



The voice of  
learning disability

# Mencap Carers Network Newsletter

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## MENCAP CARERS NETWORK

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Mencap Carers Network is 1 year old! It's hard to believe that it is only a year ago since the Carers Network was set up. During this time we have answered 95 enquiries, held Network meetings throughout the County and enabled people to make their views known via a County-wide Consultation on the Government Green Paper "Shaping the Future of Care". We also held a County-wide information giving event which included such topics as Carers Assessments, Annual Health Checks and Carers Emergency Plans.

We have been able to respond to a wide variety of enquiries which include such issues

as Community Care Assessments, Appointeeship, Benefits, Council Tax Carers Disregard, Grants, Wills and Trusts, Supported Living, Emergency Plans, Carers Assessments, to name but a few! Our ability to respond to a wide range of enquiries is helped by the fact that we access Mencap's national database of information and have added to this our own local database which currently lists information on 177 local organisations.

Please contact us if you would like information or advice, details of the next Carers Network meeting in your area, or if you have any suggestions about items we could include in future editions of this newsletter.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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## LEARNING DISABILITY PARTNERSHIP BOARD

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Learning Disability Partnership Boards were set up to check that the objectives set out in Valuing People and Valuing People Now (national strategy for learning disability services) are being met.

The Board in Cumbria is currently reviewing membership; at the moment Carers are represented by Mencap Carers Network and a Parent Carer. At the last meeting of the Board the decision was made that representation should be increased to 3 Family Carers who will be supported by Mencap Carers Network. There was some discussion as to whether we needed to recruit Family Carers with "special interests" in for example, Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities or Older Carers. What do you think about this, also how do you think Family Carers should be chosen to be members of the Board, should this be by an election type process?

There are also opportunities to join sub-groups, ie Health, Housing and Employment.

The Board meets six times a year, including the AGM, at venues alternating between Kendal, Carlisle and Penrith. Meetings usually last for no longer than 4 hours. The sub-groups meet in between Board meetings; the Employment sub-group in Carlisle, Housing in Workington and Health in Penrith.

We are very keen to get your views on this, or to discuss this further—please contact us by either telephoning 01768 868854, emailing [sue.maguire@mencap.org.uk](mailto:sue.maguire@mencap.org.uk) or by attending a Carers Network meeting in your area.



### Meet the Staff:

**Sue Maguire,**  
Lead Co-ordinator,  
Mencap Carers  
Network and  
Community  
Development Officer  
for Cumbria

**Norman Clark,**  
Network Facilitator

**Sue Cowperthwaite,**  
Network Facilitator

**Jean Watson,**  
Secretary



## PERSONAL BUDGETS

From 16th November, Adult Social Care (used to be Social Services) will be introducing personal budgets for people who receive community based services but not for people who are in residential care or nursing homes.

Personal budgets are an allocation of funding given to service users after an assessment and should be enough to meet their assessed needs.

Service users can either take their personal budget as a direct payment (ie a cash payment) or can leave Adult Social Care to arrange their

services. The other alternative is that people may choose a combination of the two.

A personal budget is confirmed after a support plan has been approved by Adult Social Care.

This approach will be used for all new referrals for community based services, and also when a person has a review.

Easy read leaflets will soon be available which will give more information about Personal budgets.

In the meantime if you would like any further information please contact us on 01768 868854.

## MONEY TO PAY FOR SHORT BREAKS FOR CARERS

You may have seen on GMTV recently that Carers UK are campaigning to secure money that the Government said was for carers short breaks but that is being used for other things.



Last year the Government pledged £150 million over two years to pay for short breaks for Carers.

The money was given to Primary Care Trusts around the country who were meant to work

with Adult Social Care (Social Services) to give carers a break.

Because the Primary Care Trusts were not told that this money HAD to be used for short breaks (the funding was not ring-fenced) many Primary Care Trusts have used the money to pay for other things. As a result only 20% is being used for carers.

If you believe that this money should be used to support carers you can:

1. Contact the Chair of your local Primary Care Trust
2. Contact your MP
3. Contact Mencap Carers Network on 01768 868854

to make your views heard.

## HOSPITAL COMMUNICATION BOOK

If your son or daughter needs to be in hospital you will worry about how they will cope with this unfamiliar situation. One thing that might help is the hospital communication book. At your son/daughter's admission to hospital you should ask that staff use the book.

Carlisle Infirmary and West Cumberland Infirmary have Communication Books. They are designed to help hospital staff to communicate with any patient who has communication difficulties. These could be

learning disability, sight problems, hearing problems, dementia, stroke or many other conditions.

There are two parts of the book:

Part one is information on communicating with patients. It includes useful signs, pictures and symbols that might be useful.

Part two is a picture and photo toolkit which covers everyday activities in hospital.

Used properly the Communication Book should help vulnerable patients have a better experience in hospital.

If you want more information contact us on 01768 868854.

## RESOURCE BRIEFS

**NHS Direct** has worked with Mencap to create an accessible guide to its services. The leaflet is aimed at people with a learning disability. Free Call 01793 648 248 or go to [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/article.aspx?name=HowToOrderLeafletsPostersPromoItems](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/article.aspx?name=HowToOrderLeafletsPostersPromoItems).

**DirectGov**, the public services website has a dedicated section for disabled people. The pages are clear and divided into useful sections such as rights, transport, education, housing. Go to [www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople](http://www.direct.gov.uk/disabledpeople)

**The Down's Syndrome Association's** website now includes a new area focusing on the

dual diagnosis of Down's syndrome and autistic spectrum disorder. The new section includes a range of useful links and a group forum. Go to [tinyurl.com/nesqo8](http://tinyurl.com/nesqo8).



### Artspider

Artspider is Mencap's arts website. It has pictures, films and music made by people with a learning disability.

It also has information about things to do and see. You can see the website at [www.artspider.org.uk](http://www.artspider.org.uk).

The Artspider website has been changed. It is now easier to use. You can send your artwork to be put on Artspider.

Email [artspider@mencap.org.uk](mailto:artspider@mencap.org.uk) and tell them what you think about it.

## HARASSMENT AND BULLYING

Does your son or daughter suffer harassment when they are out and about?



Because of the tragic case of Mrs Pilkington who killed herself and her daughter after years of abuse and harassment from local people, the Home Office have produced a document that can be used to report ANY incident that makes someone feel unsafe or threatened in any way.

This can range from name calling, following, making fun to spitting, pushing or worse physical assault. When incidents like these happen to someone with a learning disability it is called hate crime.

You can get a copy of the reporting form from your local police station. You can get help to fill it in, or you can ask someone else to help.

Once complete you hand it in at your police station. It is important to report all incidents, minor harassment can escalate into serious violence. By reporting incidents you help to inform the police and your local authority, whose job it is to work to stop hate crime.

If this is an issue that you have been affected by or you would like more information, then please contact us on 01768 868854.

## SHAPING THE FUTURE OF CARE TOGETHER

Over thirty people took part in Consultations and Focus Groups organised by Mencap around the Government Green Paper "Shaping the Future of Care Together". This very important paper sets out plans to create a National Care Service as well as proposals to reform the way care and support is funded.

People who attended expressed their concerns about the future of adult social care and how it will be funded.

One major concern was the suggestion that some disability benefits may be put into an integrated social care "pot" rather than being paid to individuals. Many people favoured a funding option which the Government have dismissed, of having "ring-fenced" tax increases to fund social care.

The results of these events have now been collated and sent to Mencap's National Campaign team and will form part of Mencap's direct response to the Government regarding this paper.

If you would like to see a summary of the above events, then please contact Sue Maguire on 01768 868854.

## MENTAL CAPACITY ACT

The Mental Capacity Act is designed to empower people to make decisions for themselves where possible. It has five key principles:

1. Every adult (over 18) has the right to make their own decisions and must be assumed to have capacity to do so **UNLESS IT IS PROVED OTHERWISE**. This means you cannot assume that someone cannot make a decision for themselves just because they have a medical condition or disability.
2. Individuals should be supported to make their own decisions. They must be given all practicable help before anyone treats them as not being able to make their own decisions.

3. Unwise decisions—people have a right to make decisions that others might regard as unwise or eccentric. You cannot treat someone as lacking capacity for this reason.
4. Best interests—anything done for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done in their best interests.
5. Less restrictive option—the person making the decision for someone who lacks capacity must consider if it is possible to do this in a way that would have the least interference with the freedoms and rights of the individual.

The Mental Capacity Act is a long legal document.

If you need more information please contact Mencap Carers Network on 01768 868854.

## NEW DEAL FOR PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

Cumbria has a lot of gaps in its services for people with autism. The Government will be producing a plan for services for people with autism later this year. It should become law early next year.

Every local authority will have to keep a register of autistic children. Other agencies will be obliged to collect data on adults with autism. The plan will focus on four main themes.

These are: Social Inclusion; Health; Choice and Control and Awareness raising and Training.

The Autistic Society website is [www.nas.org.uk](http://www.nas.org.uk) and the Autism Helpline is 0845 070 4004.

For further details please contact our office on 01768 868854.

## CARERS CINEMA CARD



Carers Cinema Card (Cinema Exhibitor's Association Card). Did you know that your son or daughter could get a card that will allow someone to accompany them to the cinema for free?

To get one of these cards you need to go onto the internet (if you don't have a computer the staff at your local library will help you to go online). Go to the Card Network website - [www.ceacard.co.uk](http://www.ceacard.co.uk)—and print off the application form.

Fill the form in, include the proof of disability as requested and send off with a cheque for £5.50.

The card lasts for a year and can be used as often as you like.

For more information call Mencap Carers Network on 01768 868854.

## ANNUAL HEALTH CHECKS



People with a learning disability have more health problems than the rest of the population.

The Government has asked all GPs to keep a register of patients who have learning disabilities.

They have also asked that Doctors offer an Annual Health Check to everyone on the register.

Not all Doctors are taking part.

To find out if your GP is taking part in the scheme phone the surgery and ask.

If they have signed up you should ask when your son or daughter can expect an invitation for a check up.

If they have not signed up you could ask why not, but you could ask for a health check to be carried out anyway.

For more information please contact Mencap Carers Network on 01768 868854.