

new carers strategy... new carers strategy... new carers strategy...

NEW CARERS STRATEGY ...

**“A caring system on your side.
A life of your own.”**



The government's new National Carers Strategy - “Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities” was launched during Carers Week on June 10th. It is a ten year plan which includes £255m of new money for carers. The Strategy is supported by the Prime Minister and seven Secretaries of State, but what does it really mean for carers? Will the promises of new money mean the development of new local support services for carers or will this extra funding get swallowed up by government bureaucracy?

The Government's Vision for carers

The Strategy says: “Our vision is that by 2018, carers will be universally recognised and valued as being fundamental to strong families and stable communities. Support will be tailored to meet individuals' needs, enabling carers to maintain a balance between their caring responsibilities and a life outside caring, whilst enabling the person they support to be a full and equal citizen.”

By 2018, the Strategy promises that:

- Carers will be respected as expert care partners by paid workers and be supported in their caring role
- Carers will be able to have a life of their own alongside their caring role
- Carers will be supported so that they are not forced into financial hardship by their caring role
- Carers will be supported to stay mentally and physically well and treated with dignity
- Children will be protected from inappropriate caring and be supported to learn, develop and thrive.

New commitments in the Strategy

On the whole, the Strategy is a very positive document, with a range of useful commitments backed up by new money. The government had already announced £22m for emergency planning and support for carers and the Strategy commits the government to spending the following amounts over the next two years:

The Strategy is the “start of a process rather than the end... carers need more help and support than has been available in the past... above all we recognise the need for better support for respite and short breaks.”

Gordon Brown, Prime Minister

- £150m to local Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) for flexible breaks, meeting the needs of both carers and the people they support
- Up to £38m to help carers stay in work or re-enter the job market
- £6m to ensure young carers are protected from inappropriate caring and receive support.

The strategy also promises that by 2011 the government will:

- Find ways of joining up services offered by the NHS, councils and charities
- Experiment with new ways of GPs supporting carers and try out providing an annual health checks to carers
- Improving the emotional support offered to carers
- Provide training to help people feel more confident in their caring role

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- Train professionals in lots of agencies, such as health, social services and housing
- Ensure that carers support charities can reach more carers
- Provide every carer with local information services and a national carers advice line and website.

The longer term 2011-2018

The strategy sets out some goals from 2011 onwards, such as:

- Finding out if we need a lead professional for carers in every area
- Review benefits available to carers and the people they look after
- Consider more increases to breaks and respite
- Consider providing replacement care for carers to attend hospital appointments and screenings
- Review the law around information sharing with carers and confidentiality
- Consider allowing payment of carers via Direct Payments given to service users by social services.

New definition of 'carer'

The Strategy puts forward a new definition of a carer which it suggests should be used by all government departments. "A carer spends a significant proportion of their life providing unpaid support to family or potentially friends. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems." It says that this suggested definition will not immediately affect assessments or benefits – at the moment. It is a suggestion for people to think about.

Support and local carers' charities

The Strategy recognises that "many carers prefer to deal with third sector organisations than with the statutory services for a variety of reasons" and recognises "the vital role that these organisations play in ensuring that carers have the greatest possible flexibility in receiving and accessing support and services".

So this sounds like good news for Carers Resource

and the three other carers organisations that work alongside us in Scarborough, Whitby and Ryedale, but so far we are being told that there is no additional money from either the Primary Care Trust or North Yorkshire County Council.

The new money for carers will not be 'ring-fenced' so councils and health trusts will not be made to spend it on carers. It is our intention to monitor the situation carefully and if required to lobby the government to do more to make sure the money intended for carers is spent on them locally.

Income and employment

The Strategy steers away from raising benefit levels, saying that the best way to make sure carers can enjoy a reasonable income "is if they, where possible, combine paid employment with their caring role." This is seen by many as a missed opportunity to deal with the financial hardship that is commonly experienced by carers and their families.

"Every day 6,000 people take on new caring responsibilities"

From the Strategy's foreword

Many carers already have the right to make flexible working requests, and the government will consider extending this right to carers who do not yet have that right, because they don't live with the person they care for and are not closely related.

Care partnership managers will be introduced at Job Centre Plus branches, along with new training for staff, marking job vacancies as carer friendly and funding replacement care for carers who want to go on approved training courses.

A good practice guide for all employers on the benefits of employing carers will be produced.

If funding permits we hope to continue with our "Changing Lives" project which provides information and support to carers who are juggling work and care or who want to return to work or training.



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Health and well-being

The Strategy gives doctors and others the clear message that "carers must be treated by professionals as partners in care... Carers often find that their caring responsibilities prevent them from accessing health services both for their own needs and on behalf of the person they support. It is important, therefore, that both carers and the people they care for are given as much choice and control as possible when accessing NHS services."

Young carers

The government wants to reduce the numbers of children who are having to provide excessive and inappropriate levels of care for parents and other family members. The Strategy sets out some plans to help support them, as well as providing new money for local services.

"People who provide a lot of care tend to have lower incomes, poorer health, and are less likely to be in work than their counterparts."

From the Strategy's foreword

What's missing?

- It is very disappointing that the Strategy does not make any promises to raise Carers Allowance or other benefits straight away, particularly when this was an issue that was raised time and time again during consultations with carers. Instead, the government says it will reform all benefits over the next few years and will talk to people about how best to do that.
- The Strategy does not give much detail about how it will change things for groups of carers who often get less support at the moment, such as black and minority ethnic carers or carers of people with substance misuse problems.
- It does not offer carers any new legal protection from discrimination, either at work or when trying to access services from councils and health trusts.



Have your say

We would like to know what you think about the Strategy so that we can represent the views of local carers to the government, to North Yorkshire County Council and to the Primary Care Trust.

There is a form on page 11 which you can fill in and send back to us. The form is also on our website to download and send back to us at julie@carersresource.net or you can email us your comments to the same address.

We would particularly like to know:

- What do you think of the new suggested definition of 'carer'?
- Which bits of the Strategy do you most welcome?
- What's missing from the Strategy or should be changed?
- What needs to happen in this area to make the government's vision for carers become a reality?
- Will the Strategy do enough to make sure local carers' services get more help from councils, health trusts and government?
- How are you affected by the Carers Allowance remaining at the current level? Would you support a protest march?

You can also post your comments on the carers' message board on the Princess Royal for Carers website at www.carers.org/forums

**Copies of the Strategy are available from:
www.dh.gov.uk/publications
or dh@prolog.uk.com**

National Carers Strategy Questionnaire.

August 2008

1. What do you think of the new suggested definition of 'carer'

2. Which bits of the Strategy do you most welcome?

3. What's missing from the Strategy or should be changed?

4. What needs to happen in this area to make the government's vision for carers become a reality?

5. How are you affected by the Carers Allowance remaining at the current level?

6. Would you support a protest march?

If you would like to receive feedback from us about this survey please give us your:

Name:

Address:

Telephone number:



Please return this form to: Giving Carers a Voice, Scarborough & Ryedale Carers Resource. FREEPOST NEA 1433, Pickering, North Yorkshire YO18 7ZZ