Happy New Year From West Cumbria Carers

Another year has flown by and it has been a big year for West Cumbria Carers. Since January 2014 we’ve been in touch with over 500 new Carers, had trips to Newcastle, Ambleside, and the cinema, and held a number of training courses from back care to singing lessons. 2014 saw a number of changes in how we work as a result of changes to our funding. We launched our new Carers Meets, a chance for Carers to get together and get information from various organisations and services in Cumbria. We appointed former Carers Health Worker Gillian Walker to become our Benefits Worker, and she now runs free Benefits Clinics across Allerdale and Copeland. We redesigned our website to make it more user friendly and created our Twitter account. We also launched our LPA service at the start of 2014 and this has proven to be very popular.

2014 also saw a number of staff changes. We said a sad farewell to Clarice Nichol, Lisa Forrester, and Nia-Maria Quinlan, whilst Joanne Carter went on maternity leave. We’ve been joined by Abbey Williamson, Malcolm Pritchard, Andrea Sowden, Ann Bruce, Eleanor Wakefield, and Tammy Horsewood. We celebrated the end of 2014 with a fantastic Christmas meal at the Hundith Hill Hotel, and it was lovely to see so many of you there. We are very excited about what 2015 will bring. We will be continuing our programme of Carers Meets, Benefits Clinics, Relaxation sessions, and Carers Clinics, and you can find full details inside this newsletter. We also have a number of other activities planned, including further trips to the cinema, first aid training, and a big awareness raising event planned for Carers Week 2015. So from all of us, we wish you a happy new year.

Free! Join Us at Workington Plaza Cinema for a Free Showing of Testament of Youth

We are delighted that once again we are able to offer Carers a free trip to the cinema. Join us on Tuesday 24th February at 2pm for a showing of Testament of Youth.

Based on the memoirs of the same name by Vera Brittain, the film tells the tale of how Vera postponed her studies at Oxford University to serve as a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse in London and abroad. After the war she returns to Oxford to read history and later becomes a writer, feminist and pacifist and has been awarded four out of five stars by the Daily Telegraph.

You must book your place in advance, by Tuesday 10th February. Call 01900 821 976.

Donations From Dancing – £627 Raised by Belfagan Morris Group

We would like to issue a really big thank you to the Belfagan Women’s Morris Dance Group. By asking members of the public to donate during their numerous performances in 2014, the group have raised a fantastic £627.07 for West Cumbria Carers.

Belfagan have a long history of raising money for charities through their events, and we are very grateful to have been chosen this year. If you would like to learn more about them, visit their website: http://www.belfagan.blogspot.co.uk/

We use donations to fund various activities, such as ice skating for Young Carers, and relaxation courses for Adult Carers. If you would like to raise money on our behalf, or simply donate, you can find out more information on our website.

Date For Your Diary – Carers Conference 2015

The five Carers organisations in Cumbria are joining up to hold two county-wide conferences for Carers. The first one will take place in Barrow during Carers Week 2015 on Wednesday 10th June, with a second one planned for later in the year in the north of the county. Further details will be in our next newsletter and online.
Do You Need Help With Claiming Personal Independence Payment or Carers Allowance?

Are you struggling with applications for Council Tax reductions or Attendance Allowance? Our Benefits Worker Gillian runs regular Benefits Clinics across West Cumbria. You can get free information and support to access benefits. Gillian will check you entitlements to benefits and funds available and assist you with applications. Recently, Gillian helped a Carer who looks after his wife who has dementia.

George (not his real name), had initially refused any benefit support. He and his wife were both retired professionals and felt that they shouldn’t be entitled to any extra money. George also worried about what people would think if they knew he was claiming benefits.

George met with Gillian at a Benefits Clinic held at his local library. He received advice and support to claim Attendance Allowance and he was also found to be eligible for a Council Tax reduction as his wife has an enduring mental illness. Attendance Allowance is only one of the benefits available to people living with a long term illness or disability. It is a tax free non means tested benefit which helps with the extra costs you incur if you are ill or disabled. The benefit amount is based on the help and support a person needs. George now has a cleaner who helps take a little pressure of him and it frees up his time to support his wife.

Depending on your circumstances there are other options available for financial support through different benefits and funding sources. If you are struggling financially because of ill health or are in a caring role for someone then book an appointment with Gillian at one of our library clinics, where we can look at your circumstances and identify what support is available.

Clinics are held as follows:

Allerdale:
- Keswick Library: 1st Wednesday of the month, 10am-12pm
- Maryport Library: 3rd Thursday of the month, 10am-12pm
- Silloth Library: 2nd Wednesday of the month, 10am-12pm
- Wigton Library: 4th Thursday of the month, 2pm-4pm

Copeland:
- Millom Library: 1st Tuesday of the month, 10am-12pm
- Seascale Library: 2nd Tuesday of the month, 1pm-3pm
- Whitehaven Library: 3rd Tuesday of the month, 10am-12pm

Appointments must be booked in advance. Call 01900 821 976 to book your slot.

SERVICES AND SUPPORT

Why Henry Would Recommend Getting a Lasting Power of Attorney

At a recent event a former Carer spoke to one of our support workers about his experiences both with using the Court of Protection and a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA).

Henry (not his real name), was unaware of the Lasting Power of Attorney process, and therefore did not apply for one when his wife first began to show signs of dementia. As his wife’s condition deteriorated, Henry needed to take on more and more responsibility for her financial affairs. Henry and his wife did have a joint bank account, but his wife had a number of investments in her own name that Henry needed to access. Sadly, Henry’s wife lost the mental capacity to consent to Henry taking on this responsibility, and this meant it was too late to apply for a Lasting Power of Attorney.

Henry was left with just one option, and that was to begin the long and arduous process of applying to the Court of Protection. The Court of Protection is a specialist legal service provided by the government that makes decisions regarding the property, financial affairs, and health and well-being of a person who is considered unable to make those decisions themselves.

For Henry, this was “a complicated business” and very “invasive.” He explained that the process took around six months to complete, during that time he was unable to access his wife’s investments to help pay for her care. It was also costly, and today an application to the Court of Protection costs £400 to start the process with an additional £500 fee levied once the court has held a hearing. Whilst this money can often be reclaimed back from the funds of the incapacitated person, it can be a large expense to find upfront.

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Once Henry began the process, he was required to provide detailed information about himself and other family members, something he found be quite intrusive. Once the court order was in place, he was then required to provide detailed statements of the accounts each year to show where he had spent any money. This cost him around £200 to submit the account. Furthermore, any additional expenses over and above what had been agreed for the monthly expenditure for his wife’s care required an additional application process. For Henry, this meant that when his wife required a stairlift there was a long wait before he could access the funds to do so.

Sadly, Henry’s wife passed away in 2009. His experiences with the Court of Protection have led him to grant his children a Power of Attorney for himself, should a similar situation arise. He did not want his children to go through the same difficult and costly procedure that he himself endured. When asked if with hindsight whether he would have got an LPA in place for his wife when they were still able to do so, he simply stated “definitely.”

With a Lasting Power of Attorney, you can nominate a trusted person to take control of your affairs if you later become unable to manage them yourself. With an LPA, you can choose to have it used by your trusted person / people either when you wish to do so, or when you lose capacity to manage your affairs. This ensures that once the LPA is in place, you are still in control until you are unable to make decisions.

An LPA can only be granted whilst you have the mental capacity to agree to it. Once you lose capacity, your loved ones will be forced to go to the Court of Protection like Henry.

At West Cumbria Carers we offer a low cost Lasting Power of Attorney Service. In addition to the £110 registration fee charged by the Office of the Public Guardian (the government body responsible for granting LPAs), we charge an administration fee of £125. This is far cheaper than most solicitors would charge. To find out more, please visit our LPA section on our website, or request an LPA application form by emailing LPA@westcumbriacarers.co.uk.
New Year Blues? Feeling Stressed? Join Us for Our Regular Relaxation Sessions

We hold free regular relaxation sessions across West Cumbria for Carers to drop in and take a little time out. Our trainer Maria, has extensive experience in relaxation therapies and will take you on a tranquil journey to help calm your mind and ease your soul. Stress can be a major contributor to physical health problems, so why not make it a new year’s resolution to try out a session. There is no need to book, just turn up at any one of the following sessions taking place this February and March.

Maryport: Community Resource Centre, 12a Seby Terrace, CA15 6NF
**Mondays, 1pm - 2pm:** *2nd February *16th March

Workington: Oval Centre, Saltbeck, Workington, CA14 5HA
**Wednesdays, 11.00am - 12pm:** *4th February *11th March

Wigton: Wigton Group Medical Practice, Southend, CA7 9QD
**Mondays, 11am – 12 noon:** *16th February *16th March

Egremont: Meeting Place, Methodist Church, Main Street, CA22 2DR
**Mondays, 1.30pm - 2.30pm:** *9th February *9th March

Millom: Millom Network Centre, Salthouse Road, LA18 5AB
**Mondays, 11am - 12pm:** *9th February *9th March

Whitehaven - Senhouse Centre, 3 Senhouse Street, Whitehaven, CA28 7ES
**Tuesdays, 1pm - 2pm:** *3rd February *3rd March

Carers Clinics – New Clinics Launched for 2015

If you want to meet one of our Carers Support Workers in a neutral space away from home in order to get information and support, our Carers Clinics may be of interest to you. We have been running a number of clinics in GP surgeries for a while and we are pleased to be expanding these further in 2015. Our Carers Support workers can help you with a number of different topics, as well as provide information on other services and organisations who may be able to assist you. Full details are listed below. For all clinics you can make appointments either by contacting us or through the surgery directly.

**Allerdale**

Maryport Group Practice
Aldenburgh House, Ewanrigg Road, Maryport.
Every Friday 10.30am – 12.30pm
Tel: 01900 815544

Orchard House Surgery Workington
South William Street Workington.
Every Monday 10am – 11.30am
Tel: 01900 603985

**Copeland**

Distington Surgery
Hinnings Road, Distington. 10am – 12pm 1st Thursday each month Tel: 01946 830207

Lowther Medical Practice
Castle Meadows, Whitehaven. 10am - 12pm
Every Tuesday, Tel: 01946 692241

Seascale Health Centre
Gosforth Road, Seascale, Cumbria CA20 1PN
Last Friday of every month — times to be confirmed. Tel: 019467 28101

Westcroft House Surgery
66 Main Street, Egremont, Cumbria CA22 2DB — Every Friday — times to be confirmed. Tel: 01946 820348

Carers Meets – New Dates Set

Last year saw the launch of our new Carers Meets, monthly sessions for Carers to get together and learn more about services available as well as gain insight into a range of topics. We have now set the dates for Carers Meets up until August 2015. Please note that if you would like to attend one it is important that you telephone us in advance to book your place. If you have internet access keep an eye on our website as we will be updating the activities calendar with details of speakers, workshops etc as we confirm them.

**All Carers Meets follow the same format:**

- 10am – 10.30am Tea/Coffee and registration
- 10.30am – 11.15am Guest speaker
- 11.30am – 12 noon Choose one of two workshops to attend
- 12 noon – 1pm Lunch and chance to talk to other carers and to look around the ‘Market Place’ where we will have various stalls and display stands from community organisations.
- 1pm-1.30pm Q & A session with guest speakers and Market Place staff

**February 2015:** This month’s issue is on Learning Disabilities

- **Allerdale** - Christ Church Rooms, Cockermouth. Thursday 19th February.
- **Copeland** - The Meeting Place, Methodist Church, Egremont. Wednesday 25th February.

**March 2015:** This month’s issue is on Mental Health

- **Allerdale** - St. Michaels Independent Living Centre, Workington. Wednesday 25th March.
- **Copeland** - The Beacon Whitehaven. Thursday 26th March.

**April 2015:** This month’s issue is on Dementia

- **Allerdale** - Wigton Market Hall. Thursday 30th April.
- **Copeland** - The Network Centre Millom. Wednesday 22nd April.

**May 2015:** This month’s issue is on Physical Disability

- **Allerdale** - Christ Church Rooms, Cockermouth. Thursday 21st May.
- **Copeland** - The Meeting Place, Methodist Church, Egremont. Wednesday 27th May.

**June 2015:** This month’s issue is on Learning Disabilities

- **Allerdale** - St. Michaels Independent Living Centre, Workington. Wednesday 24th June.
- **Copeland** - The Beacon Whitehaven. Thursday 25th June.

Free - Basic First Aid Course for Carers

Would you know what to do if someone started choking? Or how to spot the signs of a heart attack? These easy to learn skills could one day save a life. St John’s Ambulance has estimated that 140,000 more people could be saved each year if more people knew first aid skills. That’s why we are pleased to be able to offer Carers a free three hour basic first aid course that will cover the essentials.

The course takes place on **Wednesday 11th March, 9.30am – 12.30pm** at the Oval Centre, Workington and lunch will be included. To book your place please call us on 01900 821 976 by Wednesday 25th February.
Caring In Millom? Heard About The Carers Support Group?

Following on from the changes to our funding and the move from Carers Support Groups to Carers Meets, a group of Carers in Millom decided to carry on meeting regularly to provide support to one another.

The group have had several meetings since and members have reported that they feel very well supported by each other. They organise trips and meals out, as well as their regular monthly meetings.

Chaired by Sandra Cole with support from former Carer Carol Davies who has taken on the role of group treasurer, the group provides friendship and support to Carers in and around the Millom area. From January the group will be meeting every 3rd Wednesday of the month between 1pm and 3pm, at the Methodist Church Hall on Queen Street in Millom.

For more information please call Sandra on 01229 716551 or Carol on 01229 774101.

Could you help with a research project?

Dr Gemma Cherry from the university of Liverpool is currently recruiting carers of people with long-term mental health difficulties to take part in a study looking at factors influencing expressed emotion (a measure of family environment). The study will be running from January to December 2015.

They are asking people to volunteer to complete questionnaires several online. This will take about 20 minutes and participants will have the option to enter a prize draw to win one of three £50 high street vouchers upon completion of the questionnaires.

Full details are available on the news section of our website: westcumbriacarers.co.uk/latest-updates

How You Could Save £££ On Your Energy Bills

We were so pleased to have recently received a visit from Lyndsay Carver, Financial Empowerment Caseworker from Citizens Advice Allerdale & Copeland Bureaus. Lyndsay provided us with lots of information about how you can save money on your electricity bills. Lyndsay said:

“As part of the Warm Home Discount Scheme, participating electricity suppliers are providing financial support to their vulnerable customers including those on a low income with a disability, long-term illness or those with young children. Schemes are now starting to open for 2014/15. You can find out more from your electricity supplier. As part of the scheme, a discount of £140 will be credited to your electricity bill or prepayment meter for 2014/15.”

You will need to arrange this discount with your energy supplier. You will find their contact details on your latest bill or statement of account. Lyndsay also told us about Ofgem’s (the energy regulator) new confidence code. Lyndsay said:

“To obtain a free, impartial & comprehensive price comparison for all licensed suppliers in your area. Use one of the price comparison services which are accredited to Ofgem’s ‘Confidence Code’. The sites covered by the Confidence Code act independently of suppliers, so you can be sure that when you are presented with options and prices, they have been calculated and are displayed in a fair and unbiased way. They can help you find the best deal for you in your local area and provide you with a free and easy-to-use switching service. They also give detailed information on each tariff, including gas and electricity unit prices and any discounts that are available.”

If you are worried about your heating costs, not sure about how to use switching services, or interested in getting more information about loft and cavity insulation for your home, the Citizens Advice Bureau can help you. You can contact them to make an appointment with an advisor:

Workington Bureau - 01900 604735.
Whitehaven Bureau - 01946 693321.
Millom Bureau - 01229 772395.

Please see enclosed flier for information on Winter Warmth Grants now available.