



Oxfordshire & National Carers News

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR CARERS **Social and Community Services Development of Services for Carers**

Following the recent procurement processes for contracting the delivery of Carers Support Services in Oxfordshire for 2010/ 2011, the following statement has been provided by John Pearce, Service Manager, Strategic Commissioning, Social and Community Services, Oxfordshire County Council.

“Many of you will have heard that the County Council’s Social and Community Services department has had to postpone the process for the award of new contracts for support services we purchase for carers.

I wanted to take this chance to describe what has happened and to invite you to join us in looking further at how we can work to improve services. Existing providers have had their contracts renewed for a year while this process is undertaken.

There are around 60,000 carers in Oxfordshire carrying out often difficult and demanding caring tasks for family members and we are acutely aware of the support carers need. The Council has worked in close partnership with the local Carers’ Centres and carers over many years and has a strong commitment to working with them.

The current contracts with the Carers’ Centres were due to finish in April.

With this in mind we worked with the local carers to recommission the services again following a review of services since last winter.

We want the new services to be more consistent across the county and have a better chance of getting in contact with many more carers. Currently only about 10% of carers in Oxfordshire are known to either Social Services or carers groups. We were also looking to improve services to see if we can reduce any duplication.

With carers’ involvement we redesigned the contract on offer with these main points in mind. We started a tendering process but unfortunately some factors meant that this could not be taken forward.

These included:

1. Other changes have been taking place within the County Council which give us an opportunity to improve the way that services for carers are provided. We want to reconsider what we want to purchase longer term that is specific to carers.

The market response to the tender was not strong.

Consequently, the County Council has decided to withdraw the tender for a year and renew existing contracts for that period.

We are aiming to purchase something different for both effectiveness reasons and efficiency reasons from what we initially thought. We are continuing to work hard to achieve this.

Specifically the new Opportunities that have arisen

- We are looking to utilise the Council’s new Customer Services Centre to reach many more carers as part of integrated services.
- We need to retain specialist Carers’ Centres to focus on support to carers but not duplicate provision of information to vulnerable families. We think this service will really give us an opportunity to reach out and support many more carers. We will be working with local carers to ensure that we achieve this.

Continued Overleaf



Oxfordshire & National Carers News

Continued from Previous Page.

- We want to use the opportunity of the new brokerage services to deliver information, advice and support to carers to support family carers in looking after vulnerable adults in the community. This will be integrated within the services available to the most vulnerable families. This new service will ensure that carers are at the heart of the process in supporting families to get what they want for their cared for.

We want to increase our outreach and help local communities to support their own carers. The developments in the Good Neighbour Schemes allow us to integrate support to carers with the general outreach into communities. Carers' Support Groups and befriending will be maintained and strengthened by this strand of work.

These changes mean that unfortunately there will be a period before we can be certain what we want to continue to purchase exclusively for carers or what we can achieve through reaching out to the whole community. During this period we will be working closely with the Carers' Centres to continue to support them to achieve good quality and local support to carers.

The revised specifications for the services will be developed in consultation with carers, and progress reported through the regular county Carers' Strategy Steering Group."

If you would like to get involved in these changes and look at how we can improve services on offer to carers please get in touch with John Pearce or Lajla Johansson at the County Council (Ring 01865 323617 or email John.Pearce@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Carers Week June 14th – 20th 2010

Supporting the UK's 6 Million Carers

This years theme is: '**A Life of My Own**'.

Carers Week will highlight:

1. Why supporting Carers is crucial.
2. How Carers miss out on things we all take for granted.
3. What needs to be changed.

The theme **A life of my own** will enable Carers to talk about many parts of life that most of us take for granted e.g. Family occasions, going on holiday, a meal out or even just chilling out for an evening with no worries or responsibilities.

Carers will speak about what they need to have **A life of their own**, including:

- *Access to relevant and practical information, to help them with their caring role.
- *The opportunity to take a break when they need it.
- *Support at times of crisis.
- *Financial Support.

The Oxfordshire Carers Centres will be arranging events for Carers Week. Please contact your local Carers Centre for details, which will be available from the beginning of April.

If you can think of a suitable event to hold at a Carers Centre relating to the theme, '**A Life of My Own**', please don't hesitate to contact us. After all it is for you.



Oxfordshire & National Carers News

"Hidden Carers" to have pensions boost from April 2010

For the first time, it will be possible for an unpaid carer looking after a loved one to build up a full basic State Pension based entirely on National Insurance credits. The Department for Work and Pensions and Carers UK are calling on the 4.7 million carers across the country to find out if they could benefit.

April 2010 will see the introduction of the new Carer's Credit that will count towards their basic and second State Pension. People may not recognise the help they give unpaid to a disabled, ill or family member as caring but today they are being encouraged to come forward if they are looking after someone for at least twenty hours a week.

Minister of State for Pensions and Ageing Society Angela Eagle said: "We want people to tell us if they, or people they know, are looking after somebody for more than 20 hours a week so they benefit from this change. The State Pension is everyone's foundation of financial security in later life and therefore, it's only right that caring for others should be counted towards it."

The natural focus for most carers is to meet the immediate needs of their loved one rather than on planning their own financial future. Results by the Ipsos MORI survey found less than one in five of the carers (19%) pay regularly into savings and only one in seven felt they had a comfortable amount put aside for the future. It also revealed almost half (46%) the carers it questioned are worried about their financial future and just over a third (36%) have dipped into savings as a result of caring.

Imelda Redmond, Chief Executive of Carers UK said: "We know saving for your retirement years won't be your priority when you suddenly secure your State Pension that will protect your long-term future as you care for others."

If you are caring for someone for 20 hours or more a week find yourself caring for a loved one. But there are simple steps you can take to you could get the new Carer's Credit that will count towards your State Pension. Find out if you qualify by visiting www.direct.gov.uk/pensions or by calling 0800 678 1132.



Oxfordshire & National Carers News

Work Focused Support for Carers from Jobcentre Plus



Work Focused Support for Carers (WFSC) is a voluntary scheme designed to help people who wish to combine paid work with their role caring for someone.

You can choose to take part, and are free to stop taking part, at any time. Even if you don't feel ready to work now but might like to in the future, you can still take advantage of the support available.

Who is eligible?

Work Focused Support for Carers is available to carers who:

do not work or work less than 16 hours a week

are aged 18 or over

are not able to get help from any of the other Jobcentre Plus employment support programmes such as New Deal or Pathways to Work.

What other support is available?

Jobcentre Plus may be able to help pay for things like replacement care while you attend appointments with your personal adviser, take part in a training course (some of which may attract a training premium of £15.00) or attend job interviews.

Courses may include e.g.

Realistic jobs for me – 1 day (6 hours)

Doing effective Jobsearch – ½ day (3 hours)

Finding & Getting Jobs – ½ day to 2 days (3 – 12 hours)

Skills for work – ½ day to 2 days (3 -12 hours)

Jobsearch support centre – up to 6 wks flexible agreed access per customer i.e. Drop in facility.

Other additional support options may include Vocational Training.

Where should I go for more information?

To find out more about getting into work or for the full range of training available, you can: visit www.direct.gov.uk/carersemployment Or arrange an appointment with an adviser at your nearest Jobcentre Plus.