



Community Support Service

HEADLINES

FEBRUARY 2010

Headway Essex

Upcoming Support Groups

Basildon

Tuesday 9th February
Tuesday 9th March
Tuesday 13th April

Venue:

Papworth Trust,
Progression Centre,
The Witchards, Basildon,
Essex, SS16 5BP
7.30pm - 9.30pm

Chelmsford

Tuesday 16th February
Tuesday 16th March
Tuesday 20th April

Venue:

Swift House, Hedgerows
Business Park, Colchester
Road, Springfield,
Chelmsford, Essex,
CM2 5PF

Tendring

Tuesday 2nd March
Tuesday 4th May
Tuesday 6th July

Venue:

Clacton & District Stroke
Association, 85 Frinton
Road, Holland-on-Sea,
CO15 5UH
7:00pm - 8:30pm

Carers SGM

Friday 26th February
Friday 26th March (pub
lunch (to be confirmed))
Friday 23rd April

Venue:

The Headway Centre,
2 Boxted Road,
Colchester, Essex,
CO4 5JD
10.30am - 12.30pm

Colchester Social Club

Monday 1st February
Monday 1st March
Monday 5th April

Venue:

Phone 01206 845945
The Headway Centre,
2 Boxted Road, Colchester,
CO4 5JD
7.00pm - 9.00pm

EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT ALLOWANCE

Work capability assessment – some advice

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is the new benefit paid to people whose ability to work is limited by ill health or disability. Since 27 October 2008, it has replaced both incapacity benefit and income support paid on the grounds of ill health. In the past few months, we have noticed that a number of our clients who have claimed ESA since the above date have failed their work capability assessment (WCA) after a medical assessment was carried out. This means they have had to appeal against this decision if they have been deemed to be capable of work. In the section below, we will advise clients on form-filling and how best to approach the medical assessment, if they are asked to attend one.

How is the WCA applied?

A Jobcentre Plus decision-maker looks at the information provided in all ESA claims to see if there is evidence that people have **a limited capability for work or for work-related activity**. If they do not find such evidence, they will send people form ESA50, the 'limited capability for work questionnaire', to complete.

Form ESA50

This form asks for standard details (name, address, GP etc.) and asks if help is needed to attend a medical, if one is arranged. The rest of the form is an assessment of how your illness or disability affects your ability to work. This is divided into: **part 1 - physical functions** (e.g. activities including walking, standing, bending, speech, hearing - there are 11 in total) and **part 2 - mental, cognitive and intellectual functions** (e.g. activities including the learning and understanding of how to complete tasks, memory and concentration, executive tasks, coping with social situations - there are 10 in total). We would advise people who have sustained acquired brain injury to **think very carefully** when filling in part 2 of the questionnaire (see overleaf).

At the medical assessment

The medical assessment is carried out by a healthcare professional on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions. They will ask questions to try to identify that what is said during the interview matches what was written in the ESA50 questionnaire. During the assessment:

Physical disabilities:

- ◆ Explain your abilities as fully as you can, but tell the health professional about any pain or tiredness you would feel carrying out certain activities, both on the day of the examination **and over time**. (How would you feel, for example, if you were asked to do the same activity repeatedly?)
- ◆ Do not overestimate your ability to do these tasks. Focus on the problems and difficulties you have, rather than on the ways you manage to deal with them in everyday life.

Mental, cognitive and intellectual disabilities:

The health professional should ask how conditions affect people's day-to-day abilities. So, tell them truthfully:

- ◆ Whether you can understand and remember things;
- ◆ Whether you are able to concentrate on tasks;
- ◆ How you cope with change and unexpected situations;
- ◆ How you get on with other people....and about any other difficulties you may have.

Within the 21 activities mentioned above (Form ESA50), there is a list of 'descriptors' with scores ranging from 0 to 15 points. These 'descriptors' explain tasks of varying degrees of difficulty. If your **total** score in all 21 activities reaches 15, you are assessed as having **a limited capability for work**.

(See overleaf for further advice.)

Further advice on the WCA...

Form-filling:

- ◆ Keep a diary for a week, or ask someone you know well to do it for you, that lists all the day-to-day activities you have difficulty doing or need assistance with (e.g. do you need reminding, prompting or encouraging to start or complete a task?).
- ◆ If necessary, get help from your community support worker, your local CAB or another advice centre such as DIAL.

Medical assessment:

- ◆ If you do not understand a question, ask the healthcare professional to explain what they mean or to repeat the question.
- ◆ If possible, we would advise having someone with you to fill in any gaps in the information you provide.

For further information about form ESA50 and questions covered at the medical assessment, call any member of the Community Support Team on 01206 768797.

Source: Disability Rights Handbook – 2009 to 2010

And other news...

GRANTS FOR HOME INSULATION - *Reduce carbon footprint – and perhaps save money*

A Headway Essex service user who receives Disability Living Allowance (DLA) has informed me of a grant she received from her energy provider, E.ON, to put towards cavity wall insulation. In fact this grant may be available to anyone aged 70 or over or who receives DLA or a number of recognised benefits. The grant could cover cavity wall insulation, loft insulation or both, although you must own your own property or be a private tenant with permission from the landlord. There are some exceptions according to the type of property, although further details can be obtained by phoning E.ON on **0845 301 4927**. A similar scheme is available from British Gas – contact **0845 971 7731** quoting **HON** for information. It may well be worth contacting other energy providers to find out if they offer similar help.

NB: Please phone relevant provider for FULL information about eligibility to these schemes.

Sources: www.eonenergy.com – insulation grants – do you qualify? www.britishgas.co.uk/energy-efficiency/products/home-insulation

HELP FOR CARERS IN MID-ESSEX

The new NHS Carers' Directory

Mid-Essex Primary Care Trust have compiled a Carers' Directory – a comprehensive guide to the support and services that are available to all carers who live in the mid-Essex region. This is available online, and it provides details of all areas of support that can be contacted, depending on the direct needs of the person who is being cared for. Many people do not really like being referred to as a 'carer'. Instead, they see themselves as being a person who looks after someone, and does what many others would do in their situation. Having said that, caring for a person who has sustained acquired brain injury is often a tremendous challenge and can cause an immediate re-assessment of the ways in which carers live their lives - e.g. new roles, responsibilities and relationship dynamics.

Many carers who we support already know they have little time for themselves, and have the potential to become ill because of being over-worked and over-stressed. GPs in mid-Essex now hold **Carers' Cards** that give carers the contact information they need to source help, advice and support. So carers who live in mid-Essex are advised to tell their GPs about their situations and pick up one of these cards. In return, GPs should be able to ensure carers have regular health check-ups and refer them to other local organisations who can help.

Online: www.midessex.nhs.uk/carers

If you do not have an internet connection, call **01245 459459** and you will be able to obtain a written copy of the directory.

SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS

Chelmsford

A reminder to all those who attend the Chelmsford SGM that we have returned to Swift House (see front page for full address) until further notice.

Basildon

We would like to thank Rob Warren, senior OT from Basildon University Hospital, for his excellent presentation on neuro-plasticity on 12 January. Those who regularly attend our support groups in Basildon refer to Rob as 'The Bucket Man'. Towards the end of his talk he could not resist mentioning his 'bucket' (another way of describing information overload) and advised a good night's sleep and exercise as ways of emptying the bucket to keep people's minds refreshed.

If you require any further information, please contact any team member at the Community Support Service on 01206 768797 or email us at: communitysupport@headwayessex.org.uk