

CARERS' NEWSLETTER

WESTERN ISLES COMMUNITY CARE FORUM

THE RESULTS OF TWO NEW SURVEYS were announced for the start of Carers Week 2009. The results showed that carers felt they go unrecognised or ignored by different groups in society and this has a negative impact on their lives. The general public also unaware how many carers there are in the UK although they do recognise the valuable contribution that carers make.

A survey conducted by YouGov questioned over 2000 people throughout the whole of the UK about their beliefs and attitudes towards carers. When asked to estimate the number of carers in the UK, 8 out of 10 were unable to pick the correct figure of **6 million**, with almost three-quarters (**71%**) underestimating by over 4.5 million.

There was some good news, however, as the survey also revealed that the public ranked carers alongside the emergency services in terms of their contribution to society. Six out of seven people (**86%**) believe that carers make a valuable contribution, behind only nurses and firefighters (**91% and 90% respectively**). The overwhelming majority also agree that carers' benefits are far too low, with over three-quarters stating that the current level of Carers' Allowance is unreasonable.

Meanwhile, the Carers' Week survey revealed the shocking number of carers who have been pushed to extreme levels of stress and depression as a result of caring. Almost three-quarters of carers said they felt that they had reached breaking point. Over a third stated that 'frustration with bureaucracy' pushed them to breaking point, often the complex and lengthy procedures for welfare benefits, healthcare and social services. Other factors include a deterioration in the health of the person being cared for, lack of sleep and financial worries.

For most carers, 'practical support' would—or did—make a difference when they were at breaking point. Others said that more money would make a difference—hardly surprising with Carers Allowance at only £53.10 per week .

A massive 8 out of 10 carers feel that their role is overlooked or ignored by professionals, who include GPs, Social Workers and hospital staff. Three-quarters of all carers also feel that their role is unrecognised by family members and friends. Almost two-thirds of carers say that their lives are made 'much more difficult' as a result of being overlooked or ignored. More than half (**54%**) say that being overlooked has affected their health and a slightly higher number (**55%**) say that it has left them worse off financially.

The ten charities who organize Carers Week are calling on the Government to do more to support carers, along with other organisations such as the NHS, which can do so much to improve carers' lives.

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

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

Old Hostel, Tarbert, Isle of Harris, HS3 3BG

Tel/Fax: 01859 502588

Email: john.maclean2@virgin.net

MAXIMISING INCOME

Carers UK is urging carers to find out about their entitlements so they get every penny they're entitled to in order to help them make ends meet. There has never been a more important time to find out what financial help you may be entitled to. Carers UK has produced a booklet, Looking after someone – a guide to carers' rights and benefits for all carers, available from www.carersuk.org or by calling CarersLine on 0808 808 7777. The report 'Carers in Crisis' can be downloaded from www.carersuk.org

HOME ADAPTATIONS

A nationwide scheme which helps disabled people carry out essential home adaptations has been enhanced. Changes arising from the implementation of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 will trigger a simpler and fairer system of financial help. For people assessed as needing essential adaptations, local authorities must give a grant of 80% of the cost or 100% for people on the lowest incomes.

There are no longer any arbitrary limits on the amount of grant that can be provided. Under the previous system, grant was only given towards the first £20000 of works to provide bathroom and toilet facilities for a disabled person, and there was a means test to assess entitlement beyond the 50% minimum. Disabled home owners having difficulty getting into or around their home should contact their local council's Social Work Department to arrange an assessment of their needs.

The duty to give grants applies to a wide range of adaptations, including: replacing the bath with a walk in shower; constructing a ramp to help someone get into their home; fitting lower work surfaces to make the kitchen easier to use. Councils do not have to give a grant for house extensions (for example to provide a ground floor bedroom) but can do this if resources allow. They must provide some form of assistance. These modifications are part of a wider suite of changes being introduced to the implementation of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006.

YOURS is a fortnightly magazine aimed at women in their 50s and beyond. They feature a Carers in Touch service on their website and include articles on carers' lives in the magazine too. If you have internet access, go to www.yours.co.uk and select Relationships. There you will find the Carers in Touch forum where you can post questions for other carers or for their resident experts. If you prefer, you can order the magazine from your local newsagents.

Yours staff are compiling a 2009 Charter for pensioners' rights, covering all areas which affect older people's lives and are asking readers for their suggestions. Their previous charter included the need to allow pensioners the right to Carers Allowance. They also mounted a sustained campaign for cares including a 12000 signature petition to 10 Downing Street demanding that pensioners should be able to claim the allowance.

Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) will be held in Stornoway on 17th / 18th August and in Uist 10th / 11th Sept.

For further information contact Elaine Campbell, Choose Life Co-ordinator. Tel: 01851 708035
Email: elaine.campbell5@nhs.net

HOME CARE SERVICES are free to individuals whose **assessed** weekly income is £157 or less and who have savings of less than £6000 and for couples whose assessed weekly income is £234 or less and who have savings less than £6000. For those above those levels, some services still have to be paid for, varying with your income and savings. You don't pay for **personal** care in the Community if you are assessed to need it and are 65 years of age or over. Such care covers personal assistance, personal hygiene/continence management, problems with immobility, counselling and support, food preparation and diet.

However, **non-personal home care** services are liable to be charged for. These include shopping, pension collection, housework, laundry and ironing. Your assessment for home care services is carried out by your local office of the Social and Community Services Department. For home care, the level of service you get is based on your needs and **not** on your ability to pay. If you are unhappy with any aspect of your Home Care Service, you can complain. The Department has a complaints procedure and you can ask for a copy of this.

PONTIN'S BREAKS FOR CARERS

Pontin's have donated nearly 500 apartments so that carers and their families can enjoy a holiday this year. Each apartment contains a bedroom, lounge with TV, bathroom and kitchenette with full size cooker and fridge. The apartments sleep up to four people – two in the bedroom and two on a bed settee in the lounge. There is a full entertainments programme available including live music, dancing and cabaret every evening.

The breaks are Monday- Friday with availability at four parks in early July, September and October. The parks are:

Southport, Ainsdale beach, Merseyside

Prestatyn Sands, Prestatyn, North Wales

Brean Sands, Burnham on Sea, Somerset

Camber Sands, Nr Rye, East Sussex

Transport is not provided and the breaks are self catering, so food is not included.

To qualify for this free holiday, Carers must not have had a holiday in 2008 or be planning a holiday this year. Carers must be able to self manage all care and childcare needs as there will be no dedicated support on the holiday.

Places are limited so if you are interested please call the Connecting Carers information line as soon as possible on 01463 723571.

The scheme is run by The Princess Royal Trust for Carers who provide access to the holiday only. They are not able to offer any assistance with:

TRANSPORT

INSURANCE

CARER RELIEF

CHILDCARE

SPENDING MONEY

ARTHRITIS IN CHILDREN

It's one of life's stubborn myths that 'arthritis only happens to old people'. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Arthritis comes in some 200 different forms and affects people of all ages, including around 12000 babies and children in the UK, and 27000 under 25s. About one child in every 1000 develops inflammatory arthritis, which in children is called 'juvenile idiopathic arthritis' (JIA).

JIA is an umbrella term describing arthritis with no known cause in people aged under 16. There are three main types of JIA:

Oligo-articular JIA is commonest. It affects four or fewer joints. Thankfully, this type has reasonable recovery rates.

Polyarticular JIA (or polyarthritis) develops at any age, involves five joints or more, and has similar symptoms to adult rheumatoid arthritis.

Systemic onset JIA begins with rashes, fever, general malaise and swollen glands, and then develops into inflammation of the joints.

The Source, Arthritis Care's helpline for under 26s, offers free and confidential support and information for young people and their parents, carers, teachers and families wanting to know about living with arthritis. Telephone: 0808 808 2000 (10am to 4pm weekdays) or email: The-Source@Arthritiscare.org.uk for a free range of books and booklets – including 'A Day with Sam' for children under 7 and 'Kids with Arthritis – a Guide for Families'.

BREAKS FROM CARING

As a carer, you are entitled to a carer's assessment which should, among other things, support you so that you get proper breaks from your caring responsibilities. As part of your carer's assessment you should ask the social worker about the possibility of getting direct payment from the Local Authority to pay for the cost of a break. Their assessment should also explore how they can support you in any leisure activities you would like to take up.

Check with your local advice centre as they will have information on grant giving charities that may be able to help you. They may also subscribe to information resources that list grant giving charities such as www.grantsforindividuals.org.uk which lists over 3000 organisations that make grants to individuals.

To get help specifically for funding a holiday, there is an organisation called 'Tourism for All'. They produce a booklet called "A Guide to Financial Help Towards the Cost of a Holiday" which lists a large variety of trusts and funds that consider applications for financial assistance towards the cost of a holiday. You can buy a copy of the booklet for £3.50 by contacting Tourism for All on 0845 124 9971.

Another excellent website for finding grant providers is www.turn2us.org.uk. Using this website is free. It has a "grant search" area which provides the details of huge numbers of grant giving charities. Many of the charities are linked to particular trades and professions while others serve those with a specific condition of disability. Some are national and others local. You can narrow down your search by just applying to those charities that are more likely to meet your needs.

If you do not have access to the internet or you want to talk to someone directly, the Association of Charity Officers runs a helpline which can be contacted on 01707 651 777. The helpline is available Monday to Friday 10.00am to 4.00pm. If you want to contact them make a note beforehand of your place of birth, where you now live, what work you have done in the past and the work your family has done, whether you are a member of a trade union and any religious

U-TURN ON JOBSEEKERS PROPOSAL

Carers UK has welcomed the UK government's change of heart over its proposal to move carers claiming Income Support onto a modified version of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). Carers UK had vigorously opposed this proposal, arguing that it was confusing and insulting to carers when they are not unemployed and would not be required to look for paid work. In an update published in December the UK government acknowledged concerns from carers and said, "We have amended our proposal and will not move carers from Income Support until we have a clear and detailed plan setting out how we will reform the benefits system over the longer term." The move was welcomed by Imelda Redmond, Chief Executive of Carers UK, who said, "Moving carers onto Jobseeker's Allowance would have been misleading and insulting. Ministers talk about everyone doing something in return for their benefits, but carers are already working unpaid and making a contribution worth £87 billion.

Changing this policy does not mean that government should do nothing. We need an urgent and radical overhaul of carers benefits. We cannot wait for government reforms to welfare and social care to be completed before tackling carers' benefits."

THE HOME HEATING HELPLINE & ENERGY SAVINGS TRUST

The Home Heating Helpline (0800 33 66 99) and the Energy Savings Trust (0800 512 012) can give you tips on how to make energy savings around the home and advise you about grants and other assistance that may be available to you.

As fuel costs rise Carers UK would advise all carers to check at least once a year to make sure you are getting all the help you are entitled to. A simple call to the Home Heating Helpline could end up saving you money.