

## Letter from the Carers Northumberland Chair



On behalf of all trustees and staff at Carers Northumberland I would like to wish all readers compliments of the season and say thank you to all those who have supported us over the past year.

Most of the trustees and some of the staff here at Carers Northumberland are carers and we know, of course, that the festive season is often not the best time of year for people who have caring responsibilities. For carers, who are usually already overworked and overstressed, the additional work and expectations associated with the festivities can make it a difficult time for some. We are mindful of this in extending our best wishes to all carers for a happy festive season and a peaceful New Year.

New Year is a good time to take stock and look back on what has been achieved over the past year and then, more importantly, to look forward and plan the future. Carers Northumberland is first and foremost a carer-led organisation; not only are most of our trustees carers, but we also put a lot of effort into obtaining the views of carers from all over the county regarding the type of services we should be delivering. Taking account of what carers have told us that they need, this past year has been one of continued development and growth for Carers Northumberland; in addition to developing our core services to carers throughout the county we have added a young carer's development worker to the team and we are currently recruiting two carer support workers who will provide direct support to carers through GP practices, concentrating particularly on carer health issues.

As in all charities, our trustees and management have to perform a balancing act between concentrating on the delivery of high quality services and concentrating on ensuring that the organisation itself is properly governed and sustained. This means that although we are a charity primarily concerned with supporting carers, we must also run like a business in order to survive. Our business plan therefore reflects, in addition to the development of our services, the need to secure sustainable finances in the longer-term. To this end we are now also in the process of recruiting staff specifically to cover the generation of future income.

Clearly there is much to do to ensure that Carers Northumberland continues to support the many thousands of carers who live in the county but I have no doubt that our team of excellent staff and dedicated trustees are up to the challenge.

Please do continue to let us have your comments and tell us what services you feel are important to carers; your views are important to us. Thank you again for your contribution to our development over the past year and with your help we will continue to achieve our mission of improving the lives of carers in Northumberland.

*Stan Cooke*

Chair – Carers Northumberland



# Newsletter



December 2009

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### Carers Rights Day 2009

#### Caring for your income and pension

**Carers Rights Day 2009 will take place on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December and this year's theme is 'Caring for your income and pension'. As Carers UK importantly highlight when people give up work to care their first thought will probably not be around their pension but around managing the care and making ends meet. Yet if people don't get the right advice they could be missing out on making vital contributions to their state pension which would affect them later on. Adding to this a lot of carers who are already claiming a pension aren't claiming the extra entitlements that could make all the difference to their monthly finances.**

Carers Rights Day is all about making sure that carers get all the financial support they are entitled to now and in the future.

This edition of the Carers Northumberland newsletter will highlight how carers can protect their income and carers rights in general. If you are a carer and would like to talk to a member of staff about something you read in here, would like further information or have another enquiry please call us on the lo-call number 0844 800 7354 where someone will always answer your call between the hours of 10am-2pm Monday to Friday and especially for those carers who work between 5.30-7.30pm every first and third Tuesday of the month.

Carers Northumberland is supported by:



The Annual General Meeting of Carers Northumberland will take place on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December 1.00pm, at Pegswood Community Project, Longhirst Road, Pegswood. If you would like to attend please call 0844 800 7354.

## Important pensions information for all carers

Thinking about your pension is not normally at the top of anyone's agenda until they come close to retirement, and this is no different for carers. However Carers UK are making this top of their agenda for Carers Rights Day 2009 as they highlight that caring for someone can have a devastating impact on your pension longer term and carers need to take extra care of their pensions as a result.



To qualify for a full basic state pension you must have made a certain amount of National Insurance contributions throughout your working life. If you are unable to do this because you are caring for children or for a disabled, ill or frail adult then the state will credit your contributions however this only happens if you claim the right benefits and take the right action!

### How can you help to maximise your pension?

#### Carers UK give the following advice:

**Step 1:** Ensure you receive all the relevant benefits (Call Carers Northumberland 0844 800 7354 where we can put you in touch with someone for further advice or call Carers Line on 0808 808 7777).

**Step 2:** If you cannot claim Carers Allowance because it might affect the Severe Disability Premium of the person you care for, or if someone else is claiming Carers Allowance for looking after the same person see if you can claim Home Responsibilities Protection.

**Step 3:** Ask for details of your NI record.

**Step 4:** Ask for a pension forecast.

**Step 5:** Look into what else you can be doing for your state pension for example paying back NI contributions that you have missed.

***There are pension changes that are coming into force from 6<sup>th</sup> April 2010 that will mean significant changes for carers. Carers Northumberland have copies of booklets explaining these changes please call 0844 800 7354 to receive you free copy.***

**You can also contact Carers Northumberland for further information and to obtain a copy of:**

**Looking after someone** – A guide to carers rights and benefits 2009/10 (Carers UK)

You can call The Pensions Advisory Service on 0845 601 2923 or visit [www.thepensionservice.gov.uk](http://www.thepensionservice.gov.uk) for further information about your individual circumstances.

## North Northumberland

### Berwick Support Group

Christmas lunch Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December at the Cobbled Yard Hotel, Walkergate, 12.30pm

Pre booking essential telephone Jean 01668 219951

Regular meetings at the Methodist Church Lounge on Walkergate  
Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January, Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 10.30am-12.30pm

### Northern Support Group

Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December at the Collingwood Arms Hotel, Cornhill on Tweed 2.30-4.00pm

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January at the Bamburgh Castle Inn, Seahouses 2.30-4.00pm

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February at Breeze, Wooler 2.30-4.00pm

Telephone Jean on 01668 219951 07500 886323 if you would like any further information.

## West Northumberland

### Hexham and Prudhoe Support Groups

Christmas lunch Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December

### Bellingham Group

Social evening on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> December and belated Christmas lunch on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010

### Ponteland Group

Meeting as usual Friday 4<sup>th</sup> December and belated Christmas lunch will be arranged for January 2010

### Pre Christmas therapy day will take place in Hexham on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> December

For further information contact Tricia on 01434 608033

### Skills Sessions

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2010 Falls Awareness – Ponteland Memorial Hall, 1.00-3.00pm

5<sup>th</sup> February 2010 Moving and Handling – Ponteland Memorial Hall, 1.00-3.00pm

19<sup>th</sup> February 2010 Confidence Building – Ponteland Memorial Hall, 1.00-3.00pm

**Pre booking essential please ring 0844 800 7354**

## South East Northumberland

### Morpeth

Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> December 6.30pm at Morpeth Methodist Church. Christmas meal to be arranged.

New Year meeting January 20<sup>th</sup> 2010.

### Ashington

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December 10.30am-12.30pm Age Concern, The Round House, Lintonville Parkway, Ashington.

### Bedlington

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 12.30pm for buffet lunch at the Salvation Army Hall, Bedlington. Pre booking essential. New year meeting January 27<sup>th</sup> 2010.

### Cramlington

Friday 18<sup>th</sup> December 1.00pm at Cramlington Community Centre, Cramlington Village.

New Year meeting 15<sup>th</sup> January 2010.



**Local Carer Support**

### Carers' views represented in The Big Care Debate



Carers were asked to comment on the 3 questions being asked in the Governments Big Care Debate which closed on November 13<sup>th</sup>. Adding to the 17,000 views already submitted to the Government, Carers Northumberland facilitated discussion at a daylong event held at Longhirst Hall, Morpeth.

Amongst discussion there was a strong consensus that there should be more joined up working amongst services that look after our health and social care needs to make the system less bureaucratic and easier to gain help and information.

Feedback from the day has been sent to the Government, Northumberland Care Trust and the Princess Royal Trust for Carers.

### Hospital parking charges to be phased out

**Carers UK reported that on 30<sup>th</sup> September Health Secretary Andy Burnham MP made a second major announcement which will affect carers when he pledged that hospital parking charges for in-patients in England will be phased out over the next 3 years.**

He said that, 'When people are coming into hospital, the last thing they want to worry about is keeping the car parking up to date. But for families of the sickest patients, the costs can really rack up'. He pledged that patients would be given a permit for the length of their stay which friends and family could use when visiting.

### Carers Northumberland Recruit GP Carer Support Workers

Two GP Carer Support Workers have been recruited to the Carers Northumberland staff team.

As part of a Department of Health pilot project, these new workers will be based in designated GP surgeries within Northumberland to offer information and signpost carers within the practice and ensure that carers are receiving the wider support that they are entitled to.

The two new staff members will be introduced in the next newsletter along with details of their work within the GP surgeries.

### Improving hospital services for Northumberland and North Tyneside

NHS North of Tyne has approved proposals by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to invest £200 million over the next ten years to improve hospital services, at its board meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

This includes a significant investment to build a new emergency care hospital just east of Cramlington, South East Northumberland.

The board also considered a number of clinical issues which included older people's services for the future.

Lyn Dixon, executive nurse for NHS North of Tyne said, 'Local GP's have been working with Northumbria Healthcare to progress the development of assessment units at the 3 general hospitals to avoid unnecessary travelling for older people'.

#### Example:

*Mr and Mrs X have a daughter Emma aged 22. She is severely disabled and both parents provide care for at least 35 hours a week even though Mr X works full time. Only Mrs X claims carers allowance. Both parents should be disregarded leaving Emma as the only adult in the household for council tax purposes. This means their council tax bill should be reduced by 25% regardless of how much Mr X earns.*

This example is for illustration purposes only council tax discounts may apply in many other circumstances, contact Northumberland County Council for further details.

#### Does this apply to you?

- Some carers can be 'disregarded' when counting the number of adults in a dwelling.
- Two or more people who provide care for the same person can be disregarded.
- If you answer 'yes' to the following 3 questions you should be disregarded and may be entitled to a reduction in council tax:
  - ✓ Are you a carer for someone aged 18 or over who is not your partner and who lives in the same dwelling as you?
  - ✓ Do you provide care for at least 35 hours a week on average?
  - ✓ Does the person you care for receive higher rate Attendance Allowance or the highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance?
- Count the number of adults but do not include anyone who is disregarded: if only one person can be counted a 25% discount will apply, if all the adults are disregarded, a 50% discount will apply.
- If the 'cared for' person has a severe mental impairment they can also be disregarded and therefore not included when counting the number of adults for council tax purposes.



### Carer Support Fund

This fund offers carers the opportunity to take a break from their caring responsibilities. You can apply if:

- You provide or have recently provided, regular care for an adult due to disability, illness, frailty in old age and
- The care you provide is/was substantial and is affecting your own health and well-being, and
- You are over 16 or a young carer applying through a responsible adult, and
- You are registered with Carers Northumberland, and
- Your financial circumstances are such that you would find it difficult to pay for a break yourself

**Call Carers Northumberland on 0844 800 7354 for an application form**





**Carers now have more statutory rights at work to help them combine their working role with their caring responsibilities:**

▪ **Right to request flexible working**

Flexible working could include flexible starting and finishing hours, compressed working hours, annualised working hours, term-time working, job sharing, part time working, home working or teleworking.

▪ **Right to time off in emergencies**

Also known as Time off for Dependants, this gives all employees the right to take a ‘reasonable’ amount of time off work to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. An emergency may be something like a disruption or break down in care arrangements or the illness of a dependant. Employees must inform their employer as soon as possible after the emergency has happened.

▪ **Parental leave**

If you have at least one year’s continuous service with your employer and are responsible for a child aged under 5, or under 18 if the child is disabled, you are entitled to 13 weeks unpaid leave per child to look after that child or 18 weeks unpaid leave to look after a disabled child.

For further information on Carers Rights at Work or any of the above contact Carers Northumberland on 0844 800 7354 or visit Carers UK online at [www.carersuk.org/Information/Workandcaring](http://www.carersuk.org/Information/Workandcaring)

If you have given up work or not worked at all because of your caring responsibilities, and wish to return to work once your caring role ends or combine your caring role with working here is some useful information:

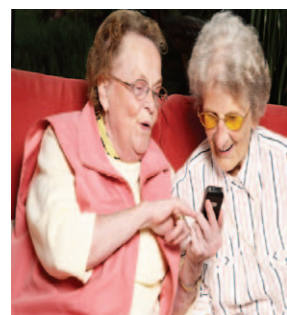
**What happens to my benefits?**

**If the person you care for has died**, you are no longer caring and your entitlements to Carers Allowance will stop. You will need to find out about which other benefit(s) you can claim and you may also have to think about returning to work.

**If you are thinking of combining work and care** you may be able to do this and claim some benefits. Carers Allowance can be paid to working carers as long as you earn no more than £87 a week (after certain deductions). You may be able to claim other benefits such as Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

**Where can I get help?** Job Centre Plus offers a range of help and has members of staff to directly support carers get back into work. If you want to combine work and caring ask your care manager for a carers assessment, this must take into account your wish (or need) to work and you may need help from social services to be able to do this.

Further information is available from Carers UK, visit [www.carersuk.org/Workandcaring](http://www.carersuk.org/Workandcaring)



**Carers Northumberland Telephone Information Service**



Sometimes as a carer what you need can be very simple like access to information and telephone support.

The Carers Northumberland Telephone Information Service will answer your calls between 10.00am and 2.00pm Monday to Friday and between 5.30pm and 7.30pm every first and third Tuesday of the month.



You can call us if you have any questions regarding your caring role for example how to take a break, benefits enquiries or where to go for practical or emotional support.

**Call 0844 800 7354**

**Do you work as well as look after someone?**

Carers Northumberland recognises that it is sometimes difficult for carers who work normal office hours to access support services.

Responding to carer need we have introduced evening support groups in some areas and we have extended the information line so that we can answer queries between 5.30pm and 7.30pm on the first and third Tuesday of every month.

Telephone

**0844 800 7354**

**Useful Telephone Numbers**

**Benefit Enquiry Line (DWP)** General Information for people with disabilities and their carers  
0800 88 22 00

**Carers Allowance Unit**  
01253 856 123

**Attendance Allowance/Disability Living Allowance**  
08457 123456

**Pension Service**  
0845 60 60 265

**Tax Credit Helpline**  
0845 300 3900

**Job Centre Plus**  
0800 055 6688