

Clawback of Carer's Allowance 'is affecting 80,000 carers'

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been criticised heavily for continuing to claw back £150 million in overpaid Carer's Allowance from carers rather than write it off as a loss.

In 2018, it emerged the DWP had detected higher rates of overpayment of Carer's Allowance than in the past, following an exercise to match claims to earnings data. Most of the overpayments were caused by carers' earnings exceeding the earnings limit.

There are 850,000 people receiving Carer's Allowance and it is thought nearly 80,000 carers are affected. Many overpayments were for one week, but in some cases overpayments continued for a decade.

Around 70% of identified cases arose because carers failed to notify the DWP with the correct information about their earnings and they were therefore over the limit. Few cases involved fraud – most were due to honest mistakes on the part of carers or the failure of the DWP, due to staff shortages, to spot payment errors.

The DWP aims to recover overpayments where it claims the carer was at fault. Just over half of these debts are under £1,000 but at the end of March 2019, 133 individuals owed £20,000 – which could take 34 years to pay back.

Carers' Resource chief executive Chris Whiley says: "We haven't heard from many carers about this issue as yet so our concerns are increasing, as we fear people are afraid of coming forward due to perhaps feeling scared, embarrassed or ashamed. We would encourage any carers affected to come to speak to us and we'll do what we can to support them."

Last August, the Work and Pensions Committee chaired by MP Frank Field called on the DWP to reassess its approach to Carer's Allowance and consider writing off the debts.

The Government responded in November and said: "Legislation is... clear that claimants are required to report relevant changes of circumstances, including changes to their earnings... Where overpayments occur as a result of the claimant's failure to report such changes, the Department is obligated to ensure they are recovered. Overpayments can only be waived in very limited circumstances... bulk reviews are not possible."

Mr Field wrote back to the Government on behalf of the committee to press for more details. He also said: "This response gives us little hope that the DWP has even



*This Parliament has not yet discussed Carer's Allowance
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understood what the problems are, let alone that it might do anything to end the misery it continues to inflict."

Mr Field has since lost his seat as an MP and Labour's Stephen Timms, MP for East Ham, became the new committee chair in late January.

A Parliament researcher told us: "There have been no further announcements or questions in Parliament on this matter since the Government issued its response in November."

A DWP spokesperson told us: "In cases where we have made an error we do not pursue repayment. While we have a duty to the taxpayer to recover money in cases of fraud or error, safeguards are in place to ensure deductions are reasonable."

The DWP has not conducted any recent evaluation of the impact of its debt recovery policies and it does not know how repaying debts will affect carers or the person they care for, according to a Commons briefing published this January.

● If you are affected by this story, please get in touch with us. You could also contact select committee chair Stephen Timms MP by emailing timmss@parliament.uk, calling 020 7219 4000, or tweeting [@stephenc Timms](https://twitter.com/stephenc Timms)

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Tasty starter to 25th anniversary year

It's our 25th anniversary in 2020 and we're celebrating all year, not just on a specific date.

The first of our special events was held at the Bentham lunch group, hosted by Bentham Golf Club, on 27 January. Twenty carers met for a two-course lunch and enjoyed a slice of cake.

The lunch group was set up 15 years ago to meet the growing demand for a local supportive group. It aims to reduce isolation and it has helped friendships to grow through difficult phases in life such as coping with dementia and bereavement.

Carer Raymond Gott, who has been going to the lunch group for more than two years, says: "Carers' Resource gives us help and advice about my wife's dementia. If we want anything they're just there. We really enjoy coming to the meal. We enjoy the company and it's good food."

Our next special event was a party at the knitting group in our Shipley office in February, where there was more tea and cake, plus music and chat.



Above, Sally Horner and Debi Hawkins, of Carers' Resource, with volunteer Susan Simpson. Below left, Raymond and Rose Gott

Look out for these 25th anniversary events on pages 6-7 if you want to spend an extra-special few hours celebrating with us – plus there are loads more to come in the next edition of Choices:

- Threshfield Lunch, 20 March
- Young carers' street party in Harrogate, 17 April
- 25th anniversary free meal for carers, 22 April
- Bradford City Hall tour and refreshments with the Lord Mayor, 27 April

If you're at Harrogate Beer Festival in March, we'll be staffing the cloakroom as normal to raise funds and we'll also have a celebration corner. Please come over to say hello!

Have your say at our carer forums

This year's first quarterly carer forums in each of our offices brought some lively debate, writes head of operations in North Yorkshire Candy Squire-Watt.

Nine carers came along in Harrogate and we were joined by Healthwatch North Yorkshire, which asked carers about some of the main issues affecting them. Topics raised included accessing services in more rural



areas, the need for carers to have a break, and the difficulties of finding and paying for adequate respite care to support this.

Jenny Sengel from our CReate service heard carers' thoughts on what support is needed for working carers. Forum members discussed how crucial it is to regain skills and confidence following a prolonged period of caring, and the importance of helping employers to understand what impact caring might have on work.

We followed this up by looking at the Manifesto for Carers, put together by carers and the national charity Carers UK, that tells politicians what the priorities are for carers – such as social care, carer breaks, carers and the NHS, finance and working carers.

Another hot topic of discussion was the 25th anniversary of Carers' Resource. Carers shared ideas about events and got the lowdown on plans that have already been made.

If you would like to come to a forum meeting and help us to have an insight into the issues that matter to you, we would be delighted to see you.

- There is a forum meeting at each of our offices every three months and you can come to whichever one suits you best. See pages 6-7 for full details.



Poster campaign for Carers Rights Day

For the latest national Carers Rights Day we printed 2,000 posters to put up around the Bradford, Harrogate and Skipton districts.

The theme for the day, last November, was "finding your way", so the posters encouraged carers to visit our web page www.carersresource.org/find-your-way/ which contains key information for carers about accessing benefits and allowances.

Carers' Resource members of staff put up the posters in GP practices, community centres, chemists, hair salons, soft play centres, places of worship, schools and other venues in and around the area.

The posters were designed to not go out of date, as the web page it points to can be updated regularly.

National charity Carers UK, which decides the theme each year, released a study on Carers Rights Day that found someone is just as likely to become a carer as they are to own their own house.

It also found most carers are middle-aged – almost half (46%)

are aged 46-65. Half of women have been a carer by age 46, but men have the same 50:50 chance by age 57 – 11 years later.

Women are therefore especially likely to be caring at ages when they would expect to be in paid work. Overall, up to 600 people a day give up paid work to care, the research showed.

● There are still some Finding Your Way posters available – if you want any to display in your community, or if you have an idea about what you would like Carers' Resource to do for Carers Rights Day 2020, contact communications officer Caroline Firth on 01274 449660 or email cfirth@carersresource.org

Previous years have included events featuring carers telling professionals

how they can work together to improve carers' lives, or professionals explaining to carers how to access help from health and social care services.



Parent carers invited to join the Club



Parent carers Jean, left, and Abi judging the Bake Off competition

A group of carers who are parents of children with additional needs have formed a new group that meets on Thursdays during term time in Shipley Asda to encourage and support one another.

They have come up with their group motto, "Active parents lead active lives," and are inviting other parent carers to join them in a range of activities including crafts, trips, fundraising events and workshops.

Jean McCrum, who attends the group, said: "Since becoming a member of Parent Carer Club, I don't feel so alone."

In December, the group hosted a Bake Off and asked Carers' Resource staff to enter their cakes for judging, raising £52.45 for the charity. Fundraiser Claire Macina won Star Baker for her red velvet cake and was presented with a certificate.

Carers' Resource also hosts a parent carer coffee and cake drop-in the Skipton office.

Locality worker Kathryn Leakey is supporting the Shipley group and says: "People are welcome to just come along, although anyone who would like to know more first can contact me on 01274 449660 or kleakey@carersresource.org."

● For full details about Parent Carer Club and other groups and events see pages 6-7.



Carers' Resource is an independent and nationally recognised Yorkshire charity which gives tailored information and support to carers, those in need of care and support, and the professionals who work with them. Our services support people to remain independent, and have choice and control to improve their lives or situations.

Carers' Resource is a company limited by guarantee.

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EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions (300 words max) are welcomed but may be edited.

The views expressed do not necessarily reflect policy of Carers' Resource. Reference to any service does not imply recommendation.

The submissions deadline for the next issue is 27 April 2020.

Send copy to the editor Caroline Firth by emailing choices@carersresource.org, or post submissions to the Bradford office (address below).

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Free app means

We've all done it – joined a gym with good intentions, then we don't go. You feel guilty for wasting money but you just can't get motivated, and you can't spare the time either. When carer Amanda Patchett ditched the gym, she found a quick way to get fit for free at her convenience – the Couch to 5k app.



Amanda with Susannah, Leon and Hilario, and Amanda after one of the Couch to 5k runs

Amanda, 51, of Shipley, and her husband Hilario care for their son Leon, 17, who has high-functioning autism, and they also have a 15-year-old daughter Susannah.

Leon was diagnosed aged five and has issues with social interaction. Amanda says: "I still help him with organising his hygiene, what to wear each day, travel details and finances.

"It's gone from helping him at school to now helping him navigate college and try to have a bit of a social life. It's just something that I live with, you know? I'm his mum but I've always been his carer."

Amanda gets a bit more time to herself now that Leon is growing up, but she still needs to make time to relax – particularly as she works at a school with children who have autism. She says: "I need to unwind as I'm dealing with autism 24/7 really."

A runner friend told her about the Couch to 5k scheme put together by the NHS, and Amanda decided to give it a go. Couch to 5k is a running podcast or app for absolute beginners that involves three runs a week for nine weeks.

Every session begins with a brisk five-minute warm-up walk. The first week starts with alternating 60 seconds of running with 90 seconds of walking, for a total of 20 minutes.

Amanda says: "In the first week you walk more than you run. I say run, but it's a light jog. You gradually

build up so that on the ninth week you can do 5k in 30-35 minutes, going at your own pace. It's not like you have to be super fast or anything. I just go along the canal."

The podcast is narrated by a woman called Laura, but for the app you can choose the voice of comedians Sarah Millican or Sanjeev Kohli, runner Michael Johnson, or Radio 2 DJ Jo Whitley.

Amanda, who chose Jo Whitley, says: "Jo tells you how long you've run for, and she keeps saying: 'You can do it!' She keeps me going."

If Amanda is struggling to get all her runs in and needs more time to progress to the next stage, she repeats a session or a whole week.

She adds: "You're amazed at how you go from being a non-runner to being able to run for over half an hour. When I run I really feel empowered and afterwards it makes me feel good and fitter. It really helps me emotionally and mentally and I also sleep well and feel so positive. It's some me time."

Amanda also runs because she can put on clothes she feels comfortable in and just head out of the door at her convenience. She adds: "I give myself that hour, a few times a week, to look after myself and to keep fit and healthy. I think it's really good, I really enjoy it and I feel like I've achieved something."

The Couch to 5k website advises to keep making progress after the

gym can jog on

nine weeks by doing a weekly parkrun, some sort of challenge, joining a running club or pushing yourself to run further.

Amanda says: "I keep saying I'm going to go to parkrun next but I don't want to run with other people yet as I'm not ready. I'm growing in confidence though, so I'm going to

do it at some point." Instead, Amanda is planning to build up to running 10k. She adds: "When I get to 10k, I might even do a run for Carers' Resource!"

● To download the Couch to 5k podcasts or the app, go to www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/couch-to-5k-week-by-week/

Donated blanket becomes a lifeline for head girl Lexi

Quilted blankets are being donated to some young carers in Harrogate to help them feel more secure.

Volunteers from Project Linus UK have been dropping off a bag of the beautiful blankets at our office every few months. Young carer worker Linda Hall says: "A group of people make them and bring them in. They're not to be sold, they're to make young carers feel special and know we care for them."

Linda recently gave one of the blankets to Lexi, 10, who lives in the Ripon area and cares for her mum. Linda goes to Lexi's school every fortnight and they chat about how Lexi is getting on and what support she needs. Lexi also attends young carer trips and activities in the school holidays.



Lexi takes her blanket everywhere with her

Linda adds: "We give the blankets out to people we feel would benefit from them. The reason I gave a blanket to Lexi is because she wasn't in a very good place at the time. We got talking about things she likes and she said she loves purple and unicorns."

"I knew we had a unicorn blanket, so I told her I had something to bring to her for next time we met. When I gave it to her she was thrilled to bits and snuggled it straight away."

Lexi is head girl at school and she helps coach young people to swim at a swimming club. She says: "My blanket

goes everywhere with me – to school, on trips to the shops and at home. It helps me because it makes me feel like I'm not alone, and I talk into my blanket to get my feelings out when I don't want to share them with anyone."

Linda adds: "I can see it has made Lexi feel she is not alone and we're looking out for her. Lexi is a lovely and clever girl and she is incredibly caring."

Lexi adds: "My blanket reminds me that Young Carers are always with me and care for me. I love it especially because it's purple and has unicorns on it – my two favourite things. I hug it all the time. I just love it."

Steeton Hub Quilters' Group has also donated blankets, pillows and toiletry bags, which are used to raise funds for us.

Carers' Resource chief executive Chris Whiley says: "Thank you to everyone who has spent their time and care on these lovely gifts, they are helping us and carers in many ways."

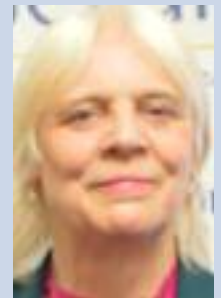


The donations from Steeton Hub Quilters

It's your Choices

By Carers' Resource chief executive Chris Whiley.

It is wonderful to think that Carers' Resource has been around for 25 years. The organisation has supported many thousands of carers through their own particular issues and difficulties, and this has without doubt increased the quality of life for many people.



However, the milestone does give me food for thought. We have been reflecting and looking back through many years of Choices and it's clear that the themes and concerns that were being talked about 25 years ago are still very much alive today.

One article in 1996 said that concern had been growing nationally over the way in which people had to pay for their long-term healthcare. And, in 1998, there was much talk of the pressure on hospital beds during winter.

Over the years we have covered issues around respite care and holidays, time for yourself and relaxation techniques, and we have worked hard to reach carers through GP practices. These are the same topics that we still cover today because we know that they are still important to carers and families.

So, who knows what the next 25 years will hold? Will we succeed in getting carers to be considered whenever a major piece of legislation is introduced? Will carers feel valued and supported by society as a whole?

What we do know is that we will continue to do our best to support carers, and other people who rely on us, in the ways that help them the most. We will continue to raise the profile of the contribution that carers make to our society and, wherever possible, we will ensure that no one has to care without the support they need.

Chris



Carers' groups and activities: Airedale, Bradford,

All carers are welcome at all events. You are welcome to bring the person you care for if this is stated in the group description. Sessions are free unless a cost is stated.

BRADFORD: Unit 15, Park View Court, St Paul's Road, Shipley, BD18 3DZ, 01274 449660.

HARROGATE: 11 North Park Road, HG1 5PD, 01423 500555.

Some events are in our Skipton, Bradford or Harrogate offices. The addresses and phone numbers are below:

Events in purple are new.

SKIPTON: Ronaldsway House, 36 Brook Street, Skipton, BD23 1PP, 01756 700888.

BRADFORD DISTRICT

BAILDON

Baildon Carers Group

Dates: Second Thursday of the month (12 Mar, 9 Apr, 14 May).

Time: 10am-11.30am.

Where: St Hugh's Community Centre, Coach Road, BD17 5HS. Refreshments, crafts and chat. Contact: Melanie Evans, 01274 449660, mevans@carersresource.org

BIERLEY

Bierley Carers Group

Dates: Every other Wednesday (11, 25 Mar; 8, 22 Apr; 6, 20 May).

Time: 10am-12pm.

Where: The Life Centre, 102-104 Bierley House Avenue, BD4 6BU. Coffee and chat, with activities. Contact: Melanie Evans, 01274 449660, mevans@carersresource.org

Wellbeing workshops

- Balancing Roles, Achieving Goals

Dates: 30 Apr; 7, 14, 21, 28 May.

Time: 10am-12pm.

Where: The Life Centre, 102-104 Bierley House Avenue, BD4 6BU. This free five-week course helps carers to focus on their wellbeing and encourages people to feel good about themselves. Carers who attend will look at a range of stress-busting techniques, practise assertiveness exercises and analyse their own and other people's thinking styles and personality types. They also have a chance to try out a number of different relaxation exercises. Please book using the contact below. Contact: Liz Liepins, 01274 449660, lliepins@carersresource.org

BINGLEY

Drop-in

Dates: 1st Wednesday of the month (4 Mar, 1 Apr, 6 May).

Time: 10.30am-12pm.

Where: The Coffee Lounge, Queen Street, BD16 2JS. Contact: Beverley Knipe, 01274 449660, bknipe@carersresource.org

BOLTON & UNDERCLIFFE

Caring for Carers

Dates: Second Tuesday of the month (10 Mar, 14 Apr, 12 May).

Time: 1.30-3pm.

Where: The Life Church coffee lounge, Wapping Rd, BD3 0EQ. An opportunity for carers to meet socially to discuss caring. Contact: Melanie Evans, 01274 449660, mevans@carersresource.org

BRADFORD CITY CENTRE

Afternoon Tea

Date: 15 Apr.

Time: 1pm.

Where: The Storehouse, 116 Caledonia Street, Bradford, BD4 7BQ. Inn Churches hosts afternoon tea for carers and their cared for. 15 people max per session. Strictly on a first come, first served basis. Café is on the first floor - stairs only, no lift access. We suggest a voluntary £2 donation

to cover the cost of the food.

Contact: Melanie Evans, 01274 449660, mevans@carersresource.org

City Hall tour and refreshments with the Lord Mayor

Date: 27 Apr.

Time: 2pm-3.30pm.

Where: City Hall, Bradford, BD1 1HY. To mark the 25th anniversary of Carers' Resource, Bradford district's Lord Mayor Doreen Lee, who is a carer, is inviting 25 carers for a short tour of historic City Hall followed by refreshments and scones. First come, first served. Booking is essential via Caroline Firth. Contact: Book by contacting Caroline Firth, 01274 449660, cfirth@carersresource.org

Curry Club

Date: 20 Mar.

Time: 6pm.

Where: Omar Khan's, 30 Little Horton Ln, Bradford BD5 0AL. £12.95 per head. Mixed sizzler platter starter, a selection of mains, pilau rice and naan bread. Vegetarian option available. Meet at the restaurant at 5.30pm to eat at 6pm. Please mention any dietary requirements when booking. Spaces are limited, so first come first served. The person you care for is welcome as are other friends or relatives. Contact: Book by contacting Melanie Evans, 01274 449660, mevans@carersresource.org

IDLE

Memory Lane Tea Group

Date: 1st Tuesday of the month (3 Mar, 7 Apr, 5 May).

Time: 2pm.

Where: Miss Butterfinger's Tea Rooms, 26 The Green, BD10 9PX. Come along to meet other carers in a relaxed setting. Price is the cost of your own food and drink. Contact: Melanie Evans, 01274 449660, mevans@carersresource.org

KEIGHLEY

Coffee Morning

Dates: 1st Friday of the month (6 Mar, 3 Apr, 1 May).

Time: 10am - 11.30am.

Where: Café Central, Central Hall, Alice Street, Keighley, BD21 3JD. Carers, cared for and former carers. Contact: Rachel Waddington, 01756 700888, rwaddington@carersresource.org

SHIPLEY

Carer forum

Date: Thu 23 Apr.

Time: 1.30pm-3pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office. An opportunity for carers to meet one another and discuss the issues they face. People who come along also learn more about the services Carers' Resource offers and feed back about how we can improve. Just turn up. Contact: Jan Burrows, 01274 449660, jburrows@carersresource.org

Craft for Carers

Date: 31 Mar, 28 Apr, 26 May.

Time: 10am-12pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office.

Contact: Melanie Evans, 01274

449660, mevans@carersresource.org

Information Drop-in

Dates: 16 Mar, 20 Apr, 18 May.

Time: 10am-11.30am.

Where: Carers' Resource office. Got a question, need a fact sheet, want advice about your caring situation? Find the answers at our new drop-in session. Just turn up! But don't forget you can always give us a call or email us if you need support.

Contact: 01274 449660, informationteam@carersresource.org

Interlude Tea Room

Carers' Group

Dates: 2nd Wednesday of the month (11 Mar, 8 Apr, 13 May).

Time: 10.30am-12pm.

Where: Interlude Tea Room and Imporium, 27 Westgate, BD18 3QX. Cost: Price of your own drink. Contact: Kathryn Leakey, 01274 449660, kleakey@carersresource.org

Knit Together

Dates: Every Thursday.

Time: 2pm-4 pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office. Knitters' party for our 25th anniversary is taking place during the group on Feb 27. All welcome. Contact: Carol Forbes, 01274 449660, cforbes@carersresource.org

Live Well, Care Well

Dates: 2nd Tuesday of the month (10 Mar, 14 Apr, 12 May).

Time: 6.15pm-7.30pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office. Wellbeing group. Learn how to manage and understand stress, and try relaxation techniques, hand massage and meditation with life coach Jenny Cooper. Cost: £2 to cover refreshments and materials.

Contact: Kay Nichols, 01274 449660, knichols@carersresource.org

Noble Comb Lunch Group

Dates: 3rd Wednesday of the month (18 Mar, 15 Apr, 20 May).

Time: 11am.

Where: The Noble Comb, Salts Mill Road, Quayside, BD18 3ST. Carers, cared for and former carers. Contact: Kathryn Leakey, 01274 449660, kleakey@carersresource.org

Menzone

Dates: 1st Tuesday of the month (3 Mar, 7 Apr, 5 May).

Time: 5.30pm-7pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office. Come along to meet other male carers. Board games, borrow books and chat. For carers and ex-carers. Contact: Melanie Evans, 01274 449660, mevans@carersresource.org

Parent Carer Club

Dates: Thursdays during term time (5, 12, 19, 26 Mar; 2, 23, 30 Apr; 7, 14, 21, 28 May)

Time: 11am-1pm.

Where: Meet at the postbox outside Asda Shipley at 11am. The group is held inside Asda. This friendly group of parent carers of children with additional Needs have formed a

group to encourage and support each other. New members are very much welcome.

Contact: Kathryn Leakey, 01274 449660, kleakey@carersresource.org

MANNINGHAM

Carer Craft and Chat

Dates: Alternate Wednesdays (4, 18 Mar; 1, 15, 29 Apr; 13, 27 May).

Time: 9.30am-12pm.

Where: Manningham Mills Community Centre, Lilycroft Road, BD9 5BD. Come along to enjoy crafts and meet other carers. Free refreshments and activities. Contact: Melanie Evans, 01274 449660, mevans@carersresource.org

STEETON

25th Anniversary Free Meal for Carers

Date: Wed 22nd April.

Time: 12pm-2pm.

Where: Steeton Hall Hotel, Station Road, BD20 6RY.

Come along to enjoy a free two-course meal, kindly funded by the Rotary Club of Keighley. The person you care for is welcome. Booking is essential via Melanie Evans and places will be first come, first served. Contact: Melanie Evans, 01274 449660, mevans@carersresource.org

HARROGATE DISTRICT

BOROUGHBRIDGE

Carers' Group

Dates: 2nd Wednesday of the month (11 Mar, 8 Apr, 13 May).

Time: 10am-12pm.

Location: BEAN Café, St James Square, Boroughbridge, YO51 9BA. Meet for a chat with cake and coffee. No booking required.

Cost: Cost of your own drink.

Contact: Carol Lancaster, 01423 500555, clancaster@carersresource.org

DARLEY

Dales Diners Lunch

Dates: 1st Thursday of the month (5 Mar, 2 Apr, 7 May).

Times: 1pm.

Where: Christ Church Hall, Main Street, HG3 2QF. Carers and cared for with memory problems. Lunch and social. Cost: £5 for two courses. Booking required in advance please.

Contact: Carol Lancaster, 01423 500555, clancaster@carersresource.org

Dancing for Wellbeing

Dates: 3rd Thursday of the month (19 Mar, 16 Apr, 21 May).

Times: 2pm to 3pm (please arrive by 1.45pm).

Where: Christ Church Hall, Main Street, HG3 2QF. Exercise class to suit your ability, sitting or standing. Gentle, safe and fun - followed by afternoon tea. Please book in advance. Cost: £5. Contact: Carol Lancaster, 01423 500555, clancaster@carersresource.org



Craven, Harrogate, Ripon and districts

HARROGATE

Carer forum

Date: Wed 8 Apr.

Time: 2pm-3.30pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office.

An opportunity for carers to meet one another and discuss the issues they face. People who come along also learn more about the services Carers' Resource offers and feed back about how we can improve. Contact: Candy Squire-Watt, 01423 500555, cswatt@carersresource.org

Cedar Court Coffee

Morning

Dates: 3rd Wednesday of the month (18 Mar, 15 Apr, 20 May).

Time: 11am.

Cost: Cost of your drink.

Where: Cedar Court Hotel, Park Parade, HG1 5AH.

Carers and former carers. Meet for a drink and a chat.

Contact: Carol Lancaster,

01423 500555,

clancaster@carersresource.org

CV Workshop

Date: 19 Mar.

Time: 10.30am-12.30pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office. If you're thinking of returning to work, come along to this free friendly session to find out how to write a tailored CV and how to complete application forms.

Contact: Andy Stephens,

01423 500555,

astephens@carersresource.org

Interview Skills for Carers

Date: 26 Mar.

Time: 10.30am-12.30pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office. If you're thinking of returning to work, come along to this free friendly session to learn how to prepare for a job interview. We'll discuss what employers are looking for, and the questions you're likely to be asked.

Contact: Andy Stephens,

01423 500555,

astephens@carersresource.org

Job Search for Carers

Date: 12 Mar.

Time: 10.30am-12.30pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office. If you're thinking of returning to work, come along to this free friendly session to find out where to look for vacancies, how to use online job search sites and how to upload your CV.

Contact: Andy Stephens,

01423 500555,

astephens@carersresource.org

Mindfulness Relaxation

Dates: 11 Mar, 8 Apr, 13 May.

Time: 2pm.

Where: Yorkshire Care Equipment (shop), Forest Lane Head, (opposite the Harrogate Golf Club), HG2 7TE.

A relaxation session in cosy surroundings. £5 per person. Followed by refreshments (included in the price) and social time.

Please email/call to book.

Contact: Christine Marshall,

01423 500555,

cmarshall@carersresource.org

Pins N Needles

Dates: 1st Tuesday of the month (3 Mar, 7 Apr, 5 May).

Time: 10.30am-12.30pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office.

Carers and former carers. Come along for a coffee and chat with your

own crafts, or support our fundraising current craft ideas.

Contact: Anne Wells, 01423 500555, awells@carersresource.org

Young carers' street party

Date: 17 Apr.

Time: 6pm-8pm.

Where: Harrogate town centre location. Young carers from Harrogate and Knaresbrough districts are invited to our 90s-themed party, with food and party games. For more information contact Linda Hall.

Contact: Linda Hall, 01423 500555, lhall@carersresource.org

MASHAM

Carers' Drop-in

Dates: 3rd Wednesday of the month (18 Mar, 15 Apr, 20 May).

Times: 2pm-3pm.

Where: Masham Methodist Church, Park Street, HG4 4HN. A chance to meet and chat with other carers and have a free cup of tea and cake.

Contact: Isobel Holmes, 01423 500555, iholmes@carersresource.org

PATELEY BRIDGE

Craft Group

Dates: 3rd Wednesday of the month (18 Mar, 15 Apr, 20 May).

Times: 2pm-3.30pm.

Cost: £5.

Where: Nidderdale Plus, Waterside Station Square, King Street, HG3 5AT.

Learn a different craft each month and make something to take home.

Contact: Carol Lancaster,

01423 500555,

clancaster@carersresource.org

Drop-in

Dates: Every Friday.

Times: 12pm-1pm.

Where: Feastfield GP surgery, King St, Pateley Bridge, Harrogate HG3 5AT. A drop-in advice service for Pateley Bridge carers.

Contact: Carol Lancaster,

01423 500555,

clancaster@carersresource.org

Lunch Group

Dates: 1st Friday of the month (6 Mar, 3 Apr, 1 May).

Times: 1pm.

Cost: £6.50.

Where: The Crown, 19 High Street, Pateley Bridge, HG3 5AP.

Carers and former carers. Lunch and social together. Booking required.

Contact: Carol Lancaster,

01423 500555,

clancaster@carersresource.org

RIPON

Carers' Drop-in

Dates: Every Thursday.

Time: 10am-1pm.

Where: Carers' Resource Ripon office, Community House, Sharow View, Allhallowgate, Ripon, HG4 1LE.

A staffed session for carers wishing to have a short consultation or to make an appointment for a later time. Report to reception in Community House and they will show you through to the office.

Contact: Carers' Resource Harrogate office, 01423 500555.

Ripon Carers Teas

Dates: 2nd Tuesday of the month (10 Mar, 14 Apr, 12 May).

Time: 2.30pm-3.30pm.

Where: Ripon Community House, Sharrow View, Allhallowgate, HG4 1LE.

Support group.

Cost: £3 for tea meetings.

Contact: Catherine Thompson,

01423 500555,

cthompson@carersresource.org

WETHERBY

Afternoon Tea/Coffee

Dates: 3rd Monday of the month (16 Mar, 20 Apr, 18 May).

Time: 2pm.

Where: Sant' Angelo Restaurant, High Street, LS22 6LT.

Carers and former carers. Drink and a chat in friendly environment with cakes.

Cost: Cost of own food and drink.

Contact: Carol Lancaster,

01423 500555,

clancaster@carersresource.org

SKIPTON DISTRICT

BENTHAM

Bentham Lunch Group

Dates: 30 Mar, 27 Apr, 18 May.

Time: 12pm.

Where: Bentham Golf Club, Robin Lane, High Bentham, Nr Lancaster, LA2 7AG.

Carers, cared for and former carers.

Contact: Debi Hawkins, 01756 700888,

dhawkins@carersresource.org

BROUGHTON

Utopia Coffee Morning

Dates: 2nd Tuesday of the month (10 Mar, 14 Apr, 12 May).

Time: 10am-11.30am.

Where: Utopia, Broughton Hall Business Park, BD23 3AN.

Coffee morning for carers, cared for, former carers and vulnerable people.

Contact: Alex Roberts, 01756 700888,

aroberts@carersresource.org

SETTLE

Settle Lunch Group

Dates: 2nd Monday of the month (9 Mar, 6 Apr*, 11 May – *date changed due to bank holiday).

Time: 12pm.

Where: The Lion Hotel, Duke St, BD24 9DU.

Carers, cared for and former carers.

Contact: Anne Brennand,

01756 700888,

abrennand@carersresource.org

SKIPTON

Carer forum

Date: Fri 6 Mar.

Time: 10am-11.30am.

Where: Carers' Resource office.

An opportunity for carers to meet one another and discuss the issues they face. People who come along also learn more about the services Carers' Resource offers and feed back about how we can improve. Contact: Candy Squire-Watt, 01756 700888, cswatt@carersresource.org

Craven Supper Club

Dates: Approximately every six weeks.

Time: Early evening.

Where: Various venues across Skipton and south Craven.

Carers, cared for and former carers – early evening meal out in various

venues in Airedale and Skipton. Contact: Tracey Howes, 07725111798.

Information Drop-in

Dates: 31 Mar, 28 Apr, 26 May.

Time: 10am-11.30am.

Where: Carers' Resource office. Got a question, need a fact sheet, want advice about your caring situation? Find the answers at our new drop-in session. Just turn up! But don't forget you can always give us a call or email us if you need support.

Contact: 01756 700888,

informationteam@carersresource.org

Lunch Group

Dates: 1st Wednesday of the month (4 Mar, 1 Apr, 6 May).

Time: 12pm.

Where: Bay Horse, Skipton, BD20 9HB.

Carers, cared for and former carers.

Contact: Vanessa Rayner, 01756

700888, vrayner@carersresource.org

Men's Social Club

Dates: Last Friday of the month (27 Mar, 24 Apr, 29 May).

Time: 2-4pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office.

Come along to meet other male carers. Play dominoes, Scrabble and have a chat.

Contact: Helen King, 01756 700888, hking@carersresource.org

Parent Carer Coffee and Cake Drop-in

Dates and times: 26 Mar, 9.30-11am; 23 Apr, 1.15-2.45pm; 14 May, 9.30-11am.

Where: Carers' Resource office.

A drop-in session for parents who live in Craven and are caring for a child/children under the age of 18. Pop in for a cuppa and to meet other parent carers in the area. Get support and information from locality worker Natalie Baxter. Contact: Natalie Baxter, 01756 700888, nbaxter@carersresource.org

Wellbeing Workshops – Balancing Roles, Achieving Goals

Date: 22, 29, Apr; 6, 13 May.

Time: 10am-12pm.

Where: Carers' Resource office.

These free workshops will help carers focus on their wellbeing and encourage them to feel good about themselves. Carers who attend will look at a range of stress-busting techniques, practise assertiveness exercises and analyse their own and other people's thinking styles and personality types. At the end of the course carers will have a chance to try out a number of different relaxation exercises.

Contact: Rachel Blackwell,

01756 700888,

rblackwell@carersresource.org

THRESHFIELD

Threshfield Lunch Group

Dates: 3rd Friday of the month (20 Mar, 17 Apr, 15 May).

Time: 12pm.

Where: Gamekeeper's Inn, Long Ashes Park, BD23 5PN. For carers, cared for and former carers. A party to celebrate Carers' Resource's 25th anniversary is taking place during the March meet-up. All welcome but please book via Helen.

Contact: Helen King, 01756 700888, hking@carersresource.org



All Care@ clients 'feel well cared for'

Clients who filled in a satisfaction survey have given the thumbs up to our paid-for care service Care@ Carers' Resource.

When asked whether support workers treat them with dignity and respect and often go the extra mile, and whether they feel cared for, every single respondent confirmed they did.

All of the clients who responded also agreed they felt safe when services were being delivered by the Care@ team, while 97% felt that the service was responsive to their needs.

Comments received include: "By taking care of my grandson you give me peace of mind," and "[your care] helps me survive day by day". Another client said: "You are tops, nothing could be nicer."

Care@ sends out surveys twice a year to ask about how clients feel about the service they receive, and it uses the feedback to improve. Head of care Sam Dawson says: "I'm delighted with the survey results, which have improved year-on-year. It's all down to the commitment and dedication of our team members. We are always looking for ways to improve services and take any feedback seriously."

One action that was identified for development was staff personal profiles. Sam explains: "We ask our customers to fill in personal profiles so we know about their likes and dislikes, about their life, hobbies, and what's important to them etc."



Ellen with care support worker Jane

However, what we don't always know is the answer to these questions for our staff teams. By asking staff to complete the same questionnaire as our clients, it will help us to understand them better and improve how we match staff and clients who have similar interests and experiences."

Jane Harrison completed her staff profile when she joined the team recently as a care support worker. She shadowed a colleague for a week to get to know clients, including 96-year-old Ellen, of Cononley.

Sam adds: "The shadowing process means any new starter can see first-hand the needs of each client, ensuring they can respond effectively to their individual needs."

● If you want to know more about working for Care@, contact Sam at sdawson@carersresource.org. You must have a driving licence and access to a vehicle.

Blue Badge renewal letters scrapped

Changes to Blue Badges have received mixed reactions over the past few months.

A Blue Badge is a permit that is displayed in a parked vehicle. It can belong to a driver or a passenger with disabilities or health conditions and it allows them to leave the vehicle closer to their destination.

Before last summer, Blue Badges were given only to people with visible disabilities such as wheelchair users or people with walking aids. But children and adults with hidden disabilities such as autism, dementia and complex mental health disorders can now apply too, making their lives and the lives of their families and carers easier.

However, it has emerged that the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency is no longer sending out reminder notices to Blue Badge holders. Carol Lancaster, a locality worker in Harrogate, says: "I had an 86-year-old carer on the phone distraught because she had

received a parking ticket and when she checked her Blue Badge was 16 days out of date."

Bradford Council's Blue Badge team said people across their district are also being affected, and it has raised the problem with the Government. Councils have also changed their Blue Badge application and renewal processes

to be fully online. Carol adds: "Councils are suggesting that, if you don't have a computer, Blue Badge forms can be completed at a main library or by asking a family member or neighbour to help. Apparently the length of time these applications are taking to get an answer can be up to eight weeks, too."

TOP TIPS:

- If you don't have a computer you can book an appointment at a main library and explain it's to apply for a Blue Badge.
- Ask when you make the appointment what documents you need to take with you. This might include your National Insurance number, the reference and expiry date on your Blue Badge if it is a renewal, proof of identification, proof of name and address and a debit or credit card to pay for the badge (up to £10).
- If you are automatically eligible for a Blue Badge due to receiving a benefit, you need a letter dated within the past 12 months proving you are in receipt of that benefit.
- The library can take a photo for you at your appointment, or if you prefer you can take a passport photo with you.
- If the badge is not awarded, the £10 payment is refunded back on to the card that you used to pay.
- Give us a call for advice if you are struggling.



Young carers tell their stories in the media

Young carers appeared in newspapers and on the radio for Young Carers Awareness Day in January, to tell people what it is like to be a young carer.

George, 13, from Harrogate, was interviewed by The Sun about how he cares for one sibling who has severe autism and another sibling who has health issues. Angel, 11, of Silsden, told the Telegraph & Argus what it is like to care for her six-year-old brother Ayden, while Azania, 11, of Knaresborough was on Stray FM with young carer worker Sarah Beard talking about caring for her brother.

Angel says: "I help the family with cleaning and make sure Ayden has enough clothes and food. I try and make him happy so he's not sad. You have to sacrifice your time and your energy with him. I feel like I am doing a good thing."

Our free youth clubs give young carers the chance to meet and have a break from caring. Our staff also give free one-to-one support and mentoring for those young people who need it. We run activities and trips during school holidays too.

Angel enjoyed young carer activities last summer and says: "I went almost every day and it was the best time of my life, because before I had nothing to do and I



From top left: Azania at Stray FM; Angel; Thanya and our team in The Broadway

would just stay at home all day. I made lots of friends, like Imaan. She was my best friend and still is."

As well as encouraging and supporting young people to tell their own stories on Young Carers Awareness Day, we sent posters to 250 schools across the Bradford, Skipton and Harrogate districts to raise awareness of what it means to be a young carer and what support is available.

Our young carer team in Bradford also hosted a stand and bucket collection with young carers Thanya and Laila in the Broadway shopping centre, and our head of development for young carers and

families, Helen Prince, was interviewed live on BCB radio.

It is thought one in 12 children is a young carer, meaning there are just under 85,000 in Yorkshire and the Humber. These young people have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level – the equivalent to nine grades lower overall than their peers – and two-thirds report they have been bullied at school.

Helen wrote to all the MPs in the areas we cover to ask them to support young carers including by tabling a Parliamentary Question asking the Government to collect and publish information about the attendance, school achievement and wellbeing of young carers.

She also encouraged them to ask local schools and colleges if they recognise young carers as a vulnerable group of learners, what they are doing to identify them, and how they are getting them the help they need. Helen adds: "Our aim is to help young carers overcome the statistics and reach their potential.

"To do that, it's important they receive the specialist support they need, which is why we're asking schools to 'think carer' and ensure any pupil who is in this situation – or anyone who works with them – knows to contact us."

Hampers, gifts and winter ball delight young carers

More than 300 presents and 80 hampers were donated to treat North Yorkshire young carers and their families at Christmas, and 66 young carers from the Bradford district were given gifts at a winter ball.

A number of the gifts were received from staff at the Department for Work and Pensions, while others were given by the NHS and Chamber of Commerce; RAF Menwith Hill; Acrecliffe Equestrian Centre, Menston; Baby Ballet Bradford; Christof's Sandwich Shop, Idle;

The New Inn, Idle; The Dog Factor, Undercliffe; and a number of individuals.

Young carer worker in Harrogate, Sarah Beard, says: "So much thought and detail had been given to the wrapping and choosing of gifts, along with the behind-the-scenes organisation of it all. It was amazing."

Carers' Resource head of operations in North Yorkshire Candy Squire-Watt says: "When caring responsibilities are heavy, Christmas can be the last thing on people's minds. These wonderful, thoughtful gifts and hampers really helped give carers a lift."

The Rotary Club of Keighley and national charity Carers Trust paid for the winter ball at Central Hall, Keighley. They treated the young people to food, a disco, games, a raffle as well as the presents. Event stylist Suzanne Oddy Design, of Keighley, decorated the room for free.

Young carer worker in Bradford Chris Windsor organised the ball, and says: "We can't thank all the donors enough for making this possible. Their generosity has made priceless, lasting memories for these young people."



Nancy Holdsworth, of Keighley Rotary, with young carers



10-year anniversary for Bradford office

We had an open day in November to mark 10 years since the opening of our Bradford office.

Staff and volunteers hosted a market stall-style drop-in for carers, professionals from health and social care, and politicians showcasing how we support carers.

Visitors were encouraged to put something in a time capsule that will be opened in 10 years' time and items included an newspaper article about getting our first contract in the district, photos, and a Choices newsletter from 2009 featuring the office opening.

Commissioning programme lead for carers in Leeds, Ian Brooke-Mawson, worked in the commissioning team in Bradford six years ago when we were given the adult carers contract for the district.

He was a guest at the open day and says: "What Carers' Resource brought was an absolute passion for supporting carers. Whereas lots of organisations know about carers, Carers' Resource is a carers' organisation: carer-led. Everything they do and believe in is about carers. That's what sets them apart."

Marlene Thomas, 60, of Holme Wood, who gave up work to care for her mum, was at the open day and explained how she got involved with Carers' Resource seven years ago when she received a leaflet about the charity's services. She said: "It took me another two years to pluck up the courage to get in touch and to understand they were there to help carers, because I didn't recognise myself as a carer.

"I was caring for my mum, taking her to the hospital and doing everyday jobs such as cooking, washing,



Jan Burrows, left, and Chris Whiley with a celebratory cake

cleaning, and making sure she had the right medication. To me that was just a daughter's duty, not that it was under an umbrella of caring. I didn't link the two."

Marlene visited Parliament with Carers' Resource and spoke to MPs about being a carer. She said Carers' Resource helped her understand what to do if her mum was ill, explained her entitlement from paid support workers, and helped her to attend courses to build her confidence and self-esteem.

She adds: "I also went to knitting and crafting groups, and I took advantage of all the charity's courses that were available. I felt I wasn't as isolated as before. Knowing someone is there makes me feel good."

Chief executive Chris Whiley cut a cake with head of operations in Bradford Jan Burrows. Chris says: "I want to say a huge thank you to everybody involved with Carers' Resource. Here's to the next 10 years."



Carer charity 'is a beacon of light'

Emma Clayton is the Leisure and Lifestyle Editor of the Telegraph & Argus, Bradford's daily newspaper.

Many carers will be familiar with the confusion and frustration of seeking practical, financial and emotional support. Battling through red tape, while dealing with the daily demands of caring for a loved one, can leave carers feeling abandoned and isolated – which can put their own health and wellbeing at risk.

For 25 years, Carers' Resource has shone a beacon of light into the darkness, helping people through the minefield of practicalities and responsibilities that you will be all too familiar with if you have ever been a carer. Providing a range of practical and emotional support, and individually tailored information, the charity also helps carers to take time out for themselves, which is a vital part of the caring process.

This year is the 25th anniversary of Carers' Resource. For many people, it has been a lifeline;

reaching out at a time when we have needed, or need, help the most.

Whether it's advice on benefits, hospital discharge processes, guidance through health and social care systems, planning for emergencies, finding leisure, learning and employment opportunities, or meeting up with other carers, Carers' Resource is there to help.

I have been a carer three times in my adult life. It is something I wasn't prepared for. It began when I was in my twenties, when I often stayed overnight with my grandmother, who was terminally ill and needed round-the-clock care in her final months. I went on to help care for my mum, who was diagnosed with dementia in her mid-fifties, and then my dad, who had cancer. Juggling a demanding full-time job with the exhausting demands of being a carer was the hardest thing I have ever done. And initially I had no idea where to turn for support. There were times when I felt very much alone.

The UK's army of carers saves the NHS millions of pounds. We shouldn't be left to despair in silence.

It is thanks to organisations like Carers' Resource – which has its 25th anniversary this year – that, in our darkest hours, we have a listening ear.



Phil is our 'mighty fine' star



Phil, centre left, with other award nominees and the Lord Mayor

Well done to our volunteer Phil Kirtley, who was a runner-up in the Community Stars Awards in Bradford.

The awards, organised by the Telegraph & Argus newspaper and Bradford Council, are designed to recognise people who are striving to make a difference in their communities. Phil was runner-up in the volunteer category.

Phil has come into the Shipley office every Wednesday for more than five years to support the Home from Hospital team, whose aim – along with colleagues running our services in North Yorkshire – is to reduce readmission rates by supporting vulnerable patients on their return home from hospital. Clients are

given a small food hamper and encouraged over a six-week period to get back to their usual activities. Staff might help them find and attend social groups, access services, get to appointments and seek practical help such as cleaners and gardeners.

Phil, who makes up food hampers, controls stock and prints assessment packs, was nominated for the award by our Home from Hospital service manager in Bradford, Shelley Marshall. Shelley says: "As well as going over and above, Phil is well-known for his positive attitude. He always tells us he's 'mighty fine'."

She went with Phil and his partner to the awards bash at The Bradford Hotel, where they had photos with other nominees and Bradford's Lord Mayor Doreen Lee, who is a carer and is a keynote speaker at the Carers' Resource staff conference this year. Shelley adds: "It was an honour to celebrate the work of volunteers."

Another volunteer, Peter Hargreaves, has been shortlisted for a Craven Community Champions Award and is due to attend a ceremony at Coniston Hotel to find out if he has won in the Volunteer of the Year category.



Phil is given his runner-up award by the Lord Mayor

Knitters' sterling effort with chicks



White 25-year anniversary knitted Easter chicks will be joining the regulars in our hen house this year.

It is the thirteenth year we have sold Crème Egg-stuffed chicks, which sell at £2 each to raise money for us as a local charity. The chicks also help to increase our profile across the areas we cover.

This year some chicks are white and have a silver charm to mark our silver anniversary – but numbers will be limited, so get one quickly at one of our offices or sales outlets. Call us or see www.carersresource.org/support-us/knitted-chicks/ for an up-to-date list of where you can buy the chicks.

At Christmas, our team of 30 volunteer knitters made more than

900 Lindor-stuffed decorations including puddings, trees and Santas, which raised £1,850.

Fundraiser Anne Wells says: "For the sixth year our crafty volunteers, local businesses, schools and organisations did an amazing job to achieve this total for us as well as raising our profile as local charity.

"I'm delighted and would like to thank everyone who helped in any way, including the 30 knitters and 28 sales outlets across North and West Yorkshire that supported us."

● If you could knit, decorate or sell our Easter chicks or Christmas decorations, please email fundraising@carersresource.org



Barnetts sold Christmas decorations in its hair salons in in Ben Rhydding

A Soundtrack to Care

Mike O'Leary – April 2017

To help when you're in need
Is more than obligation

"I'll be there...."

...to cherish and care for you"

I'm always here for you to
Put your needs above mine

"Lean on me, when you're not strong..."

I just need some help sometimes
There never seems enough time

"Help!... I need somebody"

I'll never let you down but
It's not easy on my own
"Who can I turn to...?"

I ought to get away but
I keep coming back to stay
"It's my life and I can do what I want..."

Please don't get me wrong
I'm just singing you a song
"You are everything..."

I can't do it on my own but
"You'll never walk alone..."



'I swallowed my pride and asked for help'

Mandy Appleyard was struggling to cope with her own mental health issues when her dad went into hospital.

When he returned home he found it hard to ask for outside help and needed her more than ever, but Mandy "swallowed her pride" and spoke to Carers' Resource.

Mandy, 53, of Bierley, south Bradford, says: "When he came home I found it very stressful, trying to sort his finances and without help. At that time I was at his house a lot more often and overnight. They were difficult circumstances."

Our Home from Hospital team was supporting Mandy's 83-year-old dad to settle back in at home after his stay in hospital. She says: "They helped arrange his care, got his wheelchair, and got us extra support. They were really good – amazing."

But Mandy needed help too, and asked Home from Hospital staff for help from her perspective as a carer. They referred her to another team at Carers' Resource, which meant locality worker Eileen then visited Mandy to talk about her needs.

Eileen listened to Mandy, and helped her fill in forms to ensure she got all the finances and services to which she was entitled. She also referred Mandy to a wellbeing course run by our CReate team, and told Mandy about carer groups where she could meet other carers and get peer support.

Mandy says: "Carers' Resource did far more for me than I could have organised or imagined. Now it's a lot easier, as Dad has four paid carers coming in a day. I can go in just on Thursdays and Fridays and it's a lot better. My brother goes Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

"I cook, clean, make sure his washing is done, give him a cup of tea and generally keep him happy! I see those as my dad's days, to be with him, so I have to make sure I don't do anything else on those days. It's a lot more manageable now than it used to be."

She says of the CReate course Balancing Roles, Achieving Goals: "I met other carers and realised there are a lot more carers around in Bradford than I thought – and they're lovely people. We looked at how to work out our finances, home management, and we met different people.

"I wasn't sure about starting it as I have anxiety,



Mandy and her dad following his discharge from hospital

depression and obsessive compulsive disorder. I am also quite shy. But I really enjoyed it. It's given me a backbone and I've also started to stick up for myself, which has helped me to look after myself a lot better and put up some boundaries. I've come out of my shell a bit."

Eileen says: "I remember going round to help Mandy fill in an emergency plan after the course and she had someone round fixing her boiler. She was really clear and assertive with him about her needs in a way she hadn't been before. It was great to see."

The former CReate course attendees now meet as the Bierley Carers Group. Mandy says: "We do art and talk every couple of weeks. I only go once a month as I also go to a community group to do baking." Mandy is now also exploring whether she can become a volunteer for Carers' Resource, working with groups.

She adds: "I'm managing my own conditions and finding I am now feeling happier. I'm thinking about myself more, which is a change from before Carers' Resource came along. I was a nervous wreck before but now I am beginning to think things over and I'm working things out better. I use lists now to write everything down to help me cope."

When things settled for her, Eileen closed Mandy's case but Mandy got back in touch for different support. Mandy says: "I felt she understood and I felt able to come back when my circumstances had changed. I'd tell new carers or carers whose situations have changed to not be afraid to ask for help. My dad didn't like to ask for support, but I thought, 'No, we need it'. So swallow your pride and ask for help."

We're Scrabbling for men



Two men's social groups have recently started at our Skipton and Bradford offices and they are both looking for new members. In Skipton, it's on the last Friday of the month, from 2-4pm, and in Bradford it's on the first Tuesday of the month, from 5.30-7pm.

The men who go along can play cards, dominoes or Scrabble, or browse our books. Free refreshments are provided, too. See pages 6-7 for full details.

Wills talk 'can help plan ahead'

Walker Foster Solicitors is to give free talks to carers and staff about wills, trusts and inheritance planning.

The information sessions will be at our Shipley office on 12 March and at our Harrogate office on 2 April. Both of the clear and informative hour-long talks will start at 10.30am and carers will have the chance to ask their own questions. Carer Christine, who attended the same talk at our Skipton office last year, says: "It's helped me a lot to understand things and plan ahead."

For more information contact create@carersresource.org or call your local Carers' Resource office.

