

# **Carers Newsletter**

## **Autumn 2007**

**A newsletter for carers in Newcastle,  
produced by Carers Centre Newcastle.**



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# **Dame Denise drops in**



**Dame  
Denise Platt  
(middle,  
front row)  
meets carers  
at the Carers  
Centre**

**The Carers Centre was honoured and delighted to receive a visit from the Chair of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), Dame Denise Platt, recently. CSCI is a non-departmental government body responsible for inspecting and assessing the performance of all social care services in England and through this, in their own words, to “improve social care and stamp out bad practice”.**

**Dame Denise popped in to see us during a tour of local authority and voluntary sector services in Newcastle.**

**Afterwards, she wrote to Social Services who had arranged the visit, to say how much she had enjoyed it. Caroline Thomas, Acting Director of Adult Services told us “Thank you very much for**

**all your input in making Dame Denise Platt's visit so successful. I know she was very impressed."**

**Carers Centre Management Committee member, carer, Trevor Moon said "It was nice to be able to talk to someone who was so aware of carers' issues and who is able to influence things at a senior government level."**

## **Carers Lead Officer**

**There's good news for carers in Newcastle as Social Services announce the appointment of a Carers Lead Officer. The establishment of this post shows an increased commitment from the City Council to tackling carers' issues in the City.**

**Alex Dunlop, currently working for Durham County Council's equalities team, has been appointed to the post and will commence duties on 10<sup>th</sup> September. Alex is a qualified social worker and has worked previously in a social services team specialising in Carers Assessments.**

**Cathy Bull, Acting Head of Adult Services, Newcastle Social Services, told us "I am delighted to have someone with Alex's experience and commitment to carers joining the Council to help us move forward on some of the big issues**

mentioned in the Government's New Deal for Carers."

Priorities for the Carers Lead Officer will be helping to deliver the city-wide Newcastle Carers Strategy and helping to design new developments for carers, including an emergency respite scheme.

## **Your Money Matters**

Your Money Matters is a money advice service operating in the east end of Newcastle which is designed especially for older people and their carers. Run by Help The Aged in conjunction with Barclays Bank, the service offers one-to-one advice to individuals as well as money awareness sessions to groups. The advice service covers a wide range of issues including loans, budgeting, Chip & PIN, Credit cards, debt, welfare benefits and using cashpoint machines. For more information or to book an appointment telephone Mike Smith on 0191 261 6412 or call into Caring Hands, 34 Wretham Place, Shieldfield, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1XU.

# **At the Carers Centre**

## **Carers & Friends Christmas party**

**Join us at the Old Assembly Rooms on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December for our Carers & Friends Christmas lunch and disco. The event is open to all carers and friends of the Carers Centre, so if you want to come along with the person you care for or if you are a former carer, everybody is welcome to join us for this festive get-together. The event starts at 11.45 for lunch at 12 noon, followed by dancing until 3.30pm while the bar closes at 4pm. Tickets for this event are £16.00 each but current carers can request a discounted ticket for £6.00 subsidised by the Carers Centre.**

## **Menu**

**Cream of vegetable soup with bread roll.**

**Roast Northumbrian turkey with stuffing, chipolata sausage and cranberry sauce; or vegetable moussaka and salad. All served with seasonal vegetables and roast potatoes.**

**Christmas pudding and warm brandy sauce; or Lemon delice.**

**Coffee and cream.**

## **Give your support to Raymond**

**Daring carer, Raymond Watson is doing a parachute jump in October to raise money for the Carers Centre. Raymond told us “I want to raise awareness of carers because they are unsung heroes.” Raymond has kindly offered to donate the proceeds of his jump to the Carers Centre ‘Carers & Friends Christmas party’. If you would like to sponsor Raymond you can do so through the Carers Centre; just ask Kerry and she will take your details.**

## **Mental Capacity Act - information event**

**The Carers Centre is running an information event on the Mental Capacity Act on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> October, 10.30am to 12.30pm at Brunswick Methodist Church, to explain to carers how it will affect them and the people they care for. This is a free event with buffet lunch and places are limited so booking is essential. Telephone Kerry at the Carers Centre to book you place on 0191 260 3030.**

**The Mental Capacity Act provides protection to adults (aged 16yrs+) who lose the mental capacity to make some or all decisions for themselves. This may be as a result of a condition, illness or disability that has been present from birth or that has occurred at some point in their lives, including the effects of drugs or alcohol. The Act**

received Royal Assent in 2005 and is being implemented in two phases this year, coming into force on 1st October.

## **Expert Patient Programme ‘Looking after me’ course**

**This is a free self-management course for carers. As its name implies, the course is about you making time to look after your own health needs. It aims to help you take more control of your situation and make a difference to your life. The course looks at:**

- Relaxation techniques**
- Dealing with tiredness**
- Exercise**
- Healthy eating**
- Coping with depression**
- Communication with family, friends and professionals**
- Planning for the future**

**This is a six week course which runs at MEA House, 10.30am to 12.30pm (followed by a free buffet lunch) on Monday the 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> October and the 5<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> November. Booking is essential; please contact Kerry at the Carers Centre on telephone 0191 260 3030.**

## **Gardening Group**

Thank you to everyone who expressed interest in our new gardening group. The group is now set to get underway and is waiting anxiously to find out if its application for an allotment at Moorside Allotment Association in Fenham has been successful. In the meantime, members will be working with prize winning gardener and former carer John Reid at his allotment at Moorside, learning about harvesting and soil preparation. If you are interested in joining the group, no experience is needed and a warm welcome is assured. Telephone Jane Sivell on 0191 260 3030 to find out more.

## **Carers Rambling Group**

Walking is great exercise and can improve your confidence, stamina, energy and well-being, as well as helping to relieve stress. If you are reasonably fit and would like to get out and about with a friendly group, then the Carers Rambling Group is for you. Run by NTW NHS Trust and Newcastle Primary Care Trust, the group has two gentle, low-level walks remaining in its programme for this year: Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October, Kielder, Bull Crag (four miles); and Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November, Simonside Forest, Rothbury (three miles).

**For more information telephone Gill Foster on 0191 223 2368 or mobile 07713 739 215 or Barbara Quinn on 0191 277 2355 or mobile 07939 281 915.**

## **The Benefits Column written by Newcastle Welfare Rights Service**

**You may be wondering about the changes to certain benefits that are happening as a result of the government's welfare reforms. One of the changes, planned for November 2008, affects Incapacity Benefit and Income Support (for incapacity for work). As many carers receive these benefits in their own right you may have concerns about the changes. The following information may answer some of your questions but if you find you need further help please see the 'How to find out more' section at the end of this article.**

**I already get Incapacity Benefit. What will happen to me in 2008?**

**Those already getting Incapacity Benefit and or Income Support (for incapacity) will remain on those benefits. However, it looks as if existing claimants will eventually be transferred onto a new allowance called Employment and Support**

**Allowance. The time scales for when this will happen have not been announced yet.**

### **Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)**

**ESA is the new benefit which will replace Incapacity Benefit and Income Support (for incapacity) for new claims from November 2008. It will have contributory and means tested parts. People will be able to claim on the basis of their National Insurance contributions, on low income grounds or both. Currently, in order to claim a benefit through the 'incapacity route' a claimant must satisfy the Dept for Work and Pensions that s/he is incapable of working. Most people have to do this by satisfying either the Own Occupation test or the Personal Capability Assessment.**

### **How will the ESA work?**

**All new claimants from November 2008 will have to apply for ESA instead of Incapacity Benefit or Income Support (for incapacity). The basic rate of the allowance, which is equivalent to Job Seekers Allowance, will be paid for up to 13 weeks. During this time the claimant will attend a work-focused interview and go through a revised version of the Personal Capability Assessment.**

**Claimants assessed as being capable of 'work related activity' will then receive an additional component as long as they comply with certain conditions. Some people with severe disabilities**

**will get a different additional component with no conditions attached.**

**Some claimants will get extra amounts paid with their ESA if they get Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance.**

**What is the revised Personal Capability Assessment (PCA)?**

**The new PCA has been redesigned to look more at what a person can do and what ‘interventions’ would help a person back to work. The mental health part of the assessment has been extensively revised to make it more like the physical health assessment. The claimant will need to score 15 points on either physical health or mental health grounds in order to be found incapable of work. There are a few circumstances where a claimant will be treated as having limited capability for work, but there are no plans to exempt people from the new PCA.**

**The second part of the new PCA assesses whether a claimant has “limited capability for work related activity” due to “a severe level of functional limitation”. Some claimants will be treated as falling into this group because of their condition. Claimants who pass this part of the new PCA will get the additional support component.**

**Claimants who are assessed as being capable of work related activity will get ESA with the work related activity component. Claimants aged 18+ in this group are also subject to the third part of the new PCA which is the requirement to attend a work focused health related assessment.**

### **Warning!**

**In all cases, failure to attend an assessment without good cause may lead to benefit being stopped or reduced.**

### **How to find out more**

- Book a confidential one-to-one session with Newcastle Welfare Rights Service at Carers Centre Newcastle (see front page for contact details). Appointments are available between 10am and 12 noon on the third Friday of every month; or**
  - Ring Newcastle Welfare Rights Service on 0191 277 2633 to speak to the Carers Welfare Rights Officer; or**
  - Find out where your nearest advice service is by contacting Carers Centre Newcastle or looking for the booklet “Where to get advice in Newcastle” available from the Civic Centre or any public Social Services office; or**
- Visit the Welfare Rights website at [www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/welfarerights)**

# **Send a postcard to Gordon Brown**

**“Carers are being short changed by an outdated benefits system that doesn’t recognise their contribution. They are fed up of simply being told they are valued.. They want more than words. They want financial recognition.” Carers UK 2007**

**Carers UK is running a campaign to improve the financial recognition of carers through better benefits for carers. As part of the ‘Real change not short change’ campaign they are asking carers to support the campaign by sending a postcard to Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, asking him to take a fresh look at carers’ benefits to help carers work; help carers who are unable to work; and help older carers enjoy a decent retirement.**

**If you want to take part in the campaign contact the Carers Centre to get a ‘Real change not short change’ postcard. Internet users can sign the postcard online at [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)**

# **Did you know? Tips and stories from our Carer Support Team**

- **Do you need help with using your computer? Well, Paul Caddle from the ICT Outreach Project, based at Newcastle Disability Forum, can help. Paul will come to your house for an introductory meeting to talk to you about what help you need, for example, emailing, shopping on the Internet, word processing. He will then put together a programme of sessions, based on your learning needs. Paul's service is free to anyone with a disability or mental health problem, living in Newcastle. To find out more, telephone Paul on 0191 285 4556.**
- **One of our carers is studying with The Open College of the Arts which is an open-access college with no age limit and no formal qualification requirement. You can study at home at your own pace, choose from 40 courses in 15 subject areas and start at any time of the year. There are courses on art & design, creative writing, photography, garden design and many more. People on benefits may receive a £100 deduction and there is also a £50 discount for booking online. To find out more about how to tap into your artistic streak, look them up online at [www.oca-uk.com](http://www.oca-uk.com).**

- **Male carers are now meeting regularly at noon on the third Tuesday of each month at Moot pub which is next to Manors Metro Station. This is a chance for men in a caring role to meet up with others in a similar situation for activities and competitions, have a quiet drink, relax and have a chat. For more information, contact the Carers Support Team at the Carers Centre.**

## **My visit to Minsteracres by Mary**

**“My first view of Minsteracres was the awe-inspiring avenue of American pine trees which lead to the monastery. You have to see them to believe it. I looked up and felt dizzy, they are so high! The grounds around are so beautiful, the whole place is very impressive.**

**I was shown to my own bedroom which was comfortable and warm. There were only a few of us on the special carers retreat so we had our own rooms.**

**The day started with a good breakfast and then we had discussion time, sharing our experiences about caring. You can take part in a therapy like relaxation, writing, painting or going for a walk, and we even had French dancing! The food was**

**fabulous and you are really looked after and waited on.**

**For me the retreat was a real personal experience. It gives carers time to think of themselves for once. They can share with each other their emotions and feelings knowing everyone will understand. We had lots of fun and I made friends with people I had never met before. When we were coming away, everyone was hugging. I'm definitely going back again in October and would urge any carer in need of a bit of pampering to go too."**

**The next carers retreat is from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> October. The cost is only £25 for 2 nights all inclusive. You can go by train and get picked up at Riding Mill station. For more information or to book, telephone Minsteracres on 01434 673 24.**