

# CARERS NEWS

Informing carers in Croydon

November/December 2010

## Information Extravaganza Tuesday 7 December, 10 am – 4 pm

To mark Carers Rights Day 2010 the Carers' Information Service, in partnership with Croydon Council, is holding a major information event and exhibition in the Arnhem Gallery at Fairfield Halls on Tuesday 7 December, 10 am – 4 pm.



Up to 60 local voluntary and statutory agencies will be there ready to talk about what their service offers and how they may be able to help carers and those they care for.

This is a fantastic opportunity for carers to make sure they are accessing all the support that is available, and for professionals to network and find out about other organisations who might be able to help their clients.

You do not need to book a place at this event – you are welcome to just drop in; tea and coffee will be available throughout the day.

For more information call us on 020 8649 9339 or email [info@carersinfo.org.uk](mailto:info@carersinfo.org.uk).

Don't miss out on your opportunity to have your say on how Croydon Council's budget should be allocated next year. By visiting [www.croydon.gov.uk/youchoose](http://www.croydon.gov.uk/youchoose) you will have access to information such as the council's overall budget, the savings demanded by the coalition government, and the amounts spent last year on each service. You can then increase or decrease the amount spent on services such as education, housing or social care - all the while being careful not to increase Council Tax by more than 5%.

## Spending Review

The coalition Government announced its comprehensive spending review on Wednesday 20 October. It is expected that more detailed information will become available over the next few weeks, but we have read the document and have picked out the parts of the review that we think will be of most interest to carers and those they care for.

Over the next two Parliaments the Government plans to replace the current benefits system with the Universal Credit, 'an integrated payment that will ensure work always pays, with less scope for fraud and error'. In the lead up to the introduction of the Universal Benefit the Government has introduced the following changes to benefits and services:

### Families with Dependent Children

- Child Benefit will be withdrawn from families with a higher rate taxpayer from January 2013.
- Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has been withdrawn and replaced with locally managed discretionary funds.
- The 15 hours a week free early years care for all three and four year olds has been retained, and extended to all disadvantaged two year olds from 2012-13.
- To qualify for Working Tax Credit (WTC) couples with children must work 24 hours a week between them, with one partner working at least 16 hours a week.
- Parents will only be able to claim 70% of childcare costs through the childcare element of WTC.
- The child element of WTC will increase by £30 in 2011-12 and £50 in 2012-13.

### Housing

- Social landlords will be able to charge new tenants higher rents, somewhere between current market and social rents.
- The age threshold for the Shared Room Rate in Housing Benefit has been increased from 25 to 35.
- The changes to the Support for Mortgage Interest scheme that were due to expire in January 2011 have been extended for a further year.



### Older People

- Many key benefits for older people have been retained, such as Winter Fuel Payments and concessionary bus travel.
- The State Pension will be increased in line with earnings, prices or by 2.5%, whichever is highest.
- The equalization of state pension age will be speeded up so that women's State Pension age reaches 65 in November 2018. The State Pension age will then increase to 66 for both men and women from December 2018 to April 2020.

### People on Low Incomes

- Total household benefit payments will be capped so that no family can receive more in welfare than the average take home pay of a working household. From 2013 this cap will be £500 per week for a couple and lone parent households, and £350 a week for single adult households. All Disability Living Allowance claimants, War Widows, and working families claiming working tax credits will be exempt from the cap.

### People with Disabilities

- Employment and Support Allowance (contributory not income based) for those in the Work Related Activity Group will only be paid for one year; after that claimants will be moved onto Job Seeker's Allowance.
- The mobility component of Disability Living Allowance will be withdrawn from those recipients who go into residential care.

For more information on the Spending Review visit [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk). To find out how these changes might affect your benefits call Croydon Welfare Benefits Advice Line on 0800 731 5920 or the Benefits Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00.



## Are You Caring for Your Pension?

Retirement and claiming your State Pension may still seem a long way off, especially as the Government keeps raising the state retirement age, but it is very important that you do make sure you are building up qualifying years for the State Pension as it could have a major impact on your income in later life.

Many people think that everyone automatically receives a State Pension when they reach retirement age, but this is not true. People earn their entitlement to the State Pension by building up qualifying years of National Insurance (NI) contributions – either through wages or by receiving certain benefits.

Many carers find that they have to reduce their hours, or give up work altogether, as a result of their caring role and this may lead to them not earning enough to pay NI contributions for the whole year and so not building up qualifying years. For some carers in this situation they may be able to claim Carer's Allowance (CA) or Income Support (IS) as a carer, and if so the Government will credit them with NI contributions. However, a significant number of carers are not able to claim CA because they:

- Do not care for 35 hours or more a week
- Look after more than one person but no single person for 35 hours or more a week
- Care for someone who doesn't claim disability benefits
- Care for someone for whom someone else is claiming Carer's Allowance
- Combine caring with self-employment.

For those unable to claim CA or IS as a carer, the Government introduced Carer's Credit in April this year. Carer's Credit is a weekly NI credit awarded to carers who meet the following criteria:

- Caring for at least 20 hours a week
- Caring for someone who receives Attendance Allowance or the middle or highest rate care component of Disability Living Allowance.\*

\*If the person you are caring for does not receive one of these benefits a health or social care professional can sign a certificate confirming the need for care is at an appropriate level.

The Government announced plans on 25 October 2010 to radically overhaul the State Pension and introduce a new flat rate that will do away with means testing for older people. However, these plans are only at discussion stage and have yet to be agreed with the Treasury, so we would urge carers to still claim Carer's Credit as there is no certainty if or when these State Pension changes will take effect."

If you think you might be eligible for Carer's Credit call the Carer's Allowance Unit on 0845 608 4321 or visit [www.direct.gov.uk/carerscredit](http://www.direct.gov.uk/carerscredit) for an application pack.

## Equality for Carers

In 2007, Sharon Coleman, a carer for her son Oliver, took her ex-employers to court claiming 'disability discrimination by association' following harassment and bullying at work after her son was born with complex disabilities. The employment tribunal who heard Sharon's case in London decided to refer it to the European Court of Justice (ECJ), as the European Union's Equal Treatment Directive allows for a wider interpretation of disability discrimination than UK law.

In January 2008 Sharon Coleman won the initial stages of her case when the Advocate-General (senior advisor to the ECJ) agreed that she had suffered 'discrimination by association', and in December 2008 the ECJ followed the Advocate-General's advice and ruled that EU laws protecting people with disabilities from discrimination not only apply to the person themselves, but also their carer.

Following this ruling from the ECJ the UK Government introduced the Equality Bill into the House of Commons in April 2009, and on Friday 1 October 2010 the Equality Act 2010 came into force in the UK. The Equality Act 2010 replaces existing anti-discrimination laws and draws together this legislation into a single, simpler, stronger Act. The Equality Act 2010 clarifies the protection working carers are entitled to in the workplace, and bans the direct discrimination and harassment of a carer when shopping for goods or services, using facilities such as public libraries and cafes and using services such as public transport.

For more information about the Equality Act 2010 visit [www.equalities.gov.uk/equality\\_act\\_2010.aspx](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010.aspx).

## Share the Wisdom

A new online resource, [www.netbuddy.org.uk](http://www.netbuddy.org.uk), offers hundreds of simple, yet ingenious solutions to everyday issues encountered by parents, carers, and professionals working with people who have a learning disability.

From creating calm before bedtime to preventing panic attacks on the bus, Netbuddy lists over 700 practical tips and suggestions from people with first-hand experience of special needs.

Netbuddy Co-Director Deborah Gundle, who's son has learning disabilities, said: "The idea for Netbuddy came about when my son was small. I spent so much time and energy solving day-to-day problems, which I felt sure other people had overcome before me. I had no idea where to go to find the solutions I was looking for, and I started to think it would be really useful to create a practical resource." (Source Netbuddy)

People visiting Netbuddy can use the site in several ways: they can either search for tips in areas such as 'routines' or 'sleep' or they can offer their own ideas. They can download videos and talk to other people on the interactive forum, or search for practical help in the information packs.



# Carers' Information Service News

Our popular training sessions for carers continue in 2011.

## **Solution Focused Therapy Follow Up**

Tuesday 11 January, 10 am – 4 pm

*Only for those carers who previously attended our Solution Focused Therapy training sessions in April and May this year.*

## **Anger Management**

Tuesday 8 February, 10 am – 4 pm

*This course will cover behavioural techniques such as relaxation and visualisation that can be used to control anger, and will look at stress management and dealing with low self-esteem and negative thoughts.*

## **Hand Reflexology**

Tuesday 8 March, 10 am – 3 pm

*Relax as you learn how to give and receive a hand or arm massage.*

## **Coming Soon...Caring and Me**

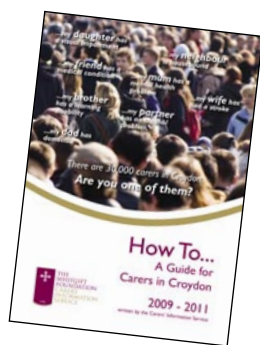
Caring and Me is a new six-week course for carers which aims to give participants time to focus on issues such as emotional wellbeing, health and diet and relaxation techniques. Sessions will run for three hours on a weekly basis at a central Croydon venue. The style of the course will be 'solution focused' which aims to focus less on a person's problems and more on identifying the strengths and resources they have to alter their future. The course will begin in March 2011 and further details and dates of the course will be available in the January/February edition of *Carers News*.

All our training sessions are free of charge, and lunch is provided on full day courses. Please ensure that you are able to attend for a full session before booking a place as our courses are always oversubscribed. For further details or to book a place contact Ruth Laws, Volunteer and Training Coordinator, on 020 8649 6280 or email [ruthlaws@carersinfo.org.uk](mailto:ruthlaws@carersinfo.org.uk).

## **How To Guide Updates**

Our *How To Guide* condenses the most relevant local and national services for carers into one volume, so that carers have access to a single, reliable source of information. The current guide was published in early 2009 and since then there have been changes to some organisations – in response to this we have produced an amendment sheet to go with your hard copy of the guide listing all the changes so far, ensuring that the *How To Guide* remains as useful and up to date as ever. You can access the amendment sheet on our website (this version of the amendment sheet is also constantly updated), or you can contact us to request one be sent to you.

We still have plenty of *How To Guides* available, and any professional who would like multiple copies of the guide is welcome to contact us on 020 8649 9339 or email [info@carersinfo.org.uk](mailto:info@carersinfo.org.uk) to arrange to come to our office to collect as many copies as they would like.



**Don't forget that you can keep up to date with events and activities for carers by subscribing to our e-bulletin, *What's New for Carers?***

**To subscribe, email [jennyjones@carersinfo.org.uk](mailto:jennyjones@carersinfo.org.uk).**

## **Carers' Information Service Survey**

Enclosed with this edition of *Carers News* is a survey asking you questions about you, your caring role and the person you care for. The survey also asks you about the services the Carers' Information Service provides, whether you have used them and if so how beneficial these services have been. Please, please take a moment to complete this survey and send it back to us using our freepost address, which you will find on the form. The survey is also available on our website, [www.carersinfo.org.uk](http://www.carersinfo.org.uk). Your responses will help us plan how to deliver services in the future and could help us secure much needed funding to continue services such as our free training for carers and the production of the *How To Guide*. Responses received by Friday 10 December will be entered into a prize draw and could win a £25 Marks and Spencer voucher.

## **Carers Activities Fund**

As mentioned in the previous edition of *Carers News* we have been able to give grants to over 15 new and existing carers support projects thanks to the Carers Activities Fund - and we thought we would share with you some of the success stories behind those grants.

### **The Turkish Youth and Community Association (TYCA)**

was given a grant to set up a Turkish-speaking carers support group. This group is now up and running and meets every Thursday, 10 am – 4 pm, at Cornerstone House. Carers, including young carers, can turn up any time during the day and are able to access advice and counselling, social activities, benefits advice and share experiences of being a carer. Support is also available out of hours to carers who are part of this group. In addition to the Thursday group carers can drop in to TYCA, Monday to Friday, 11 am – 2 pm, for support. For more information on TYCA and how it supports carers call Nilay Emek on 020 8665 0425 or 07764 273 293 or email [nilay\\_tyca@hotmail.com](mailto:nilay_tyca@hotmail.com).

The **Parkinson's UK Croydon Branch** runs a support group for people with Parkinson's and their carers who live in the north of Croydon, called 'The Other Half'. The group meets on the third Thursday of the month, 2 – 4 pm, at Cornerstone House. With money from the Carers Activities Fund the group held a pamper day on 16 September for 36 of its members. The day started with an exercise routine, followed by laughter therapy. After a delicious home-cooked lunch there were talks from an occupational therapist and an ex-Parkinson's Nurse Specialist, and hand, neck and shoulder massages were on offer all afternoon. For more information about 'The Other Half' call Monique Martial on 020 8653 2179.

The **Blessing Family Association** held a Dance and Music Workshop on 26 June for young carers from a refugee background. Twelve young carers attended the day at Palmcroy House and enjoyed the chance to take a break from their caring role and spend time with their peers. For more information about the Blessing Family Association call 020 8684 0965.

The **Face-2-Face support group** for parents who have a child with a disability or special need meets on the third Wednesday of the month, 12 noon – 2 pm, at Castle Hill Early Years Centre. The group used a grant from the Carers Activities Fund to buy craft supplies such as pottery sets and card-making kits, and to fund a home cooked meal to be enjoyed at each session. The group also has plans to start a book club and to hold a relaxation session. For more information about Face-2-Face call Paula Evans on 020 8667 0207.

# Local News

## Work and Caring

Would you like to combine your caring responsibilities with paid work?

Would you like to take part in training that might help you find work in the future?

Jobcentre Plus can help by funding alternative care while you undertake training. The training does not have to be directly linked to an offer of employment, it could simply be improving and updating your skills to increase your chances of work, but it does need to be training that has been approved by the Jobcentre. Jobcentre Plus also offers carers one-to-one advice and support from dedicated personal advisors. Engagement with these services from Jobcentre Plus is entirely voluntary and you will not be made to sign on as looking for work, nor will you lose your Carer's Allowance.

jobcentreplus

For more information visit

[www.direct.gov.uk/en/CaringForSomeone/CarersAndEmployment](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/CaringForSomeone/CarersAndEmployment) or you can call Colm Cronin, Borough Partnership Manager at Croydon Jobcentre Plus, on 020 8465 8667 or email [colm.cronin@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:colm.cronin@jobcentreplus.gsi.gov.uk).

## Make Me Smile Again!



South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (SLaM) has launched *Make Me Smile Again!* and is asking SLaM members (both individuals and groups) to submit an idea that could potentially improve patient experience, increase social inclusion or promote mental wellbeing. All submissions will be taken into consideration (only one submission per person) and the deadline for applications is 31 December 2010. Successful applicants will be notified in February 2011 and grants of between £50 and £750 will be awarded in March 2011 to enable you to carry out your suggestion.

For more information about *Make Me Smile Again!* or becoming a member of SLaM call Carol Stevenson on 020 3228 2441 or email [membership@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:membership@slam.nhs.uk).

## Counselling for Parents

Parents in Partnership (PIP) is offering parents who live in Croydon, and have a child under five who has special needs, the opportunity to access counselling. Counselling sessions can be very helpful to parent carers who may be coming to terms with a child's diagnosis, or are struggling to cope with their caring role and the impact it may be having on their life.

If you think that you could benefit from PIP's counselling service, or would like more information, call Hira Bhandari, PIP's counsellor, on 07775 665 786 or email [pip.hirabhandari@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:pip.hirabhandari@hotmail.co.uk). You will be offered an initial session to discuss your needs and to determine whether counselling is appropriate for you. If counselling is appropriate then PIP will usually offer 12 sessions of counselling on a weekly or fortnightly basis at a time and venue convenient to you.

## Befrienders Needed

Action For Children is looking for volunteers for its befriending scheme for children and young people in Croydon who have a disability. The befriending scheme aims to give young disabled people in Croydon the opportunity to develop their independence and social skills, improve their social life and at the same time give their families a break from their caring role.

Action for Children needs enthusiastic, supportive and friendly people to volunteer as befrienders, a role that will involve:

- Weekly or fortnightly contacts (for three or more hours) with the child or young person you are matched with
- Accompanying the child or young person to activities such as cinema trips, cycle rides and ten pin bowling
- Providing emotional and practical support where appropriate.

Training will be provided before you meet the child or young person you are matched with, and further training, funding and support will be available throughout your time as a befriender.

For more information call Ed Whatley on 020 7254 9408 or email [edward.whatley@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:edward.whatley@actionforchildren.org.uk).

Alternatively visit [www.actionforchildren.org.uk/volunteers](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/volunteers) where you can find more details and an application form.

## Crossroads Care Croydon

Are you a working carer? Crossroads Care Croydon would like to talk to carers who are currently combining work with their caring responsibilities, or have previous experience of this. It will take just five minutes of your time to complete an easy online or telephone survey. To complete the survey online go to [www.surveymonkey.com/s/2MH255C](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2MH255C), or to complete it over the phone call Crossroads Care Croydon on 020 8667 9893 (if you would like they will be happy to call you back to save your phone bill).

Crossroads Care Croydon is currently piloting a secure, online personal network called Tyze and are looking for carers to take part. Tyze enables carers to create an individual online network that makes it easier for friends, family, neighbours and carers to keep in touch and make plans. The site is confidential and only people chosen by the carer; and where possible the cared for; are allowed access. If you would like to find out more about Tyze, email [linda@croydoncrossroads.org.uk](mailto:linda@croydoncrossroads.org.uk).

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Designed by Croydon Voluntary Action 020 8683 5911

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