



# Community Support Service

# HEADLINES

OCTOBER 2011

Headway Essex

## SUPPORTING CARERS

### *North East Essex & Mid Essex PCT Implementation Plans 2011/12*

Both Primary Care Trusts' (PCTs') commitment to supporting unpaid carers sits within a national framework. In 2008, the National Carers Strategy aimed to ensure that by 2018 carers would be recognised and valued and helped to maintain a balance between their caring role and other areas of their lives.

#### **North East Essex - Local Background**

The last Census showed that there are 30,097 family carers living in North East Essex. 21% of these carers provide care for 50 or more hours per week. The Tendring area has the highest proportion of family carers. A Carers Needs Assessment was completed by the PCT in July 2011 and its recommendations were:

- Better identification of carers and timely referral to support services;
- To provide advice and practical and emotional support;
- To involve carers in the local decision-making process by means of focus groups and interviews which represent all carer groups, including young carers and carers from ethnic minorities;
- To increase local level data with key statistics, for example, of the number of carers accessing services;
- A Carers' Project Lead, Sharon Withnell, has been appointed to address gaps in current services and develop strategies for the implementation of future support services;
- To support and identify young carers, particularly within schools.

#### **Support for North East Essex Carers in 2011/12**

There is not sufficient space in this newsletter to detail what the PCT is currently doing. However, information is available on [www.northeastessexpct.nhs.uk/carers/news](http://www.northeastessexpct.nhs.uk/carers/news) Sharon Withnell would welcome any questions, comments or feedback on this local plan from

North East Essex carers. To do this, you can email - [sharon.withnell@northeastessex.nhs.uk](mailto:sharon.withnell@northeastessex.nhs.uk) or contact her on 01206 286837.

#### **Mid Essex - Local Context**

Similar to North East Essex, there has been a recommendation to improve the identification of carers and to offer them day-to-day support. Other recommendations have been to raise awareness of carers and their issues and provide training and courses.

#### **What Mid Essex PCT is Doing**

Again there is space for only a snapshot of initiatives, although the full implementation plan is available on:

[www.midessex.nhs.uk/supporting\\_carers](http://www.midessex.nhs.uk/supporting_carers)

#### **1 Identifying carers**

A Carers Champion Support Officer has been employed to raise carer awareness at GP practices. Information packs have been developed for both GPs and wider healthcare professionals. A website can be accessed at [www.midessex.nhs.uk/carers](http://www.midessex.nhs.uk/carers).

#### **2 Carers Wellbeing Checks**

A locally enhanced service agreement (LES) for carers wellbeing checks was developed in 2009/10 and has continued into this financial year. 45 out of 50 GP practices have agreed to provide the service. There are three aims to the LES:

- Carers are identified and put on the practice register;
- To offer all identified carers a referral to appropriate services and organisations;
- To provide carers with an annual wellbeing check.

Headway Essex has always stressed the need for carers to look after their own health and we advise all carers to access these websites if they can and talk to GPs about health issues that may result from their caring role.

## HEADLINE NEWS CONTINUED

### VILLAGE AGENTS - Mid Essex *Easy access to services and information*

Village Agents operate mainly, but not exclusively, in the rural areas of mid-Essex. A Village Agent will visit people at home if they have difficulties or need assistance with any aspect of daily life. These could be:

- ◆ Accessing local social groups, leisure or learning facilities;
- ◆ Dealing with welfare benefits;
- ◆ Travel;
- ◆ Finding out about volunteering opportunities;
- ◆ Social services and carers' support;
- ◆ Getting involved in health and fitness activities.

The agents have an abundance of information at their fingertips and are in constant contact with local organisations and service providers to enable them to provide the most up-to-date, independent advice for their customers. They work alongside key people and groups in the community to connect people to the best help and support available. Agents deal with issues no matter how complex or simple.

To talk to a Village Agent or to arrange a confidential home visit, please call free on **0800 977 5858**.

**Source: Village Agents**  
[www.villageagentsessex.org.uk](http://www.villageagentsessex.org.uk)

### FREE EMPLOYABILITY SUPPORT

Chelmer Training, located close to Homebase in Chelmsford, offers free career guidance in helping people over the age of 19 return to work or change career. People would meet on Fridays between 9.30am and 12.30pm for assistance in updating CVs, interview preparation and job search. IT training is also provided for people who wish to brush up their computer skills and for those who have not used computers before. These sessions are open to anyone who lives in Essex. For further details, please call **01245 216774**.

**Source: Chelmer Training**

### PROPOSED CHANGES TO CONTRIBUTION-BASED EMPLOYMENT AND SUPPORT ALLOWANCE (ESA)

All people who receive the above benefit will have received (or will shortly receive) a letter from Jobcentreplus of the Department of Work and Pensions to inform them of proposed changes that are part of the Welfare Reform Bill currently going through Parliament.

The key change that may affect those with ABI who are reading this article is that the Government proposes to limit the amount of time that people who receive contribution-based ESA and who are in the Work Related Activity Group to a period 12 months. (See questions and answers below.) If passed by Parliament, this change would be introduced in April 2012. **However, these measures have not received Royal Assent and there is a possibility that this legislation could be changed.**

At this stage, claimants do not need to do anything and will continue to receive their current benefits. If these proposals are approved and affect claimants' benefits, Jobcentreplus will write to them again to tell them what they need to do.

If you have concerns about these changes, please call our team or contact your local Jobcentreplus.

#### What is contribution-based ESA?

People receive this benefit if they have limited capability for work and have paid enough National Insurance contributions. It is different to income-related ESA, which is means-tested.

#### What is the Work Related Activity Group?

People in this group have been medically assessed as having limited capability for work. This means it has been decided that work may not be appropriate for them now, but with support they can prepare for work in the future.

**Source: Jobcentreplus (DWP)**

## BRAIN INJURY RESEARCH

### *Developments in robotic therapy for hand movement after stroke*

A novel approach to rehabilitation of hand movement after stroke has been developed by an American research team. Stroke is a leading cause of disability, with around one-third of patients left with some degree of physical impairment.

In the past, robotic therapy devices have been used to help re-train stroke survivors to use their shoulders and legs. The devices are attached to the affected area and work in conjunction with computer training programmes to help patients gradually regain movement.

Recently, devices have been developed that can help rehabilitate the complex and intricate use of hands and fingers. However, due to their size and design, the devices themselves usually place restrictions on movement, thus limiting their effectiveness.

The research team at the University of Illinois overcame this limitation with a device called a PneuGlove, which allows full movement of the arm and fingers when in use. The glove can be used in real-world environments or in Virtual Reality Environment (VRE) training and is particularly useful for practising the action of grasping an object.

In the team's study, published in 2010, two groups of seven stroke survivors completed a six-week training protocol consisting of three one-hour sessions held each week. One group wore the PneuGlove during training, performed both within a novel virtual reality environment and in a real-world setting with physical objects, while the other group completed the same training without the device. Patients using the PneuGlove were found to have improved more than patients not using the device on a range of tests, such as of hand/wrist movement and pinch strength. This demonstrates great promise in an important area of rehabilitation.

#### Reference

Connolly, L., Jia, Y., Toro, M. L., Stoykov, M. E., Kenyon, R. V. & Kamper, D. G. (2010) A pneumatic glove and immersive virtual reality environment for hand rehabilitative training after stroke. IEEE Transactions on Neural Systems and Rehabilitation Engineering 18 (5) 551 - 559.

**Source: Headway UK**

## FREE HEALTH CHECKS

### *For residents of North East Essex*

A member of the Health Improvement team can perform a free health check to measure:

- Blood pressure;
- Body Mass Index & waist measurement;
- Cholesterol\*;
- Carbon monoxide breath test for smokers;
- Cardiovascular disease risk\*.

Health checks are available Mondays to Fridays between 9.00am and 4.00pm and on Saturdays between 10.30am and 12.00pm. You can book for a 30 minute appointment by calling **01206 574256** or by dropping in at **Cornerstone, 5-7 Sir Isaacs Walk, Colchester, CO1 1JJ.**

\*Not available for those aged under 40, diabetic, those taking medication for blood pressure or cholesterol, anyone who has had a stroke or heart attack or been diagnosed with angina, chronic kidney disease or atrial fibrillation or had their CVD risk calculated in the last five years.

## SOUTH EAST DRIVEABILITY

### *Driving after ABI*

For those who have sustained ABI it is a legal requirement to inform the Drivers' Medical Group of the DVLA of their brain injury, as this may have affected their ability to drive. Failure to do so is a criminal offence. Having informed the DVLA, there is a possibility - although this is not always the case - that people will be asked to undertake a driving assessment.

For people in South Essex, assessments will be carried out at South East Driveability, Preston Hall Hospital, Aylesford, Kent, ME20 7NJ. A full assessment takes approximately three hours and will include assessments by a qualified health care professional and by a driving consultant. Where possible, all clients have an '*in car*' assessment to evaluate their driving ability. Following assessment, retraining can be offered by driving advisors (check for eligibility criteria). A fee is charged based on the level of assessment required. If you live in the South East region, you can be referred by the DVLA or Motability and your costs will be met. You can also self-refer, or be referred by your GP, consultant or other health professionals. For further advice and details call **01622 795719.**

**Source: South East Driveability. Also see 'Driving after Brain Injury' - Headway UK.**

# UPCOMING SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS - 2011

**Tendring** At: **Tendring Specialist Stroke Services**, 85 Frinton Road,  
Holland-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 5UH from 7.00pm to 8.30pm

On: Tuesday 4 October (social evening)  
Tuesday 1st November  
Tuesday 6th December (social evening)

**Basildon** At: **St John Ambulance South Essex Headquarters**, Sandon Road,  
Pitsea, Essex, SS14 1TH from 7.30pm to 9.30pm

On: Tuesday 11th October  
Tuesday 8th November  
Tuesday 13th December

**Chelmsford** At: **Swift House**, Hedgerows Business Park, Springfield, Chelmsford Rd,  
Essex, CM2 5PF from 7.00pm to 9.00pm

On: Tuesday 18th October  
Tuesday 15th November  
Tuesday 20th December

## **CARERS SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS**

**Colchester** At: **The Headway Centre**, 2 Boxted Road, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JD  
from 10.30am to 12.30pm

On: Friday 28th October  
Friday 25th November  
NO MEETING IN DECEMBER

**South Essex** At: **Benfleet Methodist Church**, High Street, South Benfleet, Essex,  
SS7 5LH from 7.00pm to 9.00pm

On: Thursday 27th October  
Thursday 24th November  
NO MEETING IN DECEMBER

## **SOCIAL EVENINGS** - please contact 01206 845945 if you wish to attend

At: **The Headway Centre**, 2 Boxted Road, Colchester, Essex, CO4 5JD  
from 7.00pm to 9.00pm

On: Monday 3rd October  
Monday 7th November  
Monday 5th December

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](mailto:communitysupport@headwayessex.org.uk)