

Carers Winter 2006 Newsletter

For members of the Newcastle Carers Forum
Produced by Carers Centre Newcastle

Carers Rights Day

Carers Rights Day takes place on Friday 8th December. This national, annual event is spearheaded by Carers UK with the following aims:

- **Increase take-up of benefits available to carers and their families.** Estimates suggest that 40 to 60% of disability benefits go unclaimed. There are no firm statistics on the take-up of carers' benefits but it is estimated that £660 million of carers' benefits goes unclaimed each year.
- **Ensure that carers access their rights under relevant legislation.** Every year, more than two million people become carers for the first time. Those new to caring need straightforward and accessible information about their



Looking for new members – the Time Out group, seen here on a recent visit to Rosslyn Chapel. See page three.

entitlements. Time after time carers say they need clear information and this is what Carers' Rights Day is about.

- **Raise awareness of the needs of carers.** Carers want the same life chances that other people enjoy - good health, financial

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Carers Centre Newcastle is part of Newcastle Healthy City Project, reg. charity no.1060063 and is supported by Newcastle City Council and Newcastle Primary Care Trust.

Carers Rights Day (continued)

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.

- **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.*

Find out about your rights to state benefits from:

- Jobcentre Plus (for people aged under 60yrs). Telephone 0191 203 8100, Customer Services (Newcastle), Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9am to 5pm and Wednesday, 10am to 5pm.
- The Pension Service (for people aged 60yrs+). Telephone 0845 60 60 265, Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm.
- Welfare Rights – Newcastle. There is a network of welfare rights services in Newcastle provided by Newcastle City

Council and a number of voluntary organisations. They offer confidential information and advice about benefits for carers and others; some services also provide debt advice and support. Details of how to find your local service can be found at the end of the 'Benefits Column' on page 6 or right the Welfare Rights Carers Team on 0191 277 2628, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

* Extracted with kind permission from Carers UK.

MP campaigns for better deal for carers

David Clelland, local MP for Tyne Bridge, is campaigning for improved financial rights for carers. He is currently running a petition to ask the Government to introduce a sliding scale to allow carers, who juggle caring and employment, to be able to earn more without jeopardising all of their Carer Allowance entitlement. This is because, at present carers can only

earn up to £84 per week and claim Carers Allowance; however, if they earn even one penny over this they lose their entire Carers Allowance entitlement. If you would like to add your name to David's survey, petition forms can be downloaded from his website at www.david-clelland.org.uk or pick one up at the Carers Centre.

At the Carers Centre

Christmas lunch and disco

Come along and join us at the Quality Hotel (Newgate Street, Newcastle) on Friday, 15th December, 12 noon until 4pm for the Carers Centre Christmas Party. This is a great chance to get dressed up, let your hair down, have a boogie and enjoy a tasty Christmas lunch among friends. Tickets would normally be £16 per person but we are happy to announce that the Carers Centre will be subsidising the event, bringing the price down to £6.50 per person, in order to make it as accessible to many carers as possible. To make sure you get ahead of the rush, contact Kerry at the Carers Centre to book your place. Tickets must be paid for in advance.

Group takes Time Out

Time Out is a friendship group for former carers that meets once a month at the Carers Centre. It is a welcoming and informal group that focuses on conversation, friendship and social activities. Originally established as a group for people who had previously cared for someone with dementia, the Time Out group is now opening its doors to all types of former carers.

Time Out meets on the third Tuesday of every month from 2pm until 4pm. Just drop in and you will be assured of a warm welcome; or alternatively, contact Jane Sivell at the Carers Centre to find out more or if you would like someone to introduce you to the group.

Turkish Bath Group

Fancy a relaxing, de-stressing couple of hours before the Christmas rush? If you are currently caring for someone and would like a little time to yourself, why not try a Turkish Bath at the City Pool. You can swim if you like or just sit back in the hot steam taking an occasional plunge into the Jacuzzi. The Women's Group will be going on Tuesday 12 December and the Men's Group on Wednesday 13 December. Call Wendy for more details.

Evening Dining Out Group

This new group for current carers has only recently started but is already happily eating its way across the City. With visits to eateries such as Miami Blues in the Bigg Market and The Dragon House in Stowell Street already under its rapidly expanding belt, the group's next outing will be to the popular La Toscana in Leazes Park Road on Tuesday 5 December meeting at 6.30pm. If you are currently caring for someone and would like a good night out the Dining Out Group would like to welcome you on board; just contact Wendy at the Carers Centre. Christmas meal at La Toscana is £19 per person for three courses.

Theatre Group

Another new group for current carers is the Theatre Group who have just celebrated their inaugural meeting with a trip to the Theatre Royal to see The Pirates of Penzance. If you enjoy a good show and would like to make new friends the group would love you to join them for future outings; luvvies and dahlings should contact Wendy at the Carers Centre to find out more.

Help improve health and social care in your area

The Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) forums are here to make sure the public is involved in decision making about health and health services in England. There are over 400 PPI Forums, one for each NHS Trust in England with around 29 forums in the North East area.

The forums are groups of volunteers who want to help improve the health service in their local community. Members come from different backgrounds and have a range of experiences and skills. The forums are independent of the NHS and have the power to enter and inspect NHS premises as

well as gathering the views of people in the local area on health issues. By law the NHS has to listen to the PPI forum and respond to any comments they make. The forums also try to look at the wider issues affecting health such as social care and transport. The forums aim to be as inclusive as possible and to always welcome new members. If you would like more information, to tell us about an issue or to become a forum member please contact North of Tyne Patients' Voice on 01670 504 562 or email forum.support@notpv.org.uk

Secondhand equipment list is back

Secondhand equipment list is back
We recently reported that the popular second disability equipment advertising service provided by Disability North had been withdrawn. Happily, Disability North have just informed us that they have now reinstated the original

service and have added an additional feature with the addition of a website service (for which there is a small charge). Go to www.disabilitynorth.org.uk/secondhand.html or telephone 0191 284 0480.

The Benefits Column

written by Newcastle Welfare Rights Service

There are a few changes afoot which carers might want to take note of:

Newcastle Disability Benefits Centre closing

The Disability Benefits Centre at Arden House is closing. It deals with claims for Attendance Allowance (AA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA). The work is transferring to other offices.

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claims

All DLA claims which were being dealt with at Arden House have now transferred to new offices. Claims from Tyne & Wear and Northumberland (NE, SR and TD postcodes) have transferred to: Bootle Disability Benefits Centre, St Martins House, Stanley Precinct, Bootle L69 9BN; telephone 0151 934 6305, textphone 0151 934 6056.

Attendance Allowance (AA) claims

AA claims are still being dealt with at Arden House but only for a short time. This changes from 30 October, if you make a new claim, or from 20th November if you already have a claim being dealt with at Arden House. These claims transfer to: Attendance Allowance Team, Palatine House, Lancaster Road, Preston, Lancashire PR1 1HB. AA claim forms sent from Arden House from 30 October will

have prepaid return envelopes for the Preston office.

There is no direct telephone number yet for this team. You can contact them either via the Carers Allowance Unit on telephone 01253 856123, textphone 01772 899489; or via the DLA and AA Unit on telephone 08457 123456, textphone 08457 224433.

New Disability Living Allowance forms

If you request a DLA claim form from the Bootle office you will get a new style form which they are piloting. It asks for the same sort of information as the standard claim form but has tick boxes and is set out differently. If you don't want to use this form you can use a standard form which you can get by contacting the Benefit Enquiry Line on telephone 0800 88 22 00, textphone 0800 24 33 55; or you can claim on line via the Dept for Work and Pensions website www.dwp.gov.uk

Ongoing Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance claims

The regional Disability Benefits Centres only deal with claims for three months after a final decision is made. Claims are then transferred to the central Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance Unit in Blackpool.

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How to find out more

- Book a confidential one-to-one session with Newcastle Welfare Rights Service at the Carers Centre Newcastle (see front page for contact details). Appointments are available between 10am and 12noon on the third Friday of every month; or
- to find out where your nearest advice service is contact Carers Centre Newcastle; or look 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

Epilepsy Action North East

Epilepsy is the most common of all neurological conditions in the UK, yet, it is one of the least understood.

It is a 'hidden' disability that affects quality of life. For some, its unpredictability can lead to feelings of isolation, anxiety or depression; drug treatment can be a long and arduous challenge, with side-effects that can be emotionally upsetting or result in unwanted physical changes.

Epilepsy Action North East provides information and support to people affected by epilepsy. You may be a carer in need of information or the opportunity to meet other carers for

mutual support; or an individual who is living with the condition. For information or just a friendly ear, contact Bob Dennis, Regional Service Manager North East (Epilepsy Action) on telephone 0191 284 5892, mobile 0776 724 2658, email: bdennis@epilepsy.org.uk or write to him at PO Box 359, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 2DJ.

Epilepsy Action North East are currently in the process of setting up a self-help group, based on Tyneside, for people who are affected by epilepsy. Anyone who is interested in getting involved should contact Bob Dennis, as above.

Did you know?

By Wendy Harris and Trish Gair, Carer Support Service, Carers Centre Newcastle

Homeowners or private tenants who receive a qualifying benefit can apply for a grant for heating improvements and insulation up to a value of £2700? Contact the Carers Centre for a leaflet from Warm Front.

NewcastleGateshead Staying Put scheme offers 3 services to assist older owner-occupiers with repairs, improvements and adaptations to their properties. Contact the Centre for a leaflet about any of these services:

1. The Core Service can help with large jobs by identifying the work to be done, getting estimates and overseeing the work on site. They can also help with raising the money through grants or charitable sources. They charge a fee of 10% of the cost of the work.

2. The Small Repairs Service can help with small jobs for a flat fee of £5 or £10 depending on the size of the task.
3. Finally, the Trades Register can provide you with names of reputable workers for practical tasks whose rates are considered to be reasonable and who have been vetted by AnchorStayingPut.

Dribble-Bandanas makes stylish and comfortable bibs backed with towelling which look more like an accessory than a bib. They cost £10 for three and can only be ordered from the Internet at www.dribble-bandanas.co.uk

Be safe and be seen in the dark! We still have plenty of the 'See Me' shopping bags to give away. Contact Carers Centre or call in and pick one up.

Library comes to your door

Do your caring responsibilities make it difficult to visit the library? Then let the library come to you.

Newcastle City Libraries run a free home delivery service for anyone living in Newcastle who finds it difficult to visit the library due to ill health or caring responsibilities.

As well as standard print books, the service can provide information in large print and on tape. Cassette players and reading lamps are also available as well as portable IT equipment which comes with support.

For more details ask at your local library or telephone 0191 278 4200, Fax: 0191 278 4202 or email: brinkburn.centre@newcastle.gov.uk

Christmas card posting post

Save money on stamps this Christmas by using the Carers Centre internal mail service. If you visit the Centre and know other carers who come here too, just pop your cards into the special posting box, with the name of the recipient

printed clearly on the front. It is a great way to keep in touch with your friends at the Carers Centre; and don't forget to check the box whenever your in to see if there are any cards there for you.

Christmas Closing dates

The Carers Centre will be closed from 12 noon on Thursday 21st December, open as normal on Friday, 22nd December and then closed until Tuesday, 2nd January.

If you are in need of support during this time you may want to contact one of the following services: NHS Direct, telephone 0845 46 47 anytime.

The Samaritans, telephone 08457 90 90 90 anytime.

You can also get in touch with **Newcastle Social Services** over the holiday period. The area team offices will be open as normal from 8.45am until 5pm on weekdays, apart from Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Years Day. The Emergency Duty Team will operate at all other times and you can contact them on the usual Civic Centre number, which is 0191 232 8520.



We would like to wish all our readers a safe and happy Christmas and a cheerful New Year. With very best wishes from everyone at the Carers Centre.

If you have any comments about the Carers Newsletter or other services provided by Carers Centre Newcastle, or you wish to make a complaint, please contact us (see front page for contact details).



If you have any difficulties reading the Carers Newsletter, please let us know and we will make arrangements to help you with this.

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