

Spring Edition

Issue 39

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## Free Benefit Checks for Carers

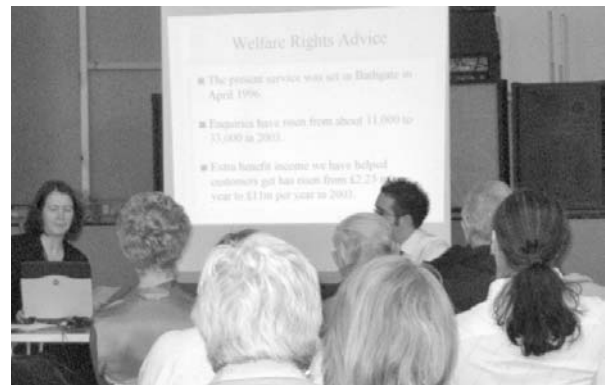
Following on from Carers Rights' Day (3<sup>rd</sup> December 2004), where over 50 carers turned up to hear presentations on benefits, carers assessments, advocacy and Carers of West Lothian, the Advice Shop and Carers of West Lothian are undertaking a partnership initiative to encourage carers to take up a free benefit check. These checks are to ensure carers are getting benefits they are entitled to. In our experience many people are going without their legal entitlement and losing out on money that is rightfully theirs.

### You may be entitled to Carers Allowance if:

- you care for someone 35 hours or more a week
- you earn less than £79 per week
- you are not in full-time education and
- the person you care for is on a qualifying benefit

Or you may benefit from the underlying entitlement rules to Carer's Allowance, which may allow for Income Support/Pension Credit/Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit.

In this issue of Dovehill News you will find an insert highlighting the contact details of the Advice Shop. Carers of West Lothian strongly advise you to contact the Advice Shop and request your free benefit check... What have you got to lose? When calling please tell the person you speak to that you are a carer and are in contact with Carers of West Lothian.



*Carer's Rights Day held in the Strathbrock Partnership Centre, Broxburn. Linda McAlpine from the Advice Shop, speaking on 'Welfare Rights'*



*L-R - Hazel Cowie (Library Headquarters), Barbara Bruce (Linlithgow Link), Lyn Aitken (Carers of West Lothian), Elizabeth Ross (Linlithgow Help Centre)*

## Linlithgow Library Information Morning

Carers of West Lothian joined Linlithgow Help Centre and Linlithgow Link at a local information morning held in Linlithgow Library on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> February. It was an excellent opportunity to chat with library customers and Carers about the service that we provide and to gain a greater understanding of the work of other voluntary organisations and ways of working together.

## CARD MAKING WORKSHOP

Have you ever wanted to learn something new?

Do you find that your time is limited due to caring, and the thought of organising time to attend a class or interest group is daunting?

Would you like to learn a skill that could turn into a hobby you could do from home? If so keep reading.

Carers of West Lothian has arranged an afternoon 'Taster Session' in Card Making. Card making can be relaxing and rewarding and you can do it from the comfort of your own home, just learning the basics can set you up with a hobby that you can enjoy for years.

The Card Making Workshop is free to Carers, places are limited and will be given on a first come first served basis. All materials are provided; "It's Craft" who are normally based in Whitburn will run the workshop.

**The Workshop is taking place on Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> April 2005, 10.30 – 12.30 at Strathbrock Partnership Centre, Broxburn. If you would like to book a place, please phone Kirsty Archibald, Carer Support Worker on 01506 775525.**

We are also looking for suggestions for other 'Taster Sessions' that we could run. So far some of the ideas have included Memory Books, Aromatherapy, Glass Painting and Woodcarving. If you can think of anything else, or would like to express an interest please contact Kirsty.

## Chairman's Remarks



I hope 2005 has started well for you all and continues to do so. Are you still keeping all those resolutions you made?

In January I attended the launch of the LOTHIAN INDEPENDENT ADVOCACY ACTION PLAN 2004-2007 at the Next Generation Centre, Leith.

This service will be beneficial to carers and I hope you will not hesitate to use it when you need it. Advocates help people to understand their rights. They will listen, support, inform,

accompany people to meetings and they will support them in their choices.

Carers of West Lothian has achieved an excellent Best Value Review Report from West Lothian Council, which will secure our funding for the next three years. This exercise has shown us our strengths and weaknesses. Congratulations to our staff for this achievement.

It was with much regret that we received the resignation of Lee Morris, Carer Support Co-ordinator. Lee has worked with us for three and a half years and has played a significant role in the development of the work of the Centre. He is moving onwards and upwards and we thank him most sincerely for all the work he has carried out for us and wish him happiness and success in his new post.

**Anna McGill  
Chairperson**

*This picture shows Carers of West Lothian staff & volunteers helping with the newsletter distribution.*



## Best Value Review

West Lothian Council, who provide core funding to Carers of West Lothian, is committed to ensuring Best Value in the services provided by the community and voluntary organisations that it funds.

In November 2004, Carers of West Lothian was included in a series of Best Value Reviews of the voluntary sector service and provision. Our organisation was subject to an evidence-based assessment in areas relevant to our service, management systems and performance.

We are now pleased to report a successful outcome securing continued core funding from West Lothian Council for the next 3 years. In the summary of findings by the external assessor our organisation's "excellent awareness for the need for continuous improvement" was remarked upon.



*Wilma (centre-right) pictured with some of the junior group and other Young Carer support workers, Summer 2004.*

## Young Carer Update

Since you last heard from me, the junior and senior groups have finished, although we did meet the junior group for one night in December. We planned to go to Edinburgh's Winter Wonderland but the weather put a stop to that and we went to see 'The Incredibles' instead. This went well and the young carers enjoyed catching up one last time.

Over the past few months I have been working with 5 young carers developing a website for young carers in West Lothian. We have met up on a few occasions to look at how this could be done and designed it with the help of a website

developer. It is just about finished and we will be launching it soon.... so watch this space! Thank you very much to Johnny, Alan, Lindsay, David B and Jordan for all your hard work on this and thanks also to Annmarie Keast for coming along to help.

Since I am thanking people, we were very pleased to receive donations from the following people who over the past few months have worked really hard to raise money for young carer activities and resources. I would like to thank Karen Burns - Karen raised £126 when she ran in a marathon last year. We also received a £50 donation from St Johns Church, Bathgate and £262 from the Boys Brigade in Bathgate, they had a sleepover in October and raised the money that night. Thank you all so very much for your support. One of the things we have done with the money was buy a digital camera for the young people to use at activities - they are now able to upload their photos onto the website. We also bought a printer to print the pictures off for the young carers to keep and various games and resources that can be used in our group work and individual sessions.

Over the next few weeks we will be looking at referrals we have received for the next group, completing home visits and deciding which young people we can offer the group work to. The staff for the group this year will be myself, Alan Finningham (Youth Strategy Worker) and Tracy Waddell (Senior Community Education Worker). The group will be run similarly to last year's group and you will hear all about it in the next newsletter.

**Wilma Philpot**  
Young Carer Development Worker

### Donations

Carers of West Lothian would like to extend our sincere thanks to the South Gyle Charity Committee (BAE Systems), and Paterson Arran Ltd (Livingston) who kindly donated £100 and £50 respectively to support our organisation in the work that we do in providing a service to carers throughout West Lothian.

### Young Carer's Letter

#### My Visit to the Scottish Parliament

When I went to the Scottish Parliament I was really excited. Wilma picked me and David up from school and we headed for Edinburgh. We were early and went to have hot chocolate.

When we got into the building we had to walk through metal detectors and some of them were set off. We were given special passes so that we could go "behind the scenes". Some bits were really boring, especially when we had to stand for ages. The debate was really thrilling, to know that someone was trying to do something to help us young carers.

There was a tremendous amount of modern art on the walls, some of which were extremely strange. Even some of the walls were strange.

I was glad when it was over because it was starting to get hot and make me feel dizzy, but I sort of wanted it to go on for a long time. I met a man named John Swinney, who used to be the leader of the SNP.

It was really cool and I want to go back with my family so that they can see it for themselves.

**Jordan McSherry**  
Young Carer



*Jordan McSherry and David Balfour (pictured above), in the New Scottish Parliament Building.*

## Carers Panel

One of the key objectives of our organisation is “**to ensure that carers have a real voice**” in the planning and delivery of local health, social and community services, and in the development of national policies. In past years we have provided this through the West Lothian Carers Forum. However, in response to evolving changes in local planning structures, the Carers Forum has reviewed its role and looked at how it can most effectively influence planning and service delivery, keeping a focus on carers needs.

The review has resulted in a decision to disband the Carers Forum in its current form and in its place set up a Carers of West Lothian **Carers Panel**. The Carers Panel will give Carers of West Lothian a medium for consultation with carers and will provide information sessions to carers, identify carer’s issues and feed these back to the appropriate bodies/persons.

We will communicate and consult with the Carers Panel on a flexible basis using a variety of methods such as telephone contact, post, e-mail, one-to-one interviews and group gatherings.

We would like to engage as many carers as we possibly can on the Carers Panel, gaining consent to approach individual or groups of carers regarding specific issues. Being a member of the Carers Panel will require very little commitment in terms of time, but it will combine one carers voice together with many more giving Carers of West Lothian information on the real and pressing issues affecting carers.

If you are interested in being a part of the Carers Panel, please contact Mary-Denise McKernan (Manager) on 01506 771750. If you think that you might be interested, but are not sure exactly what membership would entail, please contact Mary-Denise for an informal chat.

## Government Action for Carers

The Scottish Executive has made unpaid carers a priority focus for action.

A new unit called CARE 21 will advise national and local government what changes are needed now to provide better community care support in ten years time and beyond.

The first task of CARE 21 is to research future needs of carers and make recommendations for change. *OPM (Office for Public Management) has been recruited to lead a comprehensive study, which includes bringing together all reports published to date on the needs of carers, and involving carers to identify key priorities for change.*

Seb Fischer from VOCAL in Edinburgh, and a member of the Coalition of Carers in Scotland, has been seconded to the Scottish Executive to guide the work of *OPM* and ensure carer participation and the involvement of carer groups.

We will soon be sending questionnaires to local carers to allow you to participate with your views and your experience in this important work.

Carer involvement always makes for better policy and practice! So we hope you take the time to participate when the survey lands on your doorstep. At the Carer Centre we are always willing to help, if the form proves difficult!

If you have access to the Internet, you can read all about Care 21 and fill in the survey online – go to [www.opm.co.uk/scottishcarers](http://www.opm.co.uk/scottishcarers).



## West Lothian Older People’s Forum

The Older People’s Forum feeds into the West Lothian planning structure informing the development of services for older people. The Forum meets monthly during the year in a number of locations throughout West Lothian. It’s membership includes representatives from local authority and health services, voluntary sector, and service users and carers from within the community at large.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> April the Older People’s Forum will meet in the Strathbrock Partnership Centre in Broxburn. Carers of West Lothian will host the meeting, giving us an ideal opportunity to bring to the Forum service issues affecting older carers and/or ideas for improvement of services.

If you are a carer aged 50 or over with specific issues that you would like to be raised at this particular meeting, or if you are interested in finding out more about the Older People’s Forum, please contact Mary-Denise McKernan at the Carers Centre, tel: 01506 771750.

# 'Stepping Out'

Carers organisation 'Care for Carers' design, organise and facilitate 'Stepping Out' short respite breaks for carers. These breaks take place at the Low Port Centre in Linlithgow comprising a weekend of fun, exciting activities including trips and socials. 'Stepping Out' breaks are free. The following dates have been arranged for 2005:

March 18-20, May 27-29 (for carers of people with mental illness), July 22-24, September 23-25 (for carers of people with mental illness), October 28-30.

For more information on these highly rated carer weekend breaks contact Ruth MacLennan, Care for Carers on 0131 661 2077.



*Carol Melville - Holistic Therapist  
with Mary Rollo a Carer*

## Carers Holistic Therapies

It is a well-documented fact that carers often feel stressed and exhausted by the work they do looking after someone who is unwell. It is for this reason that Carers of West Lothian began a holistic therapy project in November. These holistic therapy sessions aim to give carers a break from their role as carers and allow them to relax and be pampered.

The objective of the therapies was to introduce carers, on an individual basis, to aromatherapy, reflexology and massage by a qualified practitioner. This service would be offered free and carers would be given a forty-five minute appointment.

Thus far the therapies have been very successful with spaces being filled very quickly. Despite this we still have several appointments available for March. At the time of printing we have free appointments on the 10<sup>th</sup> March at the Ability Centre, Livingston and Bathgate. We also have appointments on the 24<sup>th</sup> March in Broxburn.

Should you wish to book one of these appointments please contact Annmarie Keast at the Carers of West Lothian office 01506 771750.



## "Put Your West Foot Forward"

The aim of this three-year project is to get people in West Lothian active by encouraging them to walk more. A programme of regular volunteer led health walks is being developed, and a booklet providing local information of suitable walk routes has been produced.

To obtain a copy of this free booklet please contact the Health Enhancing Physical Activity Project Co-ordinator on 01506 771752. For further information about the project you should contact Amanda McKay on 01506 775207.

## Norwich Union Breaks for Carers

Following on from the success of last years initiative, where twelve carers and their families spent a week in Blackpool, I am delighted to offer this opportunity to carers this year. The initiative will run during Carers Week (13<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> June) and aims to provide a much-deserved break to carers from their caring role. Again these breaks will take place at the Pontins Holiday Centre in Blackpool and will be free of charge.

The holiday is aimed primarily at Carers. However it is recognised that in some cases there will be more benefit to the carer if they are accompanied by other family members, a friend or the person they care for. It must be noted that the holidays are not supported by nursing, medical or social care staff and sadly it is not possible to cater for individuals with severe disabilities or complex medical conditions.

Whilst Pontins are working to meet the needs of people with disabilities there are currently only two fully accessible chalets. Therefore, people must be able to manage within a 'regular holiday chalet setting'. While we do not wish to exclude anyone, this is the reality of the facilities available. We know from previous experience that inappropriate referrals to the holiday lead to disappointment.

There are other holiday providers that specialise in catering for a variety of needs and we would be happy to give details of them if you think this holiday may not be suitable to your needs.

Any carers who would like to apply for a place on this initiative should contact, Clare Espley before the end of March 2005 and express their interest.

## Carers, Caring & You Courses' for Professionals

Carers of West Lothian is currently running a block of 'Carers, Caring & You' courses. The courses are aimed at social service and health staff, and also any professionals coming into contact with informal carers as part of their work. They are designed to enable participants to gain an insight into the nature and scale of informal caring, and an understanding of the life changes (both emotional and practical) that result from the caring role.

Due to an excellent response to both the current and previous block of courses, we will be organising more in October 2005. Dates will be confirmed in the Summer Edition of the 'Dovehill News'. If you are a carer and have an interest in helping to facilitate future courses, please contact Annmarie Keast at the Carers Centre on 01506 771750.

## Support Group for Carers of those who have had a Stroke

Due to the success of the Who Cares? training course for carers of those who have had a stroke, Carers of West Lothian will be running an informal support group. The support group will be a chance for carers of those who have had a stroke to meet and discuss the issues facing them, as well as listen to talks from local organisations and initiatives and participate in various activities. If you care for someone who has had a stroke and are interested in joining the group which will meet for about two hours once a month, please contact Clare Espley at the Carers of West Lothian office on 01506 771750.

## Power of Attorney

Power of Attorney gives you the legal right to act on behalf of someone who can no longer manage his or her money.

Even if you are caring for someone who is able to manage their own finances, and you are able to manage your own finances, arranging a Power of Attorney is still advisable.

Managing money can cause a problem for carers and for the cared for person. If for any reason you become incapacitated, even for a short period, without a Power of Attorney, relatives or friends have no legal right to deal with your finances. This could mean that even household bills would remain unpaid.

A Power of Attorney should be arranged through a Solicitor, and can be arranged at the same time as drawing up of a will or as a separate arrangement. As Solicitors fees vary, you can phone and ask your Solicitor how much it would cost.

ENABLE is a charity that aims to improve the lives and opportunities of people with learning disabilities and their families. ENABLE Trustee Service provides help for people to set up and run individual trusts for people with learning disabilities. ENABLE also provides a service in writing wills and powers of attorney for people with learning disabilities and their carers, telephone, 0141 226 4541.

For further information on Power of Attorney, contact your Solicitor. If you have Internet access, Alzheimer's Scotland [www.alzscot.org](http://www.alzscot.org) has a more in-depth explanation of Power of Attorney, this is valid for anyone wishing to arrange a Power of Attorney, and not isolated to those caring for a person with Alzheimer's.

You can also buy a Scottish Law, Power of Attorney Pack from as little as £4.49 [www.lawpack.co.uk](http://www.lawpack.co.uk) telephone, 020739440040. It would be advisable to have issues like these drawn up by a professional Solicitor, but not everyone can afford one.

## Book Reviews

**Blue Remembered Hills price £5.00**  
Rosemary Sutcliff



The author, Rosemary Sutcliff suffered from juvenile arthritis. This is an autobiographical account of the influences and people who have helped her in her personal development as a writer. She is a well established historical and children's novelist who has been awarded several prizes and in 1975 was honoured with an OBE for services to children's literature. Sutcliff recounts her early years when, as a victim of Still's Disease, a rare form of juvenile arthritis, she was unable to walk. After the war and a love affair, which left a lasting impression on her life, she started to write. This book ends when Oxford University Press accepted her first manuscript.

**Caring for Someone with Arthritis price £6.59**



Jim Pollard

This book offers practical information, advice and support to people who care for someone with arthritis. It explains exactly what arthritis is, how it affects the body, and the range of treatments that are currently available. There is also valuable material on personal issues (including money, accommodation, aids and adaptations), planning for the future, and who to turn to for additional help and support.

Designed to be a first point of reference, this book is supportive, positive, and full of valuable information and advice. Carers of West Lothian hold a reference copy which you are most welcome to borrow.

# Direct Payments - A Brief Explanation

## What are Direct Payments?

A direct payment is money that a local authority can give to you so you can arrange and buy your own support services, instead of the local authority arranging them for you. You can employ your own assistants or pay an agency of your choice to provide your support.

## How Can Direct Payments Work?

Direct payments can open new doors for you to have:

- More freedom in the way you live your life
- More independence
- More choice and control over your services

## Who Can Use Direct Payments?

The following people can get direct payments:

- Disabled adults assessed as needing community care services;
- Disabled 16 and 17 year olds assessed as needing children's services;
- Parents, or people with parental responsibility for, a disabled child (under the age of 18) who has been assessed as needing children's services, and
- Attorneys and guardians with welfare and financial powers to act on behalf of the person who needs the services.

Presently, most disabled people who receive community care services can ask for a direct payment and arrange their own services. Examples of these kinds of services include personal care; housing support services, help to get involved in social activities and accessing work and education.

## Who can tell me if Direct Payments would work for my situation?

Contact your Social Worker if you have one, alternatively telephone your local Social Work Office. Direct Payments Scotland has links to more in-depth information on their website, [www.dpscotland.org.uk](http://www.dpscotland.org.uk). There is a Direct Payments Help line also, telephone 0131 558 3450.

Direct Payments are not suitable in every situation, and can involve a lot of work to set up; there is help available for this. However, Direct Payments could give you more flexibility of how care is received and give you more control.

If you would like any further information, please contact me and I will try and answer your questions.

**Kirsty Archibald, Carer Support Worker, 01506 775525**

## Who Cares Course for Carers of Those With Arthritis

On 22<sup>nd</sup> February between 10-12:30pm, Carers of West Lothian will be running a course for carers of those with arthritis, at the Strathbrock Partnership Centre. The course is free of charge and is a six week course designed to give carers a chance to learn new information and gain support from other carers in their caring role. The course will include information on the services available in West Lothian such as Social Services, Occupational Therapy and Health Services as well local and national voluntary organisations and support groups and advice on dealing with the emotional aspects of caring. Carers will also be able to learn more about holistic therapies and pain management in the treatment of arthritis. On the day of the course there will be a free of charge lunch and help to find sitters. Help with transport is also available.

If you would like to join the group, meet new friends and learn new skills or you would like more information, please contact **Clare Espley at the Carers of West Lothian office on 01506 771750** and we will send you a registration form for the course.



## Work, rest and play

### Carers Week 13-19 June 2005

The Carers Week theme for 2005 is work, rest and play, and will be promoting the rights of carers to have more choices and opportunities.

Many carers give up work to care, or find it difficult to take up employment, leisure and training opportunities. Carers Week is an ideal time to highlight the needs of carers, the right that carers have, and the contribution that carers make to the community, and the support and services available to carers.

As always, Carers of West Lothian will be organising a number of events for West Lothian carers during Carers Week. Details will be available in our next edition of the 'Dovehill News', which is due out at the beginning of June.

However, if you want to find out what's going on sooner, just give us a call on 01506 771750, or drop into the Carers Centre for a chat sometime during May!

Carers of West Lothian Carers Centre  
Strathbrock Partnership Centre  
189a West Main Street  
BROXBURN EH52 5LH



Phone: 01506 771750  
Fax: 01506 858882  
E mail: office@westlothian.com  
Web: www.carers-westlothian.com

Opening Times  
Monday to Friday 10.00am - 3.00pm

### Useful Telephone Numbers

Advice Shop	01506 776444
Benefits Agency Enquiry Line	0800 88 22 00
Disability West Lothian	01506 774030
Handicabs	01506 633953
Local Volunteer Enterprise	01506 650111
NHS Helpline	0800 22 44 88
Samaritans	0131 2219999
<b>Social Work Centres</b>	
Livingston	01506 777777
Bathgate	01506 776700
Broxburn	01506 775666
Out of hours Emergency Service-	01506 777401
	01506 777402
	01506 777404
Voluntary Action West Lothian	01506 634115
West Lothian Council -	01506 777000
West Lothian Connected	
NHS Help Desk	01506 777664
NHS 24	08454 24 24 24

## Carers on Line Website Links



[www.arthritiscare.org.uk](http://www.arthritiscare.org.uk) – UK-wide voluntary organisation. Their aim is to promote independence and empower those with the disease to live positive lives as well as raise awareness of the condition. This site gives news on drugs used such as Co-proximal - and fitness programmes for the condition.

[www.arthritiscare/patientuk](http://www.arthritiscare/patientuk) - provides a helpline service offering a range of self-management and personal development training courses for people of all ages to enable them to be in charge of their arthritis.

<http://www.opm.co.uk/scottishcarers> - the Scottish Executive is working with the Office for Public Management (OPM) looking into the future needs of unpaid carers, and how services might need to change over the next 10 years and beyond. Visit this site for up to date papers and reports, and to complete an on-line survey.

[www.sharedcarenetwork.org.uk](http://www.sharedcarenetwork.org.uk) - does not provide services but is an umbrella organisation for family based short breaks schemes for disabled children and young people in the UK. Gives details of schemes local to you, and training if you wish to become a short-break carer.

[www.vocal.org.uk](http://www.vocal.org.uk) - new-look website for the Voice Of Carers Across Lothian (VOCAL), which is based in Edinburgh. The website offers information on advocacy, addictions, training, counselling, group work, volunteers and advice.

**Carers of West Lothian's own website where you will find the latest news and you can access all of our support materials is <http://www.carers-westlothian.com/>**

**The Carers of West Lothian  
Carers Centre will be closed  
25th and 28th March 2005  
for the Easter Break**

Please note that views expressed throughout this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Carers of West Lothian. We cannot endorse or recommend any service advertised within this publication