

# Caring Matters

The newsletter of Carers Northumberland Christmas 2011



**All Change at Carers Northumberland**

**Carers and the Welfare Reform Bill**

**Meeting the costs of a cold winter**

# Welcome...

... to this latest edition of our newsletter, which is a little slimmer than usual, because of coming soon after the delayed September circulation! It's been a period of significant change at Carers Northumberland, with the result that our staff team looks a little different from how it did when the newsletter last went out. Support groups and other activities continue as before, but you might see different faces from those you've come to expect! Cari Hook, Angie Tait, Carolyn Reynolds, Bonnie Houghton and Helen Chown have moved on from the organisation. We wish them all well.



You'll find more about the team later, along with details of activity in your area, but you can easily check details by ringing the Information Line on 0844 800 7354, or visiting our website at [www.carersnorthumberland.org.uk](http://www.carersnorthumberland.org.uk).

We're starting some new work, including improving support for working carers and those looking to get back to work, establishing closer links with GPs and their practice staff, and putting in place support specifically for older carers. The latter is a result of funding from The People's Health Lottery, through a partnership with The Princess Royal Trust for Carers nationally, which has brought us funding for 12 months, aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of older carers. We're looking forward to having older carers involved in determining what our activities will be.

Early in the new year, we'll be contacting everyone on our database to update their information. For the first time we'll be asking for some information about the person you care for. You can choose not to provide any details you feel uncomfortable sharing, but the more we have, the more relevant the help and information we can offer. **We do not share your details with any other organisation.**

Our offices will be closed from Friday 23 December 2011 until Tuesday 3 January 2012, during which time you will be unable to speak to a member of the Carers Northumberland team. Medical emergencies should be directed to your GP or the Ambulance Service as appropriate. For care issues, contact your care manager during office hours, or the out-of-hours Duty Team during any of the public holidays or usual out-of-hours days/times.

We wish you a peaceful Christmas and a positive 2012.

*Sandi Downing*  
Chief Executive,

# Carers Northumberland News

Throughout the charity world, funding is becoming increasingly hard to find. Carers Northumberland is fortunate to be commissioned by Northumbria Healthcare Trust - Adult Care, to deliver carer support in the county on their behalf. The September newsletter highlighted our success with The Big Lottery (a grant contributing to the costs of the support we'll provide for the next five years) and we're very pleased to benefit from project funding to support work with older carers for 12 months from December. However, it hasn't all been good news. In the first 10 months of 2011, we've been unsuccessful in funding bids totalling almost £500,000, which has had an impact on our ability to maintain the staff team we had in place.

As a result, we've had to re-structure across the county, looking at different ways of keeping our support services going. We no longer have Area Development Officers, but have increased the hours of Carer Support Workers in each area. They will keep support groups running and maintain contact with carers. As before, if you live in the north of the county, Margaret is your Carer Support Worker, and if you live in the South East, you'll see Gail. We've recruited Katherine Spoons as Carer Support Worker in the west. She'll start in the New Year and is looking forward to very soon meeting as many carers there as she can.

Two new Project Officer roles have been created: Jayne will be working to improve our links with GP practices across the county to aid early identification and easy referral of carers for support. Kate will be working to improve support for carers who continue paid work alongside their caring role, or who would like to return to work. As part of that, she'll be working with employers in the county to help raise awareness of carers in the workplace.

Anne-Marie Johnstone has been appointed as our Information Officer, and will start in the New Year, taking over responsibility for the newsletter, amongst other things. Hers will be the voice you hear most often on the Information Line!

## Contacting Carers Northumberland Offices

As a result of the changes to our team, we have also altered some the office arrangements. We closed the Longhirst office, moving Gail to Ashington, and none of the area offices are staffed every day.

To be sure of speaking to someone, please ring the Information Line, or the main office number (01670 518204). Where necessary, your message will be passed to your local worker, and we'll continue to ensure that you receive a response as quickly as possible.

# Useful Information for 2012

Throughout 2012, we will continue to provide regular meetings for carers across the county and hope you'll come and join us at one near you. During the year we'll also be arranging other activities and events, and will publicise those in the newsletter and at the groups.

For specific dates of meetings, please ring the Information Line on 0844 800 7354.

## Support in North Northumberland

|                 |                    |                                   |   |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Alnwick</b>  | 1.30pm to 3.30pm   | St Paul's Court lounge            | (4th Mon of month)                                  |
| <b>Berwick</b>  | 10.30am to 12.30pm | Walkergate Methodist Church Hall  | (last Wed of month)                                 |
| <b>Wooler</b>   | 1.00pm to 3.00pm   | Tankerville Arms Hotel            | (2nd Mon of month)                                  |
| <b>Cornhill</b> | 1.00pm to 3.00pm   | Collingwood Arms Hotel            | (2nd last Mon of month)                             |
| <b>Amble</b>    | 1.00pm to 3.00pm   | 9 Kennedy Road                    | (3rd Thu of month)                                  |
| <b>Felton</b>   | 1.00pm to 3.00pm   | Felton Village Hall               | (Thursdays) <b>Jan meeting is lunch as arranged</b> |
| <b>Belford</b>  | 1.00pm to 3.00pm   | Belford Fire Station              | (under review ring for info)                        |
| <b>Rothbury</b> | 1.00pm to 3.00pm   | Quiet lounge at Rothbury Hospital | (under review ring for info)                        |

## Support in South Northumberland

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Ashington</b><br>(4th Thu of month)    | Age Concern Northumberland, The Round House, Lintonville Parkway/<br>Hirst Welfare Centre, Alexandra Road, Ashington (alternate months)<br>1.30 pm to 2.30 pm |
| <b>Bedlington</b><br>(3rd Wed of month)   | <b>Salvation Army Hall, Hartford Road, West Bedlington</b><br>1.00 pm to 3.00 pm  |
| <b>Cramlington</b><br>(last Thu of month) | St Nicholas Church Hall, Cramlington<br>1.30 pm to 2.30 pm  |
| <b>Morpeth</b>                            | Morpeth Methodist Church, Howard Terrace,<br>(2nd Thu of month) 12.30pm to 2.30pm ( <b>meals arranged for first meetings</b> )                                |



## Support in West Northumberland

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Bellingham Area</b><br>(4 <sup>th</sup> Thurs of Month)  | Community Room, Bellingham Fire Station<br>1.00pm to 3.00pm ( <b>Jan meeting lunch as arranged</b> ) |
| <b>Haltwhistle Area</b><br>(3 <sup>rd</sup> Thurs of Month) | Haltwhistle War Memorial Hospital<br>10.30am to 12.30pm  |
| <b>Hexham Area</b><br>(4 <sup>th</sup> Wed of Month)        | Hexham Community Centre<br>10.30am to 12.30pm  |

**There will be no meeting in December due to Christmas holidays -**

**Jan meeting is lunch as arranged.**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Ponteland Area</b><br>(1 <sup>st</sup> Thurs of Month) | Merton Hall, Merton Way, Ponteland<br>10.30am to 12.30pm |
|---|--|

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Prudhoe Area</b><br>(3 <sup>rd</sup> Wed of Month) | The Manors, Adderlane Road, Prudhoe<br>10.30am to 12.30pm |
|---|---|

**Text CARE16 £5 to 70070 to donate £5 to us today!**

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Universal Credit is a new benefit being created to replace most working-age, means-tested benefits, including: Job-seeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefits and tax credits. This means that:

- ◆ Approximately 245,000 carers on Carers' Allowance will remain outside the Universal Credit
- ◆ Approximately 250,000 carers currently in receipt of the carer premium to means-tested benefits will be moved onto the Universal Credit.



The Welfare Reform Bill also proposes a benefits cap which would mean that, per week, couples would not be able to receive more than £500 and individual claimants £350 in benefits. The Government also announced that DLA claimants, War Widows and families claiming the working tax credit would be exempt from the cap, but that other benefits, like Carers Allowance, would be included.

The Government is also proposing to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with a new Personal Independence Payment (PIP). The PIP structure will be similar to DLA, retaining two rates of a mobility component, but will also only have two rates of a "daily living" component. There will be several changes, including the assessment process and qualifying period, and a reduction in funding available as DLA is replaced by PIP. It is not yet confirmed through which rates of the PIP daily living component carers will be entitled to Carer's Allowance.

Carers UK are working with members of the House of Lords to table amendments that will exempt carers from the proposed benefit cap and to ensure that *both* rates of the PIP daily living component lead to a Carer's Allowance entitlement.

Carers Northumberland supports the Hardest Hit campaign against cuts to benefits of people with disabilities and their families. For more information visit [www.hardesthit.org.uk](http://www.hardesthit.org.uk).

# Winter Fuel Payments

## Winter Fuel Payments

Carers in receipt of Carers Allowance and who meet the other eligibility criteria are entitled to Winter Fuel Payments.

Winter Fuel Payments are paid depending on people's circumstances in a qualifying week. The qualifying week for winter 2011/12 is **19-25 September 2011**.

For winter 2011/12, the amounts will be:

- ◆ Up to £200 for households with someone born on or before 5 January 1951, and
- ◆ Up to £300 for households with someone aged over 80 years.

Both men and women born on or before 5 January 1951 may qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment for winter 2011/12. This date changes each year in line with the increase in women's State Pension age.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**How do I apply?** Most people do not need to apply, however, if they do, they can call the Winter Fuel Helpline (0845 9 151515, textphone users call 0845 601 5613) and ask to have a claim form posted out. Alternatively, visit [www.direct.gov.uk/winterfuel](http://www.direct.gov.uk/winterfuel), fill in the claim form online and print it off to post. Completed forms need to be received on or before **30 March 2012**, and should be mailed to: Winter Fuel Payments Team, Department for Work and Pensions, PO Box 10142, Annesley, Nottingham, NG15 5WY.

**Who gets paid automatically?** People who got a payment last year, are still eligible and their circumstances haven't changed, or people born on or before 5 January 1951 and receiving at least one of the following benefits: Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, Bereavement Benefit, Carer's Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Graduated Retirement Benefit, Incapacity Benefit, Industrial Injuries Benefit, State Pension, Severe Disablement Allowance, War Pension, Widow's Benefit.

**Can someone get a Winter Fuel Payment if they're still working?** Yes - as long as they meet the eligibility criteria. They may need to make a claim if they've not received a Winter Fuel Payment in the past.

**When will payments be made?** Most people should receive their Winter Fuel Payment automatically before Christmas. This should be the case if they got a Winter Fuel Payment last year, remain eligible and their circumstances haven't changed, or if they have made a successful

# Cold Weather Payments

*claim before 23 September 2011. Any payments not made before Christmas will be made in the New Year.*

**What changes affect Winter Fuel Payment entitlement?:** *The Department of Work and Pensions need to know if someone moves home, changes bank account or if someone leaves or joins the household. They also need to know where someone was in the qualifying week (19-15 Sep 11).*

**Why have the payment rates changed?** *A temporary increase was made in the rate by the previous Government. In 2011/12 the rates are returning to their usual amount.*

**What's the difference between Winter Fuel Payment and Cold Weather Payments?** *Winter Fuel Payment is an annual payment for older people to help with the costs of keeping a household warm in winter. Cold Weather Payments are made automatically to eligible people for weeks of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.*

## Cold Weather Payments

Cold Weather Payments are made automatically to eligible individuals once the weather gets very cold in their area, only during the period 1 November to 31 March. A payment is made when the average temperature has been recorded as, or is forecast to be, zero degrees Celcius or below for over 7 consecutive days at the weather station linked to the eligible individual's postcode. (details of each weather station can be found by searching by postcode at [www.direct.gov.uk/coldweatherpayment](http://www.direct.gov.uk/coldweatherpayment)).

Cold Weather Payment is £25 per day for each seven day period of very cold weather. Payments are made in the same way as benefits received by the individual and are usually paid within a week of being triggered. Payments do not affect other benefits received.

Eligible benefits include: Pension Credit, Income Support (if receiving Disability Premium, Child Disability Premium or have a child under 5 years), income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (if receiving Disability Premium, Child Disability Premium or have a child under 5 years), income-related Employment Support Allowance (if receiving Support Component, Work-related Activity Component, Severe or Enhanced Disability Premium, Pensioner Premium, have a disabled child or a child under 5 years).

Further information about both payments is available at [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk).



# End Notes

## New Social Care and Health Information Points in Northumberland

Five new Social Care and Health Information Points will open in Northumberland in December. These are being developed through a partnership between Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust and Northumberland County Council. They will provide people in Northumberland who have a disability or long-term illness with information and advice about services and sources of support to help them remain independent.

Information Points will be based in libraries in Amble, Berwick, Morpeth and Haltwhistle, as well as the Information Centre at Cramlington (Yourlink)

Open days will be held as follows:

Morpeth Library, 12 Dec 10am-2pm; Berwick Libraray, 13 Dec 10am-2pm; Haltwhistle Library, 14 Dec 10am-2pm; Cramlington Information Centre (Yourlink), 15 Dec 10am-2pm; Amble Library, 16 Dec 10am-1pm.

## AGM

At our AGM on Mon 6 Dec, the following were confirmed as members of the Trustee Board: Stan Cooke, Peter Stonell, Anne Arter, Shirley Charlton, Angela De Travernent, Diana Hogg, Julia Plinston, Julie Birkin Nicholl, Sarah Marshall, along with new appointments of Dorinda Jack, Tim Rolls and Lindy Conway.

Trustees can be contacted via the Ashington office. More information about our new trustees in future newsletters.

## Carers Northumberland contacts

**Information Line** 0844 800 7354 – calls to the Information Line cost 5p per minute from BT landlines. Other providers and mobiles may be dearer. Anne-Marie Johnstone (Information Officer)

**Ashington** 01670 518204 - Sandi Downing (Chief Executive), Debra Blakey (Finance & Administration Officer)

**South East Office** 01670 320019 - Gail Purvis (Carer Support Worker)

**North Office** 01668 219951 - Margaret Todd (Carer Support Worker)

**West Office** 01434 608033 - Tricia Ashford (Carer Support Services Manager), Katherine Spoons (Carer Support Worker)

**GP Support Project Officer** - Jayne Povey (01434 608033)

**Working Carers Project Officer** - Kate Whitehead (01668 219951)

This newsletter is produced by Carers Northumberland for carers, their families and professionals supporting them. Feedback on, and contributions to, the newsletter are welcomed, and should be emailed to [info@carersnorthumberland.org.uk](mailto:info@carersnorthumberland.org.uk) or mailed to: Caring Matters, Carers Northumberland, Suite 17, Wansbeck Business Centre, Rotary Parkway, Ashington, NE63 8QZ.