

CONNECT

March 2023

Newsletter of AIACE-UK

Editorial

Belinda Pyke Editor CONNECT

Welcome to this edition of Connect. In our last issue, we published an article on social care by Philippa Russell which she concluded with a number of questions on what AIACE-UK offers to members who might need information or advice on care and support. Do have a look again at what she wrote and let us have your ideas. At its last meeting, the AIACE UK committee discussed how to follow up these suggestions as our chair, Tom Kennedy, explains in his piece for this issue.

Staying healthy is vital for all of us and as former EU officials we can benefit from regular and comprehensive medical screenings. But many of us have delayed the screenings, put off perhaps by Covid and by the new complexities of organising a screening. Nick Heenan's article is therefore a timely reminder not to delay. And we also have an explanation of how to book and claim for your screening.

Living to a 100 might seem unlikely or even unwelcome but it's very much a topic of discussion now, including a Channel 4 series with Jon Snow. Gail Kent writes about a seminal book on the 100-year life and its relevance even post-retirement.

The regional convenors of AIACE are a vital part of ensuring two-way communication with members and John Farnell writes about what it involves. It is, as he suggests, what you make it. We are looking for a convenor for the London region so get in touch if that interests you. It could, for example, be organised as a job share.

We are also looking for a new webmaster to replace Alan Huyton. Contact him if that could interest you.

Message from the Chairman

Tom Kennedy, Chairman AIACE-UK

Care and Support

Readers will recall that, in the last issue of "Connect" we published an article by our member, Dame Philippa Russell, on the parlous state of the public provision of care and support for the elderly or disabled in the UK. Her article concluded with some suggestions as to how AIACE-UK might improve the service that we provide to members by way of information and advice on this subject.

At the most recent meeting of the National Committee at the end of last month we were pleased to welcome Dame Philippa to join us as an observer and to contribute to our discussion. We recognise that we have neither the mandate nor the means to act at a national level, although those members who are interested (and nearly all of us will sooner or later be directly concerned with providing or needing care and support) or who already have direct experience of caring or receiving care can lobby MPs and local authorities.

We estimate that there may be around a quarter of our roughly 800 members who are caring for a family member or receiving care either in their own home or in a care institution. In order to establish the scale of the need for action in this area we will first organise a survey of members and invite you to share your experience of caring or being cared for (including financial aspects), whether positive or negative.

Other proposals which we will consider include clarifying the conditions for and extent of funding for care (known as 'dependency') under the JSIS; understanding how to receive funding for care in the UK; 'signposting' members to local sources of information, and advice on where and how to get support; 'soft support' including sharing experiences in this newsletter and regular personal contact.

The provision in the UK is far from homogeneous throughout the Kingdom. There are variations between the devolved nations and between local authorities, both as to the extent and financing of care and support. For that reason the success of our efforts will depend, in large measure on the involvement of colleagues in our regional groups who will of course have our full support.

We may decide that, alongside our pensions and JSIS ambassadors it would be useful to appoint one or more 'Care' ambassadors. While that possibility still lies downstream we have asked Gail Kent to coordinate and channel our reflections on the issue. Gail is the most recently co-opted member of the Committee having retired last year after a distinguished career of senior management positions in DG HR, including, at one stage, responsibility for relations with pensioners.

The forthcoming survey will invite comments and suggestions but you are already welcome to contact Gail or any other member of the Committee on this subject if you wish.

AIACE International Annual Congress

Since its establishment in 1969, AIACE International has organised an annual Congress (known as 'Les Assises' in French) in May. It is held at a different location each time in one of the Member States and is intended for the members of the Association. The programme includes the General Assembly (AGM, a legal requirement for non-profit organisations constituted under Belgian law), conferences, thematic workshops, excursions and cultural and social activities.

In recent years (even before the disruption caused by the Covid pandemic) the number of participating members has declined and complaints have been made about the costs of participation which require members to travel and to stay in hotels for five or six days.

After discussion of those and other issues associated with the Congress in its present form the Executive Board of the International Association decided to separate the obligatory AGM from the other activities and consideration is now being given to the form that future Congresses may take. As a first step the 2023 AGM will take place on Thursday 27 April by Zoom only.

Our President, Dominique Deshayes, has also decided to carry out a survey of members' experience and expectations which we sent to members last week. Please do complete and submit your response (on-line) by the deadline of 08 March.

Gentle reminder

The annual subscription for members of our Branch of AIACE is, at £22.00 still the lowest of any of the national branches and includes our membership fee paid to AIACE. The overwhelming majority of members pays by standing order in early January and so most subs are now in our bank account. If you have not already paid please either do so as soon as possible or (preferably) set up a standing order. Our bank account number is 70508152, and. The sort code is 20-94-48.

If you have recently changed your home or e-mail address or your telephone number please let us know by emailing office@aiace.uk.

A heartfelt reminder to act in time rather than just too late

Pick Heenan

I thought to pass on a few words of advice about the importance of our biennial screening check-ups based on my own recent experiences.

The UK has just about got through the Covid pandemic, or at least we can now see the light at the end of the tunnel. Yet in reporting on the current crises facing our NHS, the CEOs of various major Health Trusts have cited amongst other things, the severe impact on the NHS of what they currently dub the 'twindemic': that is a very recent steep rise in hospital admissions of people suffering from Covid and also from those suffering respiratory problems from the nasty strain of influenza-virus that has been sweeping the country this winter.

This is affecting many parts of the NHS, from pressure on the front-line GPs, to shortages of ambulances and much longer waiting times to be seen at A&E.

Despite this background, I would urge you all to *make sure that you do NOT delay or postpone the routine health screening exercise to which we and our spouses are all entitled*. Though some of us live far from a suitable private clinic (such as BUPA, Nuffield, Roodlane/HCA UK, or BMI), it is still possible to organise a DIY screening programme co-ordinated with your local GP, with some of the specific tests supported by the JSIS screening scheme being done privately if need be.

Yes, the NHS is under a lot of pressure and many people feel that they wouldn't want to add to this unless they became seriously ill. But when it comes to any illness, prevention is very much better than cure. Prevention is not only important for the patient but also for resources of the health services supporting them. The very purpose of the screening exercise is to catch any abnormalities in their earliest stages, when treatment is far easier and far less of a drain on our healthcare providers, whether this be the NHS or our own JSIS.

The NHS does of course provide its own medical screening services (on a 'condition-by-condition' basis) particularly to older people and many of us will already be following these I'm sure. However, the effectiveness of these very much depends on their over worked GPs finding the time to properly review incoming reports of medical checks and to themselves initiate a timely follow-up, rather than 'just about' keeping up with the pressure of their registered patients' own requests for new appointments.

In my own case a routine blood test requested by my GP led to an appointment with a specialist and some specialised tests, which inevitably took some months to arrange. The medical report eventually sent from the specialist back to my GP was never followed-up, largely I imagine due to pressures of work during the Covid lockdown and its aftermath. As a consequence, the next round of routine blood tests some 2-3 years later picked up a marked deterioration in my condition.

As luck would have it this was the time that I had already asked for a JSIS funded screening exercise, having myself put this off for several years not only due to Covid, but also because JSIS was itself slowly changing both the nature of its screening exercise and updating their lists of approved clinics in each country.

Having the same blood tests done privately in the UK and with the same results in hand, the reaction of the GP co-ordinating the screening was completely different. Now under the care of private medical services, I have moved from specialist to specialised testing and begun treatment, all within a few short weeks. Whereas I should perhaps have previously been pressing my NHS GP to explain a medical report that I did not myself understand, and then requesting appropriate treatment, all this was all done for me very rapidly within the private sector, without my needing to drive things forward. JSIS has also moved quickly to recognise a serious illness and I am confident looking forward that I am in safe hands and that things are as good as the can be.

Which brings me back to the reason for writing this little article: please do not let anything delay you from taking up your regular 2-yearly screening exercise and from acting quickly to follow-up on whatever this may find. These screening exercises are designed to pick-up things requiring treatment long before you yourself can sense there is anything wrong. It's your life and you owe it to yourself – and your loved ones – to take good care of it!

To have a health screening paid for by the JSIS

Richard Hay – Co-convenor AIACE-UK South and JSIS Ambassadors

1. **Check that your last screening was at least two years ago**
2. **Contact PMO to obtain an invitation** to have a screening (PMO no longer send reminders automatically). This can be done:
 - a. By telephone: +32 2 295 38 66
 - b. By e-mail: PMO-RCAM-MEDECINE-PREVENTIVE@ec.europa.eu

- c. By using EU Login (JSIS-on-line)
3. **Then choose where you want to have the screening:** in the UK, or in Brussels, Luxembourg, or indeed another approved centre elsewhere in the EU.
 4. **If you opt to have your screening in the UK,**
 - a. there are many local centres offering their standard ‘off the shelf’ health screenings; the most widespread are BUPA, Nuffield, BMI, and Spire. In specific areas, other centres may also be available: Roodlane (part of the HCA group) in London and Glasgow, and the Candover Clinic in Basingstoke (although the latter hasn’t yet resumed health assessments since lockdown).
 - b. If you opt to have your screening in the UK, you will have to pay yourself and reclaim (reimbursement usually happens very quickly, often before a payment by your credit card is debited to your bank account). The amount reimbursed is in principle 100% for all approved diagnostic tests; however, this full reimbursement is also subject to a financial ceiling on the amount, to exclude paying excessive fees (we are not aware to-date of any case in the UK where the ceiling has applied for a screening).
 - c. Also, your UK screening will not automatically include the same list of checks as approved by the JSIS. When you have one of these standard checks in the UK, this will include a consultation with a medically qualified doctor. In discussion with the doctor, it is possible for you to raise your need to have any check on the JSIS list that has not been included on the centre’s standard offering. Sometimes, these doctors will not agree to prescribe additional tests, and ask clients to get a referral letter from their GP. If either the doctor from the centre or your GP agrees that it would be a good idea to carry out one or more of these extra checks, they must say so in writing, to ensure that it is covered by a ‘prescription’ for the purposes of the JSIS. In addition, you must check that you meet the ‘frequency’ and ‘age’ limits laid down in the respective protocols for women and men.
 - d. If in doubt, it is best to check with the JSIS in advance whether they will reimburse the full cost of these extra checks which on a ‘stand-alone’ basis can cost more than the JSIS will allow. The PMO has promised a degree of latitude where substantive clinical reasons for going beyond the standard age and frequency criteria.
 5. **If you opt to have your screening in Brussels, Luxembourg, or elsewhere,**
 - a. you will have to pay your own travel and accommodation costs.
 - b. If you have opted for Brussels or Luxembourg, this is normally because you wish to attend one of the centres that has an agreement with the PMO. There are now six approved centres in Belgium, and one in Luxembourg. The list of approved centres can be found on JSIS ONLINE, on the AIACE UK website (<https://www.aiace.uk>), or by contacting our JSIS Ambassadors (jsis.ambassadors@aiace.uk or 07517 320 361).
 - c. At any of these centres, you explain when booking that you wish the screening to be reimbursed by the JSIS
 - d. The JSIS will pay the centre directly for the cost of the screening, provided the person having the screening has primary cover. A spouse on complementary cover (also know as ‘top-up cover’) will need to pay up-front and claim reimbursement afterwards.
 - e. The screening will include all the tests laid down by the JSIS for your category of screening.
 6. **Screening for spouses with complementary cover:** Spouses with top-up or complementary cover benefit from a derogation in the UK and other countries where the statutory or legal scheme (the NHS in the UK) doesn’t offer structured screening programmes on the same basis as the JSIS programme. This significant concession was won by AIACE, and we urge members to avail themselves of it. The same procedures apply as for the primary member, except that spouses with complementary cover cannot benefit from direct billing.

7. **Claiming reimbursement:** There are two golden rules for claiming reimbursement for screening programmes:
- a. **Use the dedicated claim form** (available on the AIACE UK website) rather than the standard form used for usual claims.
 - b. **Make sure to include all relevant expenditure in a single claim.** Expenses cannot be claimed in dribs and drabs.
 - c. **Alternatively** use JSIS-online to request authorisation and reimbursement of your screening. JSIS-online is a very useful and relatively straightforward tool for interacting with PMO on medical matters. There will be an article on it in the next edition of CONNECT.

The 100-Year Life

Gail Kent

Recently on Radio Four and in the national newspapers, you may have heard or seen mention of the concept of a '100-year Life', often referring to the book with this title by Professors Grattan and Scott of the London Business School, written before the pandemic and subtitled 'Living and Working in an Age of Longevity'. The current interest is particularly related to the political hand-wringing about the disappearance of many over 55s from the workforce, despite both labour shortages and the cost-of-living crises.

Although the book is aimed at individuals rather than businesses or government, it does have interesting lessons for the latter two groups too, and maybe provides some clues as to what has brought about this change in attitude.

The aspiration of the authors was to write a book to support people, whatever their age, to think deeply about how to structure the long lives they are likely to experience. Longevity and how to deal with it at both social and individual level has become a dominant topic of debate. But Grattan and Scott believe too much emphasis is given to the issue of pension deficit and old age care and not enough to what to do with the gift, not curse, of those many extra years. Thousands of users have logged in to the website www.100yearlife.com and completed the diagnostic – including me! I recommend it, it's fun and thought-provoking, although more useful at 55 than 65!

The writers outline that during the 20th Century a 3-stage view of life emerged; the first stage of Education, followed by the second stage of Career then the third stage of Retirement. They argue that there are real opportunities to move away from the constraints of a 3-stage life to a way of living which is more flexible and more responsive – a multi-stage life with a variety of careers, with breaks and transitions. People will work into their 70s or even 80s, there will be new jobs and skills (maintaining productivity is no longer about brushing up on knowledge, it is about setting aside time to invest in relearning and reskilling). In the book they give examples of someone born in 1945, 1970, 1995 to illustrate the transitions.

In her MBA class, Professor Grattan always gets her students to calculate for how long they would need to work, saving 10% for pension, to be able to retire with 50% of their final salary. The answer is until they are over 80! However, getting the finances right is far from everything. Family, friendships, mental health and happiness are all crucial components. You cannot have a long and financially successful career if your skills, health and relationships are depleted. Life must become multi-staged. The only way a 3-staged life could work would be with a very long second stage of continuous employment. This would make the finances balance but over time it becomes too hard, too exhausting and frankly too boring.

You may say, as EU pensioners in the happy position of a final salary pension, what has this to do with us? Well, I think we don't live in a bubble and even EU officials are affected by global trends. We also can help our colleagues still at work to prepare for retirement. Plus, we all have family and friends who are more directly concerned. In addition, the book looks at preparing for a long life by developing assets other than money/pension. What are our productive assets (knowledge, peers, reputation) that we can use? What are our vitality assets (health, balanced life, strong friendships)? What are our transformational assets (self-knowledge, networks)? The days of retiring, putting your feet up and resting are long gone. As ex-HR director,

I can tell you that there are just as many EU officials who dread retirement (they say they are not old enough yet!) as who long for it.

An interesting point is made that living for longer is always talked about as being older for longer. But in fact, as a society, we are younger for longer. We can all think of young people in their 20s who are still acting younger ('juvencence') or who do not want to commit to something as previous generations did but wish to travel and experiment for longer. Also, those at the child rearing stage are asking to work more flexibly (yes, the fathers too) and it is common to work fewer days so that childcare can be shared and enjoyed within the couple. Within my own family my son works a compressed week, and my son-in-law works part-time. That is a huge change from the past. As multi-stage careers develop, couples need to coordinate with each other and support each other so that both can develop skills for the future.

Of course, the book also warns that the 100-year life could become the preserve of the well-off, whilst the poor face 60 years of dead-end jobs and much earlier death. Governments need to try to ensure the gift of longevity is accessible to all.

Why AIACE Regional Groups matter – and need Convenors

John Farnell

I have been the Convenor of the Oxfordshire Regional Group (which includes half a dozen counties around Oxfordshire and the West Midlands) for four years. At first I assumed that the task would be limited to organising get-togethers – in our case, a lunch every six months for members to keep in-touch, learn about changes to our pension or health insurance and, usually, listen to an interesting talk from a guest speaker. Oxford has a plethora of well-informed people who are used to public speaking so I expected that that part of the job would be straightforward (it was, except that the best speakers can be difficult about dates).

The Covid pandemic, of course, brought a few changes. From March 2020 we had to cope with lockdowns, social isolation and no possibility of face-to-face meetings. Tom Kennedy, our President, suggested that AIACE regional groups should try to offer support to members if they needed it. In our group about a dozen volunteers offered to act as local contact persons in six sub-areas who could be approached by members for assistance or information if necessary. In the event, this service was hardly used; our members seemed able to cope or had other people to fall back on. In the absence of face-to-face meetings we used Zoom on one occasion to have a chat and keep informed about health insurance developments, thanks to Michael Hocken, an authority on JSIS rules who is also a member of our Group, and Alan Huyton in Edinburgh, who provided technical support.

A minor but crucial task for a Regional Group Convener is to keep abreast of newcomers to the group and those who leave it. Turnover in the membership of AIACE groups is slowing down but it has not stopped. Over the last four years eight members have joined the Oxfordshire group after leaving their place of work in the EU or moving from other parts of the country, two have moved away, and three have died.

A significant proportion of our 65 members wants to keep in touch. Between 35 and 40 people usually attend our lunches, and 50 members have been to at least one lunch in the last four years; that is quite a high score considering our widespread membership.

Why do AIACE members think regular contact with each other is important? I believe that Brexit has a lot to do with it. It has underlined that we ex-Eurocrats are a rare species, people who espoused a European way of life for decades, worked hard to promote European solutions to Europe's economic and social problems, and then had the misfortune to live in a country that left the European Union. During this turbulent period of the United Kingdom's history, where belief in (or rejection of) European solutions to political, economic and social problems has become as divisive as different religious beliefs during the Reformation, AIACE provides us with an occasional refuge or common home. The process of sharing memories of an earlier life in a more pro-European world across the Channel, exchanging views about the unexpected and radical changes occurring in our country and, yes, occasionally poking fun at the contradictions or ignorance of Brexiteers,

can be comforting, even revivifying. And just seeing how we are all coping with everything that Brexit has brought without too much fuss is instructive.

Some Regional Groups are now looking for a new Convenor. If you are wondering whether you could take on the job, my advice would be: 'Try it'. You will find that the work involved is relatively straightforward, infrequent, and much appreciated by members. Besides promoting sociability you will be providing a valuable service to people like yourself who are going through a difficult time but are still showing the energy, flair and interest in others that made them want to join the European project in the first place.

Getting the information you need

Alan Huyton – Secretary AIACE-UK

AIACE International - <https://aiace-europa.eu/>

Our parent organisation recently launched its new website, which has become an excellent source of practical information as well as a guide to how AIACE operates. I would suggest that you bookmark it and use it as your first stop-off point for the following types of information.

Access to IT systems – getting to My Intracomm, Sysper and JSIS can be very useful to obtain official guidance and to undertake necessary transactions. But as we all know, sometimes things go wrong, or you lose the link or your password etc. There is a special section on the site that gathers all the vital information and tutorials so that you can come here when things go wrong.

JSIS forms and guidance – the page on health has links to JSIS-Online and the new mobile application. A sub-page contains many articles with links to explanatory documents and guidance notes on issues such as carers, nursing homes etc. You can get the up-to-date forms for reimbursement, dentistry, etc – this is very handy if you do not use JSIS-online.

Pensions – this page has the links to Sysper and My Remote. The documentation page has useful forms, e.g. the life declaration, and guidance on how to change a bank account, contacting PMO etc.

Insurance – the page tells you all you need to know about the CIGNA insurance schemes.

In addition, you can access Vox, get information about upcoming events and see the regularly updated news section.

This new website is a major step forward for the organisation and I recommend spending a few minutes getting to know what is there. Happily there is no registration and no password needed to access the site, which simplifies things immensely.

AIACE-UK - <https://www.aiace.uk/>

With the improvements to the international site, we no longer need to use our UK site to try to do the same job. As you well know, the systems change frequently and it is not always easy to keep up-to-date. Our website is in the process of modification, and we are clearing out a lot of the older material that has gone out of date. We will not repeat what exists elsewhere.

However, we will use the site to announce AIACE-UK events, publish our newsletter 'Connect', store the minutes of our committee and the AGM and highlight issues that are of unique or particular relevance to the UK. A decision was taken some years ago to require registration and password access to the most interesting part of the site and we may review this in the near future. We will let you know.

Feedback

Finally, if members have requests or comments on the websites, bearing in mind that everything is provided by volunteers, then please feel free to write to the editor of Connect at connect@aiace.uk and/or to me at webmaster@aiace.uk.

Happy browsing.

The Association for the Rights of Britons Abroad

Pamela Mayorcas

ARBA (the Association for the Rights of Britons Abroad) was set-up in Brussels, in the 70s, when the UK government was planning to reform the Nationality Act. The proposed changes would alter entitlement to claiming British Nationality, especially for children of British nationals born outside the UK – potentially affecting many British EU staff. The proposals would also affect the number of years that Britons could live outside the UK before losing their right to vote in national (UK) elections.

A researcher from Sussex University has been looking into the matter of nationality (e.g. which countries allow dual nationality/which don't) and of voting rights and is planning to publish a book on the subject. If you were a member of ARBA or remembers attending an ARBA meeting or getting involved in the debate, please drop me a line. And let me know whether you would be happy for me to forward your details to the researcher – my contact details are: pamela@mayorcas.uk or conventional mail: Pamela Mayorcas, 65 Wavendon Avenue, London W4 4NT

Sir Julian Priestley Memorial Lecture

The Editor

This year's lecture will be given by Alastair Campbell on the theme 'What one generation does, so the next can undo'. It will be chaired by Mark Mardell (ex-BBC Europe editor) and take place on Thursday 11 May at Europe House, Smith Square, London SW1P 3EU, hosted by the European Parliament. Doors will open at 17.30 and the event will start at 18.00 concluding around 19.30. The European Parliament will offer a drink before and after the lecture. It will also be streamed on zoom thanks to the European Movement who will set up bookings for in-person and online attendance on their website in March.

You can read about the lecture series on the European Movement website: https://www.europeanmovement.co.uk/julian_priestley_lecture

AIACE-UK/London Group – Spring Lunch – Tue, 4 April 2023 – Europe House, Smith Square

Pamela Mayorcas

We are privileged to have, as our speaker, Professor Anand Menon, Director of UK in a Changing Europe. In the 7th year after the referendum, Professor Menon will ponder questions that probably preoccupy many of us – how has Brexit affected the UK economy, the IMF forecast and whether there is any possibility that the UK could or would apply to re-join the EU?

The cost, for coffee/tea on arrival, lunch (meat or vegetarian), cakes, wine/soft drink, tea/coffee is £28 per person.

Please write to: pamela@mayorcas.uk for payment details or send a cheque, for £28 per person, no later than Tue, 21 March 2023, to: P Mayorcas, 65 Wavendon Avenue, London W4 4NT.

AIACE-UK committee

Chairman	Tom Kennedy
Vice-Chairman	Robert Hull
Treasurer	John Wiggins
Secretary	Alan Huyton
Membership	Jane Cornelius, Emanuela Savoia
Connect	Belinda Pyke (Editorial), John Claxton
Vox	Belinda Pyke
Web/Email/Zoom	Alan Huyton
JSIS ambassadors	Michael Hocken, John Claxton, Brian Porro (IT)
Pensions ambassadors	Martin Clegg, Pernille Andersen, Alan Huyton
AIACE International:	
Delegates	Robert Hull, Tom Kennedy
Substitutes	Alan Huyton, Belinda Pyke

Alan Huyton plans to stand down as Webmaster in the spring so we will be looking for someone to take this on. The person does not necessarily need to be on the Committee. Contact Alan at webmaster@aiace.uk if you would like to know more about what is involved.

AIACE-UK Regional Convenors

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Survivors: Louise Overbury
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AIACE-UK Office

Office: Jane Cornelius, Europe House, Smith Square, London – office@aiace.uk

CONNECT

We welcome short paragraphs or full articles, even your poems or photos. Help us share experience, advice and reflection – connect@aiace.uk

AIACE-UK

For more information see the AIACE-UK web-portal: <https://www.aiace.uk/>