

"Involving People"



Carers
in Hertfordshire

charity registration number 1085491

The newsletter for learning disability carers

August 2017

For more information about anything in this newsletter or to find out more about our support for carers of people with a learning disability, contact:

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Making carers count

Welcome

With Autumn fast approaching I hope you have been able to enjoy some time in the sunshine. It's been as busy a time as ever at Carers in Hertfordshire and we are getting ready for the Annual Event for Carers, which takes place on Tuesday 26th September 2017. Bookings are now being taken and if you would like to attend you can learn more on page two.



I, Sue Maskell, Involvement Worker for Learning Disability and Autism, have been exploring co-production, getting more carers involved in having a say about the planning and delivery of health and care services in Hertfordshire. I am looking for carers supporting a relative with a learning disability to become Family Carer Representatives. We know that carers are experts by experience and have a wealth of knowledge, which would be great to share with the county's Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB). You can read more about the role and LDPB on page three.

Other topics covered in this newsletter include Health Walks, accessible transport options and an update about Nascot Lawn Respite Centre in Watford, which is threatened with closure due to funding cuts.

There are also details of our upcoming meetings for the Learning Disability Carers' Forum and C4A Group (for people caring for an adult with an Autism Spectrum Condition). These groups enable carers to meet others in a similar caring role to them and have a voice on the development of health and care services in Hertfordshire. Details of the meetings are on the back page.

If you have any ideas about topics you would like covered in future newsletters or at Forums please call on 01992 58 69 69 or email me at sue.maskell@carersinherts.org.uk

Carers' campaign to save respite centre from closure

Carers and families of children with complex medical needs are fighting to save Nascot Lawn Respite Centre, in Watford, from closure due to funding cuts.

The centre, which is operated by Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust (HCT), provides overnight respite and care to give their families a much needed break. It also has a day care service for children aged up to five who have serious health care needs and learning disabilities.

In June, Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the facility's main funder, informed parents that the centre would close in October 2017 because it was withdrawing its funding of £600,000 a year. The CCG had not consulted with parents before the announcement.

Around 50 young people under 19 use the facility and another 15 attend the day service.

Michèle Stokes, our Chief Executive, said: "The loss of the respite service without suitable alternative provision will put extra strain on families and cause anxiety. Whilst

we recognise the difficult financial situation that Herts Valleys CCG is in, this decision does not seem to have taken account of the impact of closure on the wider health and social care economy."

The families who benefit from Nascot Lawn have lobbied politicians and organised a petition, which was presented at Hertfordshire County Council's Full Council meeting in July.

At that meeting Councillors agreed to write to Herts Valleys CCG to express the Council's opposition to the closure of Nascot Lawn and ask them to reconsider the decision or at least delay cuts. As a result funding has been found to keep the centre open until the end of January 2018.

Michèle added: "We understand that Nascot Lawn was given to the state to provide a home for 'mentally handicapped' children and has a covenant in place protecting this use. If anyone has further information about this please get in touch with us."

You can contact us by calling 01992 58 69 69 or email contact@carersinherts.org.uk

The Annual Event for Carers

Tuesday 26th September 2017

10am - 3.30pm

Drop-in session from 4pm - 5.30pm.

**The Fielder Centre, Hatfield Avenue,
Hatfield, Herts, AL10 9TP.**

If you are an unpaid carer please join us to:

- **Get information and advice from us and other organisations that support carers.**
- **Meet other carers.**
- **Tell us about your experience of caring.**
- **Learn about what we have been doing over the last 12 months and our plans for the future.**



Places for the 10am - 3.30pm session are limited, so book early to avoid disappointment. Book via:

Phone: 01992 58 69 69

Email: contact@carersinherts.org.uk

Online at: www.carersinherts.org.uk

Have your say: Be a Family Carer Representative

Are you caring for an adult with a learning disability or a child with a learning disability transitioning to adult services?

If you are and would like to bring the voice and experience of carers to meetings and help shape health and care services in Hertfordshire then you might be able to help us as a Family Carer Representative.

We are looking for unpaid family carers, just like you, to play an active part in Hertfordshire's Learning Disability Partnership Board (LDPB).

The LDPB is made up of representatives from a range of organisations that provide services to people with learning disabilities and their carers/relatives. Organisations such as Hertfordshire County Council, colleges, health services and charities like Carers in Hertfordshire.

The Board is co-produced, which means it involves service users throughout commissioning processes, so people who need the support have a say in creating the best services for them.

Sue Maskell, Involvement Worker for Learning Disabilities and Autism, said: "We want to harness people's experiences and use their skills and knowledge to improve services and the wellbeing of carers and people with a learning disability."

Training and support is offered to enable carers to best share their ideas.

We would like a network of several carers to be involved in the LDPB and attend meetings or join in with the sub working groups.

Former carer Marie, who looked after her late son, said: "I have enjoyed my time as a representative, putting forward other carers' views and helping develop a better service for our relatives with a learning disability. I'm looking forward to welcoming new carers to the LDPB."

The LDPB meets monthly, but we would be looking to have members paired with a buddy or having someone to share the meetings they attend with. We will also have a list of people who could act as deputies if you are unable to attend a meeting.

If you are interested in volunteering or finding out more about the role please contact Sue Maskell on 07702 336748 or email sue.maskell@carersinherts.org.uk



Accessible Transport options to make your journey easier

Depending on where you are going and your mobility needs, your transport options might need a little extra planning. For a 'one stop shop' on travelling with a disability in the UK, visit www.gov.uk/transport-disabled

National Rail has information on the accessibility of train stations and getting assistance during a journey - learn more on 03457 48 49 50 or at www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/disabled_passengers.aspx

Transport for London also has information about accessible journeys – find out more by calling 0343 222 1234, emailing tflaccessibility@tfl.gov.uk or visit www.tfl.gov.uk

In Hertfordshire about 1 in 5 buses are accessible to wheelchair users, but many will not take mobility scooters at all. It is advisable to check with the bus company beforehand. Hertfordshire Action on Disability has more transport options - call 01707 375159 or visit www.hadnet.org.uk/services/transport/disabledtransportoptions.aspx

Future Forums and Groups

Our forums are open to carers of adults with a Learning Disability, Autism or Asperger Syndrome. They provide an opportunity to meet others, listen to speakers, get information and have your say about caring issues and improving services in Hertfordshire.

Upcoming Learning Disability Carers' Forums:

Tuesday 3rd October 2017

Tuesday 5th December 2017

Tuesday 6th February 2018

All the meetings above take place from 10am to 12.30pm, followed by a sandwich lunch.

At Birchwood Leisure Centre, Longmead, Hatfield, AL10 0AN.

Our upcoming C4A Carers' Group for people caring for an adult with an Autism Spectrum Condition:

Monday 4th September 2017

Monday 6th November 2017

Meetings take place from 7.30pm to 9.30pm.

At Oxlease House, Travellers Lane, Hatfield, AL10 8TJ.

To book your place or receive information about either group, please contact us:

☎ **01992 58 69 69**

@ **contact@carersinherts.org.uk**

🌐 **www.carersinherts.org.uk**

If you don't have your own transport and wish to attend please contact us to discuss travel arrangements. We can also cover the costs of alternative care.

Keep fit and social with Health Walks

Walking is a great way to keep fit and meet new people and even better it's free! It is also a good way to for adults aged 19 to 64 to meet the NHS recommendation of 150 minutes moderate intensity exercise a week.

Hertfordshire Health Walks, organised by Hertfordshire County Council's Countryside Management Service, offer more than 60 free, local and friendly walks every week.

The walks are held regularly – some at the same time and location each week – all year round – and the short **First Steps Walks** are **wheelchair accessible** in most cases.

The Health Walks are led by volunteer walk leaders who are passionate about supporting others to enjoy their local environment and you can walk at a pace that suits you or the person you care for if they accompany you.

Walk lengths vary between 30 and 90 minutes in duration and all you have to do to get started is turn up.

You can learn more about the routes and joining a Health Walk by calling 01992 588433 or going online at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/healthwalks



Mencap's Here I Am Campaign

Mencap is trying to improve peoples' understanding of learning disability, what it is and isn't, and at the end of last year launched the Here I Am Campaign.

The campaign is about raising awareness and getting people to see past someone's learning disability to their personality and identity. There are 1.4 million people in the UK with a learning disability.

The campaign involves adverts on billboards, TV and the internet and six stars have shared their stories: their interests and how learning disability has affected their life.

You can learn about the #HereIAm campaign and support it by following it on social media and sharing videos and stories. Find out more at www.mencap.org.uk/get-involved/here-i-am