

# CARERS CHAMPIONS

*Newsletter – SPRING 2009*



Hello!

We hope this issue finds you well and enjoying 2009.

As you will see, our newsletter has a new look, which we hope will provide easy reference to the different sections of information.

We always welcome contributions from carers, after all – this newsletter is for YOU! In this issue we are pleased to feature an article by Jan Anstis about her recent trip to Westminster to attend the launch of a new Physical Health Check tool for people suffering mental health conditions. See page 5 for more details..... Each future newsletter will have its own dedicated carer's page.

Our website is currently being updated so if you have any contributions for the website or the next issue of the newsletter, be it an article, poem, money-saving tip or anything else you can think of – please send it in to us!

As always, please let us know if you have any suggestions or comments – we really value your opinions and input and look forward to hearing from you soon.

*Carers Champions Support Team*

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**Disclaimer:** We reserve the right to select and edit articles submitted. The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent those of Carers Champions. Although we do our best to ensure information is accurate, we are not liable for any incorrect information or errors contained within.

**If you would like receive this information in a different format e.g. large print, Braille, audio or in a different language please contact us on 01752 211 348 or e-mail [carers@colebrookhousing.co.uk](mailto:carers@colebrookhousing.co.uk)**

## Diary Dates & Opportunities:

### **'Cosy Corner' Drop In - 3 Woodland Terrace, Greenbank, PL4 8NL**

A warm welcome awaits you **every Wednesday** between **11am and 2pm** at our **'Cosy Corner' Drop In for carers** – some free parking is available on site. Carers Champions staff will be around to offer advice and information and perhaps put you in touch with relevant specialists e.g. our Welfare Benefits Advice Worker. We have a comfortable lounge and garden where you can meet new friends, have a coffee whilst browsing the carer's resource library, joining a short workshop, surfing the net or just relaxing!

<b>April</b> <b>09</b>	<b>15<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Carers Awareness Training</b> – The East End Community Resource Centre, 9.30am – 1.00pm	
	<b>22<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>National Carers Poverty Protest</b> - London	
<b>May</b> <b>09</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Carers Awareness Training</b> – The East End Community Resource Centre, 9.30am – 1.00pm	
	<b>19<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>St John Ambulance Carers Support Programme PART 1 of 4</b> Harewood House, Ridgeway, Plympton, 10am-1pm.	
	<b>26<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>St John Ambulance Carers Support Programme PART 2 of 4</b> Harewood House, Ridgeway, Plympton, 10am-1pm.	
	<b>27<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Cosy Corner Drop In</b> – Pasty making with Gloria.	
<b>J</b> <b>u</b> <b>n</b> <b>e</b> <b>W</b> <b>E</b> <b>E</b> <b>K</b> <b>0</b> <b>9</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>St John Ambulance Carers Support Programme PART 3 of 4</b> Harewood House, Ridgeway, Plympton, 10am-1pm.	
	<b>C</b>	<b>8<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Information &amp; Advice sessions for carers</b> – further details to follow.
	<b>A</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Information &amp; Advice sessions for carers</b> – further details to follow.
	<b>R</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>No Cosy Corner Drop In - cancelled due to weekend working.</b>
	<b>E</b>	<b>11<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Womens Health Fair</b> – from 10am – 4pm at Plymouth Guildhall.
	<b>S</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Bus trip to Torquay</b> – come out for the day, visit the beach and have an ice cream. We will be leaving Plymouth at 10.30am and leaving Torquay at 3.30pm.
	<b>W</b>	<b>13<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>LINK Annual Launch</b> – event with Carers Champions Team in city centre.
	<b>E</b>	<b>14<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Social Event - 'Cream teas &amp; Chat'</b> - venue to be confirmed.
	<b>E</b>	<b>16<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>St John Ambulance Carers Support Programme PART 4 of 4</b> Harewood House, Ridgeway, Plympton, 10am-1pm.
	<b>K</b>	<b>17<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>Carers Awareness Training</b> – The East End Community Resource Centre, 9.30am – 1.00pm
	<b>29<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>St John Ambulance Carers Support Programme PART 1 of 4</b> Venue to be confirmed.	

### **COMPETITION NEWS!!**

As part of our celebrations for Carers' Week we will be running 2 short competitions:

**Competition 1:** Write a limerick about being a carer.

**Competition 2:** Draw/design an A4 size poster which celebrates carers' week.

The winning entry for each competition will receive £25 of store vouchers. Entries must be received by post or e-mail by Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009. **Why not have a go and Enter NOW!!**

# ST JOHN AMBULANCE - CARERS SUPPORT PROGRAMME

St John  
Ambulance



St John Ambulance Devon in collaboration with Carers Champions and Plymouth City Council are offering the opportunity for all carers to attend a four session course aimed at providing practical skills and information. Suitable for all carers who look after relatives, friends or neighbours, the course runs over 4 morning sessions and is entirely **free** for those taking part.

The course includes practical first aid skills, modules on stress management, medicines, safe moving and handling, preventing falls, coping with dementia – and more!

For further information or to book a place, please contact Emma Healey at St John Ambulance Devon by ringing **01392 822646** or email [emma.healey@devon.sja.org.uk](mailto:emma.healey@devon.sja.org.uk)

*'The group was very open and friendly – I felt able to ask questions when normally I am too intimidated'*

The course starts at 10am, closes with a free lunch at 1.00pm and will be running on:

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup> May and 2<sup>nd</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> June 2009 at St Budeaux Library, St Budeaux.

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June and 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> July 2009 venue to be confirmed.

## CARERS AWARENESS TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS

The workshops provide the opportunity to meet Carers Champions staff, Plymouth Adult Social Care staff and to hear first hand experiences directly from carers.

Participants will gain an insight into:

- © Carer's day to day issues & longer term difficulties.
- © The Law & Carers Assessments.
- © Diversity.
- © The work of Carers Champions and other local resources & voluntary organisations.

Workshops are **FREE** and will take place on:

**15<sup>th</sup> April, 13<sup>th</sup> May & 17<sup>th</sup> June** 9am – 1pm

At: The East End Community Resource Centre,  
4a Cattedown Road, Plymouth.

Places are limited so please call **01752 211 348** or e-mail [carers@colebrookhousing.co.uk](mailto:carers@colebrookhousing.co.uk) to book a place.

## Friends & Families of Special Children, Carers UK Plymouth Branch

### FREE Activities & Courses:

★ **Experience History with the National Trust** – 8 weeks

17<sup>th</sup> April – 5<sup>th</sup> June, 10am start.

★ **Carers Week** 8<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> June, Pampering, theme days, activities and a cream tea trip!

★ **Nature's Adventure** – 7 weeks

19<sup>th</sup> June – 31<sup>st</sup> July, 9.30am start.

For further details or to book your place(s) on these courses, call **01752 204 369** or e-mail:

[info@friendsandfamilies.org.uk](mailto:info@friendsandfamilies.org.uk)

## PLYMOUTH AGE CONCERN'S 57<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL SKILLED HANDS ART & CRAFT EXHIBITION

If you are over 55 and have completed a piece of art or craft work during the past 12 months, then you are eligible to enter Plymouth Age Concern's 57<sup>th</sup> Annual Skilled Hands Art and Craft Exhibition being held in Plymouth Lower Guildhall in June. Details of how to enter are available from any Plymouth Age Concern centre (or telephone 01752 665424 or 256020). The exhibition will be open to the public from 10.30am – 4.00pm on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> and Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> June, and 10.30am – 1.00pm on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June. Admission is £1.00. A presentation of awards will take place at 2.00pm on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> June.

If you are interested in attending these courses, but are concerned about leaving the person you care for at home, you may be eligible for a sit-in service from the Carers Grant. For more details please call Carers Champions on 01752 211 348.

## Partnership Work:

### FAMILIES COUNT TOO



We were pleased to access funding via Partnership Talents and this has enabled us to assist Families Count Too in the running of 3 workshops to support carers of people with drug and alcohol misuse issues, and to help Families Count Too to develop its work. Families Count Too provides much needed local support for family and friends affected by drug and alcohol misuse.

The workshops provided the opportunity for carers to relax in a safe space and speak to others who are experiencing similar issues. Help and support was provided by a visit from the local police neighbourhood team leader, relaxation techniques, handout packs and a free lunch. So far, positive feedback has been received, with all participants appreciative that their difficult caring role had been recognised.

#### **Families Count Too**

Local support for  
families & friends  
affected by drug &  
alcohol misuse

For friendly help from people who have experienced similar situations, please call **Carol** on **07833 239 574** or **Lyn** on **07833 239 561**.

**Alternatively** please e-mail: [familiescounttoo@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:familiescounttoo@hotmail.co.uk)

**Or** if you would like a copy of the resource pack, you can access it online from Carers Champions website: [www.colebrookhousing.co.uk](http://www.colebrookhousing.co.uk) Click on CARERS and EVENTS, alternatively call us on **01752 211 348** and we will be happy to post a copy out to you.

### WOMEN'S HEALTH DAY

The Women's Health Day was a lively and fun day held at the Guildhall coordinated by the Racial Equality Council. The day was targeted for women from Black and Minority Ethnic Groups to look at health and well-being issues.



Carers Champions along with Local Involvement Network (LINK), Plymouth Advisory Partnership for Older People (PAPOP) and Plymouth Involvement and Participation Service (PIPS) shared a stand in the form of an enormous colourful road with six bus stops. At each stop, women could access information on various aspects of our services, have the opportunity to give their views and ideas and share their experiences.

The event had information on general health, menopause, osteoporosis, diabetes, breast cancer awareness and more, an interesting and lively talk from Dr Rekha Shrestha on Womens Health, a fabulous free lunch, salsa workshop, alternative therapies and pampering opportunities. It was well attended and a great chance to meet and receive feedback from women from BME communities.



### VISIT TO WESTMINSTER FOR PHC LAUNCH – BY JAN ANSTIS



In November 2008 I received information from the charity Rethink, about a Parliamentary Launch of a new Physical Health check tool for folk suffering mental health conditions. Over the years we have seen people at increased risk of a range of illnesses whilst taking potent drugs; heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disease and so on. People are frequently overlooked and poorly monitored because they have the mental label. **It is scandalous.** My own son nearly died because an underlying condition continued to be ignored, until I raged and raged. The issue fired my compulsion to attend.

There followed activities of how physically and financially I might get to Westminster. I called Carers Champions and explained the project and the difficulties. Within days the relevant services had been contacted and the finance underwritten by direct debit. Thus, on 4<sup>th</sup> December at 6pm, I walked up the steps of 1 Great George Street, the venue of the launch.

Warmly greeted by the Rethink team, I was given the Physical Health check papers and guided into a room filled with glorious, passionate, championing individuals. Nurses, health professionals, volunteers, journalists, M.Ps, and Consultant Psychiatrists. One man in particular was pointed out to me. It was Dr. Michael Phelan; Clinical Psychologist and Clerical Director of West London Mental Health Trust. He had become increasingly concerned and aware of the health problems of his patients and had developed the Physical Health Check tool with a group of patients, staff and a member of Fulham Social Services.



Any health professional can use the tool. No special training is required. The list of questions is divided into 4 sections; general health and lifestyle, symptoms checklist, screening section and finally, the action plan. It aims to engage folk in conversation about their health, the object being the need to explore and identify issues and draw up an action plan. It takes no more than 30 minutes and should be undertaken by people who know their client well and have a good rapport.

On completion, the client is given a copy to take to their G.P or any other relevant person. It should be completed at least once a year. Free copies are available at [www.rethink.org/how we can help/research/research themes/physical health chec.html](http://www.rethink.org/how_we_can_help/research/research_themes/physical_health_chec.html) or telephone Rethink on **02078 403 074**.

I thank Dr Phelan for caring enough to do something and I thank Carers Champions and Direct Payments who felt the issue important enough to support my attendance at the launch. I shall work tirelessly for its implementation.



*Many thanks to Jan Anstis for this article.*



## Carers' Rights:

Recently in the drop in, through general discussions with carers and from feedback received, it is clear that many carers are not aware of the rights and also statutory services obligations to carers. So over the rest of this year we are going to feature articles on carers' rights.....

### CHANGES TO THE CARE PROGRAMME APPROACH (CPA)

Everyone must receive an initial assessment when they come into contact with secondary mental health services. This will determine their need for treatment, care and support and whether care under the CPA process is required. Those who do not qualify for CPA will be cared for under Standard Care and will still have carers identified and informed of rights to their own assessments.

A thorough risk assessment including the service users and carer/s must be made before a decision is made that CPA is no longer required.

#### CPA should NOT be withdrawn without :-

- \* an appropriate review and handover (e.g. to the lead professional or GP).
- \* exchange of appropriate information with all concerned – including with carers.
- \* plans for review, support and follow up as appropriate.
- \* a clear statement about the action to take and who to contact in the event of relapse or change with a potential negative impact on that person's mental well-being.

#### The guidance states that :-

- \* where service users are carers, particular plans must show how their caring needs will be met.
- \* that service users' and carers' assessment, care and support plans must be coordinated.
- \* that service users' and carers' plans, whether on CPA or not, must show what to do in the event of a crisis or relapse.
- \* even if someone is not eligible for CPA, a carer will still be identified and recognised.
- \* CPA cannot be withdrawn without service users and their carers being involved.

These changes aim to promote and coordinate care and support activity for individuals.

For further information, please contact Elaine Longbottom – CPA Lead on **01752 272 399**.

### FLEXIBLE WORKING INFORMATION

**Are you finding it difficult to manage your caring role with your work commitments?**

**You may be entitled to flexible working:-**

To request flexible working you need to be:-

- \* an employee (not an agency worker or in the armed forces) and have worked for your employer for a minimum of 26 weeks at the time of request.
- \* a carer who cares, or expects to be caring for an adult, who is your spouse, partner, civil partner or relative, or someone who lives at the same address as you.

Flexible working can take many forms and does not necessarily mean part-time hours.

For more details call **0808 808 7777** or visit: [www.carersuk.org/Information/Workandcaring](http://www.carersuk.org/Information/Workandcaring)

# Feeling the Pinch?:

## TOP TIPS FOR SAVING MONEY THIS NEW YEAR

- £ Switch appliances OFF at the wall instead of leaving them on standby.
- £ Set your thermostat to 21°C during the day and 18°C at night.
- £ Wear lots of thin layers to trap body heat and keep you warm.
- £ Wash clothes at 30°C instead of 40°C
- £ Don't go food shopping on an empty stomach.
- £ Choose own brand supermarket products.
- £ Replace minced meat with soya mince, it is much cheaper and provides a good source of protein.
- £ Make use of leftovers, by concocting a tasty soup or bubble and squeak.
- £ Only boil the quantity of water that you need in the kettle.
- £ Have a shower instead of a bath, where possible.



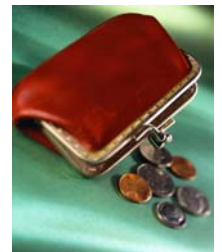
## FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO BOOST YOUR FUNDS



£ **WARM FRONT GRANT** – up to £2700 available if you are in receipt of benefits. Call **0800 316 6011** or visit [www.warmfront.co.uk](http://www.warmfront.co.uk) to find out more.

£ **LOCAL COUNCIL GRANTS** – if you have a low income you may be eligible for a grant to help you with home repairs and improvements, such as insulation. Call **0800 512 012** for more details.

£ **WATERSURE** – Through South West Water. Yearly bill capped at £497. To apply call Customer Accounts **0800 169 1133** and ask for an application form. The cared for person will need a letter from their GP stating that they have a condition which means that more water is used than an average household. Their GP will have heard of the scheme.



£ **CARERS CHAMPIONS RELIEF FUND** -

- ◆ Are you a carer registered with Carers Champions?
- ◆ Are you experiencing a personal financial emergency?
- ◆ Have you tried all other possibilities (e.g. a carers grant or the DWP's social fund) but been refused?

If you can answer YES to all of these questions you may be eligible for the **Carers Champions Relief Fund**. So far we have helped carers to buy replacement items e.g. a cooker or fridge. However some of you may be struggling to pay gas, electric and water bills etc and we might be able to help you! Call us on **01752 211 348** or e-mail: [carers@colebrookhousing.co.uk](mailto:carers@colebrookhousing.co.uk) to find out more.

## USEFUL WEBSITES

- £ [www.frugal.org.uk](http://www.frugal.org.uk) lots of advice on living economically in the UK.
- £ [www.moneysavingexpert.com/](http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/) printable money off coupons to stretch your money further.
- £ [www.resettlementagency.co.uk/](http://www.resettlementagency.co.uk/) furniture reconditioning and reuse project in Plymouth. Visit 80 – 84 and 97 Union Street, Stonehouse, Plymouth PL1 3EZ or Tel: **01752 217 046**.

## Special Feature: **STROKE** Awareness

### Stroke is a medical emergency

By Dr Steven Alder, Consultant Neurologist, Plymouth Hospitals Trust and Dr Rosie Heath, GP, NHS Plymouth.



A stroke is the third most common cause of death in the UK. It is also the single most common cause of severe disability. In the UK, around 1,000 people under 30 have a stroke each year but most people are over 65.

It could happen to you, or someone you care for so it's important you know what to do. **A stroke is a medical emergency. If you see the signs of a stroke, act FAST and call 999.** The sooner someone receives treatment, the better their chance of recovery.

#### Common symptoms of a stroke

Early symptoms and signs of a stroke can appear suddenly, to help check for a stroke use the **FAST** test.

**F - Facial Weakness** Can the person smile? Has their face drooped?

**A - Arm Weakness** Can the person raise both arms?

**S - Speech Problems** Can the person speak clearly & understand what is being said?

**T - Time to Dial 999** If you see any of these signs, call 999 immediately.

#### Reduce your risk

- Have your blood pressure checked regularly.
- Stop smoking.
- Take regular exercise.
- Avoid heavy drinking.
- Cut down on salt and fatty foods.
- Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables.



Smoking doubles your risk of having a stroke.

The NHS Smoking Helpline can help you give up, phone **0800 022 4 332**, or visit [www.gosmokefree.nhs.uk](http://www.gosmokefree.nhs.uk)

## Plymouth City Council Carers Service & Local Services Updates:



### SHORT BREAKS VOUCHER SCHEME

**If you would like to let us know your thoughts on any of the information on this page or how this is of use to you, we will pass your comments on to Plymouth City Council**

The Short Breaks Voucher Scheme is a new initiative to give people more flexibility and control in taking short-term residential breaks, enabling people to book a respite break with the provider of their choice, hopefully within their local area, at a time and date convenient to them.

Care Managers completing assessments are able to offer carers a number of vouchers (number to be decided together in response to what they require) and then all carers will need to do is decide which of the participating homes they would like to book with and when!

A few people have already made use of the scheme and positive feedback has been received. The scheme is simple to use and carers find it really useful to be able to phone up a residential home and arrange for a week's respite without having to go through their care manager every time.

## **Did you know as a carer you could be entitled to a Direct Payment from the Carers Development team?**

If you care for someone and have an assessment of your caring role you could be entitled to payments to help you to either continue in that role or simply to give you some time off to relax and look after your own health and wellbeing.

Through use of Direct Payments the Carers Development team regularly enable carers to purchase items such as washing machines, mobile phones, even computers or driving lessons - anything which helps you manage and make the best use of your time in your caring role. We also fund some leisure activities so you can enjoy the time you do have for yourself – this could be membership of a gym, craft groups or even National Trust membership.

**If you think you could benefit from any of these or want to know more about Direct Payments for carers, please call 01752 668 000 and ask for a carers assessment and we will take it from there!**

## **Caring for Carers Support Service**

For friends and relatives who provide help and support to someone with a mental health problem.

We provide:-

- A monthly Support Group
- One to one support
- Information on request
- Telephone support
- A monthly newsletter

THIS SERVICE IS FOR YOU. You may feel that you do not need personal support right now, but may feel it beneficial to receive our newsletter each month which includes information that may be of interest to you as a carer.

For further details contact: **Pam Pinder**, (Carer STR Worker), Assertive Outreach Services

Tel: **07887 711 834**

Email: [pamela.pinder@plymouth.nhs.uk](mailto:pamela.pinder@plymouth.nhs.uk)

Or visit the website:

## **Regular Support Group at River View**

There is a regular support group at Plymouth Age Concern's River View Centre, at 1.30pm – 3.30pm every last Thursday of each month. For further information, please contact Denise Gregson on **01752 253 974**. The River View Centre is located at Astor Drive, Mount Gould, Plymouth PL4 9RD.

## **RADAR KEYS!!**

The **National RADAR Key Scheme** offers independent access for disabled people to around 7,000 locked public toilets around the country.

Carers Champions have purchased 50 **RADAR Keys** which are available to carers at a reduced cost of £2. (normal price £3.50 plus VAT). If you would like to purchase a RADAR key, please contact Carers Champions on **01752 211 348**.

# Influencing National & Local Services:

## NATIONAL DEMENTIA STRATEGY

The first ever National Dementia Strategy was launched in February 2009. It is a landmark document that will transform the quality of dementia care. It sets out initiatives designed to make the lives of people with dementia, their carers and families better and more fulfilled. Why not use the Carers computer to view the strategy during your visit to the drop in on: [www.dh.gov.uk/en/socialcare/deliveringadultsocialcare/olderpeople/nationaldementiastrategy](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/socialcare/deliveringadultsocialcare/olderpeople/nationaldementiastrategy)

## WE WANT CARERS HELP TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Plymouth Involvement and Participation Service (PIPS) works with mental health service users and carers to improve mental health services.

There are currently exciting new opportunities for service users and carers to represent PIPS on a group called the LIT and plans are in place to make this happen. But there are many other ways to be part of the PIPS network.

Anyone getting involved in PIPS opportunities will receive any support or training they need and expenses will be paid so that no one is out of pocket. As a carer there will be lots of ways to get involved with PIPS and help improve services.

Please contact Ashley Daw on **01752 202406** or e-mail [adaw@colebrookhousing.co.uk](mailto:adaw@colebrookhousing.co.uk). PIPS is based at **Unit 15, HQ Building, 237 Union Street, Plymouth PL1 3HQ**

## EXCITING PROGRESS FOR THE PLYMOUTH LINK

Plymouth Local Involvement Network (LINK) has had a really successful 2008. Our numbers have grown to over 500 members, who give us their views and ideas for improvement on local health and social care services. We now have a Stewardship Group, which will drive the LINK forward and we have been collecting lots of feedback. A report will be produced which will outline what the local issues are and how they can be improved; which will be shown to the people who provide and influence local health and social care services.

As a carer, you may have lots of valuable experience in dealing with local health and social care services and ideas for how these services should be improved. The LINK needs your views so that we can make a difference for carers. There are lots of opportunities for carers to get involved in the LINK:

- Contact us and let us know about your experiences of services and your ideas for improvement. Become part of the LINK. You don't need to give any time, but we will stay in touch and let you know what the LINK is doing, how services are improving and offer you opportunities to have your say in local plans (for example, about respite services, meals on wheels and other services you know about).
- If you have some time to give and want to help improve health or social care services we can support you (and pay for expenses/carer's costs) to:
  - ☺ Become a LINK Ambassador and help us to promote the LINK, gather people's views at events and groups, or even help us out in the office!
  - ☺ Become a member of the Visiting Team that will visit and monitor the quality of services.

For further details call **01752 202 407** or visit [www.plymouth-link.co.uk](http://www.plymouth-link.co.uk).

## PLYMOUTH'S CARERS STRATEGY

Jean Humphries, who is leading the work to review and update Plymouth's Carers Strategy, visited Carers Champions offices recently, and talked to the staff, and also carers, who attend the regular Wednesday 'Drop In'. Jean has been tasked by Plymouth City Council to talk to a wide range of people, and also more importantly, to *listen* to their views, on both the current carer services in the city, and what carers would like for the future.

The **National** Carers Strategy was published in June 2008, and made the following recommendations:

- Launch of UK carers information service
- More funding for carers breaks, rights and employment support
- Training programme to support carers
- Annual health checks for carers & improved emotional support
- Carers discount cards
- Review of carers benefits – although no changes yet
- More flexibility in personal budgets and direct payments
- Improved links between statutory and voluntary agencies
- The Plymouth Carers Strategy will take these national recommendations into account, but will also reflect local issues and concerns, on the ground in the city of Plymouth.

### ***Annual Survey - Sept 07 – Feb 09:***

A big **thank you** to those of you who completed our annual survey. The results have been processed and the full report is available to read in our resource library, drop in sessions and to download from our website: [www.colebrookhousing.co.uk](http://www.colebrookhousing.co.uk) click on 'CARERS' and 'OUR SERVICE'. Unfortunately due to costs we are unable to send out hard copies to everyone through the post, however if you feel this is of interest to you, please contact us and we will send a copy to you.

#### **What did we learn and what do we need to do better?:**

- Overall Carers Champions Service was valued as good/excellent.
- Drop in is good and those who use it enjoy it.
- People really value the welfare and benefits advice.
- Most people really enjoy the newsletter and gave us good suggestions about what they want in it – we have already made some changes.
- Overall staff were rated highly as being friendly, helpful and knowledgeable.
- Since we started we have match funded in year 1 to value of: £24,552.



#### **Service Improvements:**

- Carers highlighted how varying their needs are in respect of caring role/communication needs. Carers Champions do fully recognise this although we are very limited to what we can provide, because we have limited resources – the feedback has been passed on to funders.
- Recommendations to improve newsletter – turnaround times regarding printing and getting to carers/what carers want to see in it.

**There were a number of recommendations that we took from the report, some of which are for us to improve our service:**

- Need to provide a more flexible service where we can within funding – some evening and weekend opportunities.
- Improvements to how we support new carers and existing carers whose needs change.
- More support at citywide locations such as community outreach.

**Some recommendations have been passed on to Plymouth City Council as funders to address or pass on to relevant departments:**

- Length of term of funding – need for carers to have continuity of staff.
- Ongoing demand for welfare benefits support for carers
- Unmet needs/service improvements in relation to carers assessments, regular communication, events, trips, short breaks, direct support to carers, transport, need for carers regarding hepatitis C support and health service improvements.

## ***General Notices:***

### **Can you help us develop and deliver Carers Champions services?**

- Could you help by contributing to our newsletter?
- Could you proof read our literature to ensure it contains information which is actually of use to carers?
- Could you aid us in the creation and distribution of our promotional information?
- Are you interested in joining us on our training sessions to train professionals in carers' issues?
- Would you like to join us at events to help promote the service?
- If your answer is YES to any of the above, call us today on **01752 211 348** or email: [carers@colebrookhousing.co.uk](mailto:carers@colebrookhousing.co.uk)

### **CARERS WEEK—COMPETITION!!**

Don't forget your entries for Carers' Week Competitions. Entries must be received by post or e-mail by Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009. Please send entries to: **Carers Champions, 3 Woodland Terrace, Greenbank, Plymouth, PL4 8NL.** The winning entry for each competition will receive £25 of store vouchers. **Why not have a go and Enter NOW!!**

**NEXT ISSUE OUT JULY 2009— deadline for articles 08 June 2009.**