

# CARERS' NEWSLETTER

## WESTERN ISLES COMMUNITY CARE FORUM

### CARERS WEEK 9-15 JUNE 2008

"It's difficult to overstate how important carers are to ensuring millions of people can maintain their independence and enjoy a good quality of life. We know first hand what a crucial role carers play in the lives of the older people we support. I think it's vital that their contribution and the challenges carers face stay at the forefront of public debate: that's why WRVS is supporting carers week." (Lynne Berry, chief executive WRVS)

The aim of Carers UK new Carers Week initiative, Carers 1000, is to recruit 1000 carers from across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, who each year will

- A) take part in the Carers Week annual survey and
- B) Will be invited to take part in an interactive event with Ministers and national politicians, creating a unique opportunity for carers to directly express their views at the highest levels.

They will also be provided with information about carers week, and invited, if they wish, to:

- ◇ Promote carers week locally
- ◇ Send a letter to their local newspaper just before carers week (Carers UK will provide a template)
- ◇ Tell their story in the local media

Send your name, address, date of birth, and contact details to Carers week, 32-36 Loman street, London SE1 0EH

The 2007 Annual Parliamentary reception took place for the first time in Downing Street. Two carers spoke alongside the Prime Minister, who included in his remarks "Carers are a remarkable group in society; a lifeline for the millions of people who rely on their compassion and dedication. We, as government, need to do more to listen to learn from carers about how we can better provide the support they need and the recognition they deserve."

*(WICCF IS JOINTLY FUNDED BY WIHB AND CNES)  
CO-ORDINATOR: JOHN MACLEAN*

THIS NEWSLETTER IS CIRCULATED WIDELY ON A QUARTERLY BASIS TO USERS OF SERVICES AND THEIR CARERS THROUGHOUT THE ISLANDS. THE VOLUNTARY AND STATUTORY ORGANISATIONS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY HERE TO DISTRIBUTE MATERIAL TO PEOPLE WHO ARE ACKNOWLEDGED AS BEING HARD TO REACH. WE WELCOME CONTRIBUTIONS

**LARGE PRINT NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE—PLEASE CONTACT US**

## **‘Your Call’ - a counselling service first for Scotland**

The Edinburgh-based Lothian Centre for Integrated Living (LCIL) is launching a unique telephone counselling service for disabled people.

“Your Call” is open to all disabled people in Scotland over the age of 18 and to their immediate family members. “What makes the service special is that the counsellors are all disabled people themselves, providing them with an understanding of what it means to live as a disabled person in Scotland,” explains service co-ordinator Ian Fuller. The majority of the volunteer counsellors staffing the service have trained over a four year period to Diploma standard in counselling.

Mr Fuller continues: “Counselling can help people who are trying to come to terms with painful events from their past, or who need support through a current crisis or change in lifestyle. It can also help people who are struggling to manage difficult feelings such as depression or anxiety, or who are seeking direction and meaning in their lives. A counsellor will not judge you, nor tell you how to live your life. Instead, he or she is trained to help you explore your own situation and to support you to find your own way forward.”

Anyone wishing to contact the “Your Call” appointments line should phone 08088 010362 between 11am and 3pm on Mondays and Tuesdays, and between 11am and 1pm on Wednesdays. Calls are free from home telephones and from some, but not all, mobile networks. The number is withheld and so will not appear on phone bills.

Your Call is a 3-year project which is mainly funded by the Scottish Government. LCIL is a user-led organization which exists to

practically support the right of disabled people to live independently in the community of their choice.

Your Call aims to offer counselling to an estimated 140 disabled people across Scotland over the next two years.

“What makes the service special is that the counsellors are all disabled people themselves, providing them with an understanding of what it means to live as a disabled person in Scotland,”- Ian Fuller, Your Call co-ordinator.

The service is welcomed as “an excellent means for disabled people to access a counselling service” by Brian McGee (Chief Executive of COSCA)

**With** rising fuel prices (electricity, coal, gas oil), many people are too worried about heating bills to heat their homes.

If paying for your heating is a problem for you and you, or someone on whom you have depended, have worked in farming, forestry or other land based occupation, then RSABI may be able to help you. This charity, with help from the ScottishPower Energy People Trust, is able to award grants to help those who spend more than 10% of their income on heating costs. Anyone contacting them can be sure of total confidentiality, and there may be other ways in which they can help.

### **CARERS CAN'T AFFORD TO BE ILL**

This year's Carers Week will concentrate on the health and wellbeing of carers. Their theme *Carers can't afford to be ill* is the reality for many carers, and highlights the need for better support and services.

Carers Week will

- recognise and celebrate the contribution made by carers
- reach out to ‘hidden’ carers in every community; ensuring they know where to find support
- promote policies and practices that can improve the quality of life of carers
- campaign for better support and services for carers

OLD HOSTEL, TARBERT, HARRIS, HS3 3BG TEL/FAX: 01859 502588

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**ACTION FOR KIDS** provides disabled children and young people (aged 2 to 26 across the UK) with specialist mobility equipment. This equipment means opportunities, freedom, self-reliance and independence to the children and young people who benefit.

Over the last ten years they have helped over 1000 young people. They have supplied mobility aids from simple trikes to sophisticated powered wheelchairs. Most equipment is provided on a permanent loan scheme so they cover the cost of maintaining and servicing the equipment.

They also provide a Family Support Service for disabled young people and their families, including a confidential telephone and email helpline service as well as home visits. Tel: 0845 300 0237 or Email: [info@actionforkids.org](mailto:info@actionforkids.org)

### **UK's Oldest Marathon Runner?**

Buster Martin, ( who you may remember featured in a past Newsletter as Britain's oldest employee at 100), competed in this year's London marathon hoping to be recognised as the oldest ever competitor. However, as he cannot produce his birth certificate, the Guinness Book of Records won't officially recognise him as such. In fact there is speculation that he may **ONLY** be in his mid 90s! Whatever his true age, he certainly deserves admiration and praise for doing a marathon.

**Anne Begg, MP** is Carers Week 2008 Parliamentary champion. Before becoming an MP in 1997, Anne was a teacher who specialised in History and English. She was born with the rare genetic condition Gauchers Disease which has resulted in her bones breaking regularly. Anne has used a wheelchair since 1984 and she was first full-time wheelchair user to be elected to Parliament. She is a senior member of the Work and Pension Select Committee and among her political interests are social justice, equality and welfare reform.

**ALZHEIMER SCOTLAND (Lewis & Harris)  
DAY CARE**  
Solus, Westview Grove—6 days 10am-3pm

### **CARERS URGED TO CHECK COUNCIL TAX BILLS**

With Council Tax bills for 2008 now issued, Carers UK is urging carers to make sure they are paying the correct amount. It is not widely publicised but some carers could qualify for up to 50% off their council tax bills.

Carers UK regularly hear from carers whose local council or even their local advice centre have told them incorrectly that they cannot have a discount, when in fact the carer is entitled. Carers UK helpline has helped in cases where the carer has been paying too much since as early as 1993 when Council Tax was first introduced. The good news is that this money can be backdated all the way to 1993, leading in some cases to substantial backdating awards of thousands of pounds.

Jean French is manager of Carers UK helpline CarersLine. She says "It is well worth carers getting independent advice about their council tax payments, even if they have been paying for years. Local councils may insist they have the calculation right, but often they fail to understand the various types of help with council tax they are obliged by law to offer. Their written or online information can be confusing. You may need to be persistent with your appeal."

Carers UK has issued updated advice for carers on their website, including a template letter that carers can use to ask their council to recalculate their council tax. If you are a carer and want to find out if you should be getting a discount on council tax, visit our website [www.carersuk.org/Information/Financialhelp/Helpwithcounciltax](http://www.carersuk.org/Information/Financialhelp/Helpwithcounciltax)

Tigh Ceilidh, Barvas—Tue & Thu 10am-3pm  
Tigh Ceilidh, South Dell—Weds 10am-3pm  
Church Hall, Leverburgh—Mon & Weds 9.30am  
—2.30pm

