

Must try harder in our schools

PARENTS will be look anxiously at Sheffield's latest schools test figures and wonder why?

Figures released today show Sheffield is now ranked 125th out of 150 local authorities - down from 106th last year.

How can a city that wants to see itself as a modern, vibrant place with thriving universities and a diverse economy produce such bad results when it comes to educating our children?

Some families will be unaffected by the results. Within the disappointing picture there are pockets of excellence and if your child is in a successful school they are receiving as good an education as any in the country.

But the rest of us are concerned. To finish 125th out of 150 would get most kids in trouble at home.

The city of Sheffield is no different. If we are finishing so low down a national table parents need to know why and what is being done about it.

End sick violence

KICKING, head-butting, punching and racial abuse - everyday occurrences for ambulance staff.

What have we come to as a society when the people we employ to help us when we most need it are attacked doing their jobs?

Since last July 60 attacks on paramedics were recorded in South Yorkshire - nearly two a week.

Across the Yorkshire Ambulance Service a total of 230 attacks were recorded - an average of one a day.

Police and the courts must come down hard on those who abuse emergency services.

Since last July three people have been given prison sentences, other cases are due to go before the courts.

That should just be the start of a crackdown. Offenders must learn that we will not tolerate such behaviour.

Green is good

HOLLYWOOD superstar Sean Bean boosted his green credentials by donating £15,000 towards the planting of a new forest in South Yorkshire.

The Sheffield-born actor played the real-life Robin Hood when he unveiled a statue at Doncaster airport.

Let's hope his example encourages more to give their cash to green projects.

TONIGHT'S QUESTION

Q: Should Darren Gough be Yorkshire's captain? See Back Page

HAVE YOUR SAY

✓ If you agree vote **YES**
✗ If you disagree vote **NO**

To join our vote log on to www.thestar.co.uk, vote by phone or text message. Phone 0901 801 5640 for Yes or 0901 801 5641 for No. Text STARVOTE, followed by a space and YES or NO and send to 84070.

Texts cost 25p plus standard network rates. If you do not want to receive details on any other products or services, please text the word EXIT at the end of your message.

LAST NIGHT'S RESULT

Q: Would you use the new fast bus service?
YES **71%** NO **29%**

Looking forward to the good old days

Retirement village with a difference for 'new old'



SMITH OF
The Star

EILEEN looks a bit impatient. "Nice to meet you love, but I've got to go and play bowls now or I'll miss my t'ai chi class later."

She nips off to join her friend and they disappear round the corner, laughing and waving on the way to their game.

Eileen is 74, and busier than ever but, unlike her friend, has no plans to go sky diving or ride pillion on a Harley Davidson.

Eileen is more a line-dancing and library book kind of girl, but she's thinking about abseiling in the summer, unless she goes to Vegas.

Welcome to the new old. The over 70s, 80s and even 90s still have their cardigans and fluffy slippers, they still get arthritis, miss the old days and wish they were 30 years younger.

But for many the idea of watching their last years drift by from a damp nursing home chair is simply unacceptable.

They are fitter, more energetic, ambitious and, well, *younger* than they have ever been.

And my goodness haven't they grown.

The percentage of people aged 65 and over in the UK population has increased from 13 per cent to 16 per cent in the past 30 years with the numbers of 85 and overs going up from 7 per cent to 12 per cent.

There are now a national record 1.2 million people over 85. By 2030, people over 60 will be the largest growing sector of the population and with increasing affluence, longer lives and better health, many of them aren't going to go quietly.

Not for them the draughty council flats, leaky terraces or rambling, crumbling family homes of previous generations.

They don't want traditional old folks' homes either. This lot want a new deal. A deal like the one offered by the Extracare Charitable Trust.

Extracare was formed in 1987 and currently operates 26 supported housing schemes and retirement villages throughout the Midlands and the North.

And there's one on the way to Sheffield.

Later this month will see the first show apartment open at the £24m Brunswick Gardens Retirement Village off Station Road, Woodhouse, pictured above.



Independence: Artist's impression of Brunswick Gardens Village, Woodhouse

VILLAGE LIFE

■ Rent for one-bed apartment £75 a week - much cost may be covered by housing and welfare benefits.

■ 50 per cent part-purchase of a one bedroom-apartment - from £55,000 (rent payable on un-purchased portion)

■ Two bedroom apartment to buy outright - from £125,000

■ Brunswick Gardens will have 12 properties available for outright purchase, 30

■ Average community charge at other centres is £67 per week to cover: heat, light, power, water and waste, maintenance and other

The village will offer 208 self-contained apartments and nine bungalows to 350 people aged 55 upwards. Each home will have its own front door, kitchen, living room, shower room and one or two bedrooms.

Within the development's walls there will be a gym, restaurant and bar, jacuzzi, village shop, arts and crafts centre, Village Hall, IT /Technique Suite, hair-dressing salon, library greenhouse and woodwork shop. Full health and social care can also be provided.

The philosophy of the non-profit-making trust is simple. People should be able to live in peace and security, maintain their independence, dignity and property in their old age.

John Payne, Partnership Director at The Extracare Charitable Trust, said: "Our charity enables its residents to enjoy the same independence, social life and opportunity, experienced by people half their age.

“It's an excellent place. I shall be trying to get somewhere in there. I had a stroke a few years ago and I need somewhere that's safe and where I don't have to go far to get what I want. It looks ideal to me. I would love to live at the one in Woodhouse.”
Former Wood machinist Eric Cavill,

“The places are brilliant. They have thought of everything and everything is top class quality. I will have to see what they cost but they offer the kind of security and comfort that I would like. The apartments are marvellous.”
Former steelworks buyer Betty Sharpe, aged 75.

“It looks a really good place. We all had a lovely time there. I think it would be a great place to live. We need to know how much it will cost though before we can decide whether we can manage it.”
Sheila Coupe, retired local government officer, aged 72.

“I own my own house at the moment but it's only a small one so I would have to rent a place in there. We are all active in the village now and we would want to volunteer to help to run things if we moved in to Brunswick Garden Village. They look lovely places.”
Retired School secretary Joyce Loveday, aged 72.

“I am renting at the moment so I will have to see if I can get in but it is important for me to get somewhere secure because I have no family. I don't always feel safe where I am now. Being able to go to bed knowing I am perfectly safe is what appeals to me.”
Berenice Needham, 74, of Woodhouse.

“We achieve this by working in partnership to create villages that are affordable, offer a wide range of exciting challenges and are actively involved with the wider community.”
“Villages offer a safe and supportive environment where residents and visitors can learn, make new friends, stay healthy and enjoy the time of their lives.”
“Our approach is founded on the charitable principle that age, health or financial means shouldn't be a barrier to achieving an enjoyable quality of life in later years. We view an active lifestyle, which promotes independence and well-being as the key to achieving this.”
“We are working in partnership with like-minded local authorities, regeneration bodies, charitable trusts and developers to enable more people to benefit from the later lifestyle they deserve.”

Brunswick Gardens opens early next year and a group of Sheffield elderly with hopes of a place at Brunswick visited a similar development at Reeve Court in St Helen's.

The modern lines of the building look like any other apartment development but the internal avenues and lanes put it stylistically somewhere between a Morrisons supermarket and a holiday village.

And it's busy. In every room off the main 'street' there are people doing artwork, line-dancing, sending emails to grandchildren or just reading. The apartments and bungalows are stunning. Spacious, warm and well kitted out they are more up-market than old-folks' home.

A milkman and a postman delivers to the bungalows and apartments every day and there's a village shop to stock up on tinned Irish stew and rich tea.

As we were leaving Reeve Court Eileen and her friend, fresh from lunch in the restaurant, waved to us from the doorway. They didn't stay for long though, ceramics class starts at two.

The Star pledges £135,000 of fund to project

PENSIONS in crisis, an ageing population living longer and needing more care, Dementia costing £539 per second.

Is there any hope? Yes, plenty. And The Star is putting its money where its editorial mouth is by pledging £135,000 of its Old Folks Fund to the Brunswick Village project at Woodhouse.

The Extracare Charitable Trust set up The Sheffield Retirement Village Appeal to raise funds to provide social and leisure facilities in the heart of the scheme.

Of the £2.6m required, £1.1m has to be raised locally. £685,000 is still required.

Star Editor Alan Powell said: "When the Telegraph and Star



Appeal: Gail Wyman

Old Folks' Fund was wound up in 2005 Star the trustees decided the remaining funds - £135,000 would be donated to start an appeal fund.

"The trustees considered the most worthwhile project specifically for old people that it

had considered and money from the Telegraph and Star's old folks' fund will be represented in some aspect of the village.

"I would say that provision of care for the elderly will become increasingly acute because of the changing demographic of the population of Sheffield and it is hoped that the village at Woodhouse will be the first and that there will be others built in other areas of the city.

"The beauty of the Extracare schemes is that old people can retain a home of their own but also have facilities at hand to allow them to have choices about how they live. Having seen the St Helen's scheme it is a cross between a modern housing development and a five-star hotel.

"We are delighted to be backing the trust."

Whilst partners will support the development of the Village building and accommodation, the facilities can only be equipped through charitable funding). Of the £2.6m required, £1.1m has to be raised locally. £685,000 is still required.

The Village at Woodhouse is a partnership between Sheffield City Council, The Arena Housing Group and the Extracare Charitable Trust.

While partners will support the development of the Village building and accommodation, the facilities can only be equipped through charitable funding.

To support the appeal contact Gail Wyman on 0772 055 3666.

Viewpoint

A chance to have your say every Thursday



Jam packed: Britain has the most congested roads in Europe

Public transport can be a success

By Rob Murphy

Green Party Transport Spokesperson

TEN years ago, the Transport Minister John Prescott promised that the new government would tackle traffic congestion, reduce road traffic and improve public transport.

Five years ago, Sheffield Council and the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive produced a Local Transport Plan intended to reduce traffic and increase the use of public transport.

Britain now has the most congested roads in Europe. In Sheffield, under both Labour and Liberal Democrat administrations, traffic levels have risen and millions of public transport passenger journeys have been lost.

Provision of an adequate transport infrastructure has been one of this government and this council's biggest failures. Why?

Despite talk of traffic reduction, government policy is contributing to its increase. The closures of local post offices and schools (like Wisewood) mean longer journeys for people and that means more traffic.

Protecting and improving local shops and services is the first step in controlling traffic levels.

I don't always feel safe where I am now. Being able to go to bed knowing I am perfectly safe is what appeals to me.

Berenice Needham, 74, of Woodhouse.

Extra taxes will have no use if drivers have no other option'

We must deal with the backlog of pedestrian crossings to improve safety and stop communities being divided by main roads. More walking also means better health and cuts in crime levels.

Cars have their place in our transport system, particularly for the disabled and infirm, those in rural areas and those travelling at awkward times, but we have to accept that in a city like Sheffield and at peak times they are the least efficient form of transport in terms of energy use and road space.

To function correctly, a city needs a quality public transport system. To encourage people to leave their cars at home we must offer a cheap, reliable and convenient alternative. Extra taxes and obstacles for motorists will have no effect if they have no other option.

Investment on roads dwarfs investment on public transport. In Sheffield, for example, £60m is being spent on the inner relief road.

Multi-storey car parks planned for the city centre will attract extra cars and produce new bottlenecks on a road system unable to cope with the increase in traffic.

Meanwhile, applications for funding for extensions to Supertram and track improvements to a bottleneck at Dore junction have both been rejected by the Department for Transport.

The long-promised regulation of the buses is the starting point of any Integrated Transport Policy. There is no point spending millions on new bus lanes if operators use them as an excuse to run fewer buses and cut less profitable routes.

Deregulation of the buses has been a disaster; hundreds of millions of passenger journeys have been lost in South Yorkshire. Sheffield Council has still to even apply for a Quality Contract, which would allow public control of fares, routes and timetables.

On the railways too, privatisation has been a failure. The short term profiteering of rail companies has sucked out millions of pounds of public subsidy from the industry and left us with ageing infrastructure that struggles to cope with current demand.

The Green Party believes that plans to improve the local rail network (shelved because of the unsuccessful tram extension bid) should be brought back, increasing the frequency of trains from Dronfield Station. Reopening stations such as Heeley and Millhouses as well as the Stocksbridge line would be relatively cheap, supply a fast alternative route into the Heart of the City and ease the pressure on congested roads.

Being pro public transport is not necessarily being anti car. A well-planned public transport system would be a benefit to all road users.

Public transport is a success in Europe and has been a success in Sheffield in the past. It can be again - all it needs is the political will.