

CARERS' NEWSLETTER

WESTERN ISLES COMMUNITY CARE FORUM

HELP SCHEME FOR YOU TO SWITCH TO DIGITAL TV

Despite the amount of publicity in the national and local media, there will probably be some who will be caught out by the deadline. Be sure that you are not one of them as there is assistance available. Also, we cannot be certain, even in the islands, that rogue traders will not appear, pressurising people into purchasing a new set when a simple, cheap conversion would be quite satisfactory.

Older and disabled people living in the Western Isles are being offered help to switch to digital with the Switchover Help Scheme. The Scheme has been set up to help eligible older and disabled people to make the change to digital on one of their TV sets in their home.

People are eligible if: They are aged 75 or over; or they have lived in a care home for six months or more; or they get (or could get) disability living allowance; or attendance or constant attendance allowance or mobility supplement, or they are registered blind or partially sighted.

What's on offer? For a one-off payment of £40, eligible people will be offered: easy-to-use digital equipment to convert one television set in their home; home delivery and installation, if you wish; an aerial check and replacement if needed, where we can help and a helpline and returning advice; a 12 month digital aftercare service.

Eligible people will be written to directly and will get help in plenty of time before the switchover. The letters will explain how they can get extra help to convert one TV in their home to digital. Details about how to apply, an explanation of all the available options and prices are clearly set out in the pack.

Most people will be asked to pay £40 towards the standard offer of help. For eligible people who are also on pension credit, income support, income based jobseeker's allowance or employment and support allowance, it is free. The Help Scheme is run by the BBC and has been designed around the needs of older and disabled people.

All installers are vetted, carry identification and will never call without an appointment.

In the meantime, you can make a free call to the dedicated number of **0800 40 85 900** if you require assistance or check www.helpscheme.co.uk or www.digitaluk.co.uk/postcodechecker.

Your local contact is: Derek McCune 07864 832925 Email: Derek.McCune@eaga.com

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)
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LARGE PRINT NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE FROM WICCF OFFICE

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4th DECEMBER IS CARERS RIGHTS DAY. WHAT IS CARERS RIGHTS DAY? The aim is to encourage carers to increase their uptake of benefits.

- **Increase take up of benefits**—estimates suggest that 40%-60% of disability benefits go unclaimed. There are no firm statistics on the take-up of carers' benefits but it is estimated that £740 million of carers' benefits goes unclaimed each year.
- **Make sure carers know their rights**—every year, more than 2 million people become carers for the first time. Those new to caring need straightforward and accessible information about their entitlements. Time after time carers say they need clear information and this is what Carers' Rights Day is about.
- **Guide carers towards practical support**— access to practical support can be vital in maintaining carers' health and well-being and can help to ensure that they are not isolated and socially excluded. This might include time off, help with lifting and bathing, equipment or adaptations to the home or access to leisure activities for their disabled son or daughter.
- **Raise awareness of the needs of carers**—carers want the same life chances that other people enjoy—good health, financial security, the right to a family life, opportunities to work and pursue their own interests. But the reality for many carers is vastly different. Carers Rights Day raises awareness of the needs of carers with policy makers and professionals.

CARERS' RIGHTS INFORMATION BOARDS

The Western Isles Community Health and Social Care Partnership (CHaSCP) recognises the importance of ensuring that carers receive the information they need to help them claim the benefits that are rightfully theirs to claim

because

- Millions of carers benefits are not claimed each year
- Carers may be missing out on a range of other discounts and benefits like Income Support, Housing Benefit , Council Tax relief
- Claiming the Carer's Allowance can help protect basic State Pension Rights for Carers under 65.

To ensure that more carers are aware of the help they are entitled to, the CHaSCP will be launching a number of Information Boards around the islands. These are placed in Doctors' surgeries and include free copies of the booklet **Looking After Someone?** (a guide to carers' rights and benefits which provides specialist advice to carers.)

10 FACTS ABOUT CARING from Carers Scotland

1. There are 660,000 carers in Scotland
2. Almost 500 people a day take up caring
3. 3 in 5 of us will become carers at some time
4. 110,000 people provide over 50 hrs care a week
5. Over 250,000 juggle caring with holding a job
6. By 2037 number of carers in Scotland could be 1 million
7. Carers save the Scottish economy £7.6 billion - almost equal to the cost of providing NHS services in Scotland.
8. The main carers benefit is worth £53.10 for 35 hrs - £1.52 per hour. The National minimum wage is £5.52 per hour.
9. Three quarters of carers struggle to pay utility bills and more than half cut back on food and heating.
10. Three quarters of carers say their health is worse because of caring responsibilities.

I thought that this 'Foreword' from the booklet "Carers and their rights - a guide to the law relating to carers" was worth sharing with readers of the Newsletter.

"Carers make a unique and immense contribution to society and to those they look after.

Despite the contribution that unpaid carers make to society, they are routinely denied their rights to equal opportunities, services and resources.

It is hoped that the guide will enable carers to achieve better outcomes for themselves and for those they care for, and empower them to exercise these rights and to promote the vision of carers. This vision is founded on the rights of carers:

- ✦ To have their contribution to society recognised
- ✦ To choose when, how and if they care
- ✦ To be treated as 'people first and carers second'

To have their caring viewed as a positive life choice, and

"underpinned by the human conditions of love, empathy and devotion to human beings".

Unpaid carers have the right to expect no less.

Carers' Income & Pension

When giving up work to care, carers first thoughts are not about their pension but about managing care and making ends meet. And yet if they don't get the right advice, they could be missing out on vital contributions to their state pension which could affect them long term. In addition, too many carers who are already claiming a pension aren't claiming entitlements to extra financial support that could make all the difference to their finances. A new booklet entitled 'Caring about your pension' from Carers UK will be available in December

Supporting Carers

Cares UK has reacted to a recent report from the Committee of Public Accounts (Supporting Carers to Care, 42nd Report of Session 2008-09) which reveals that carers find it hard to access state benefits and employment support because of confusing and complex processes and poor communication from the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP).

Launching the report, Edward Leigh MP, Chairman of the Committee said "The value of the service that these unpaid carers provide to society is not reflected in the quality of DWP's arrangements for providing them with financial and other support."

Imelda Redmond, Chief Executive of Carers UK, said: "This is the second time in 12 months that a senior Committee of MPs has criticised the DWP's approach to carers. Last year the Work and Pensions Committee described carers' benefits as 'outdated' and urged an overhaul of the system. They also recommended an increase of up to £60 per week in carers' benefits, which is yet to happen. Now the Public Accounts Committee has found that those benefits aren't delivered effectively and carers are facing a multitude of problems in accessing the support that is rightly theirs.

"It is unacceptable that one in five carers find it difficult to claim benefits and face complex and impenetrable rules that make little common sense. Carers are also facing delays in having their application processed. For someone who is looking after a newly disabled relative this can add additional stress in what is already a difficult time.

Shared Care Scotland Are you caring for a family member, partner or friend and need to recharge your batteries with a short break from your caring responsibilities? Your Social Work department will be able to offer advice on what short break services are available in your area and how you access them. There may be waiting lists for services or eligibility criteria, so it's best to make enquiries early.

If you're not sure where to start, or if you experience any difficulty you can contact Shared Care Scotland on 01383 622 462 (10am-4pm) or visit www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk

Shared Care Scotland is a Scottish charity which promotes and supports the development of short break services (also known as respite care) for carers and the people they care for.

In Scotland there are an estimated 500,000 people who care for family member, partner or friend, who may be ill, disabled or dependent on drugs or alcohol.

Getting the right break at the right time is a big priority for many carers. Short breaks help keep families together and can contribute to the health and wellbeing of everyone in the caring relationship. They also help people with care needs to maintain or make new relationships, learn new skills and be included in their community.

Shared Care Scotland wants carers to have confidence in the quality and reliability of services, and wants carers fully involved in decisions about short break services in their area.

With the right kind of short breaks, families *will* cope and *will* continue to support and care.

Depression Alliance Scotland The telephone information is open throughout the day, five days a week, in order to meet public demand. The opening hours are Monday-Friday 11am-1pm and 2pm-4pm. If you or someone you know is experiencing low mood or depression please do not hesitate to phone on 0845 123 23 20 or send an email to info@dascot.org A new service offering support for people to use 'Living life to the Full Interactive' is an online programme based on cognitive behaviour therapy. You will work through a six session course and your DAS support worker will be there to offer 4-6 short telephone or email contacts over 6 weeks to help you get the most out of it. Interested? Email info@dascot.org.uk or call 0845 123 23 20.

Looking for funding? The Co-operative Community fund gives grants of between £100 and £2000 to community, voluntary, or self help groups to run projects that meet the following criteria. To be successful a group must carry out positive work in the community and their project must:

Address a community issue

Provide a good long-term benefit to the communitySupport co-operative values and principles

Ideally be innovative in its approach

Your group doesn't have to be a registered charity to be eligible. To read more about the Fund and fill out an application form visit their website <http://www.co-operative.coop/membership> and click on 'Community Fund.

PUBLICATIONS and LEAFLETS

Many of the following publications could be of benefit to users of services and their carers. They are all available free of charge from the WICCF office.

The **WICCF 'flier'** of voluntary sector and statutory services in the Western Isles.

The **WICCF Directory of Services**. A comprehensive booklet of services, benefits and allowances.

Paying for Home Care Charges. (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar)

This leaflet gives information on who has to pay for the home care service and how the charges are worked out.

Carers and Their Rights (Carers Scotland)

This guide provides information on the legal rights of carers as they apply in Scotland. It is not intended as a definitive statement of the law.

Caring and Consent (NHS Scotland)

The leaflet is for you if you are the carer of an adult who is unable to make decisions. The leaflet explains:

- the rights of people who are unable to consent (agree) to medical treatment;
- the rights of their carers to be involved in decisions about their health care, and the rights of a legal proxy (someone allowed by law to act someone else's behalf).

The information is based on the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act.

Personal safety at home and in the street - advice for older people (Help the Aged)

This booklet gives advice on what precautions to take—both at home and when going out—to ensure personal safety and the security of your property. There is also a security checklist for you to cut out and pin up which includes a space for you to write down phone numbers of your local services so they are handy if you need to verify the identity of a doorstep caller.

RareShare <http://www.rareshare.org>

RareShare is a new online network dedicated to connecting patients, families and healthcare professionals affected by rare medical disorders.

The site currently hosts over 675 unique communities, each dedicated to a specific rare disorder. These communities are free to join and offer members access to several tools, including collaborative pages where members can contribute tips and other disorder-specific information, community forums where members can discuss issues and community experts who help guide members to additional reliable resources on the web.

RareShare hopes to develop the site further. Ideas for the future include personal journals, which can be made public or kept private for friends and family; information about upcoming and in-progress clinical trials; a messaging system to allow members the ability to communicate privately with other members; and broader disease-group communities, such as a community for all Lysosomal Storage diseases.

We would love to hear from you! Please feel free to contribute to the Newsletter. You could tell us about your caring experience and how it's changed your life—for the better or worse; or you can write to let off steam about services received—or not received (anonymously if you wish); or if you have any funny stories, experiences etc; or if there are articles that you want to see in it. Contact Katie Ann—details are on the front page.