

# New bearings for Berkshire Carers Service

IT IS WITH sadness that Berkshire Carers Service has to announce it will no longer be providing any services to carers from Thursday 31 March 2016.

Our carers' information, advice and support services which have been commissioned by our local authorities and the NHS Berkshire come to a close finally on March 31.

Future services for carers based in Reading and West Berkshire have been commissioned from Nottingham-based, Carers Trust East Midlands. Their Helpline number is 0118 324 7333.

Services for carers in Bracknell will be provided by the Ark Trust. The new service will be called Signal, telephone 01344 266 088 and email [info@signal4carers.org.uk](mailto:info@signal4carers.org.uk).

In Wokingham, contact the Council's Customer Service team on 0118 974 6000.

A decision on carers' services in the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead has not yet been



announced. We will update carers via our website as soon as this information is confirmed. Please visit us at [www.berkshirecarers.org](http://www.berkshirecarers.org)

If you would like us to pass on your contact details so you can continue to receive support, please turn to the back page for information about how to do this.

You can also get information and advice from Carers UK on 0808 808 7777 and Carers Direct on 0300 123 1053.

**Message from our Chair - page 2 - 3.**

# Proud to serve carers over 21 years

Message from Jane Faulkner,  
chair of Berkshire Carers Service  
Board of Trustees

IT IS WITH great sadness that I inform you that from 1<sup>st</sup> April Berkshire Carers Service will no longer be contracted to provide services to carers in Berkshire.

Our services in West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead will close.

We have been proud to serve carers over the past 21 years and I would like to say a huge thank you to our loyal membership and carers for your support and appreciation over the years.

I would also like to say thank you to our dedicated team of expert staff. They are a terrific team and it is extremely sad that they will be disbanding.

They have been backed up by a fabulous team of volunteers, to whom I would also like to say a heartfelt thank you.

I wish them all well for the future.

The huge range of work carried out for carers by the staff - from small beginnings we have grown to have 13,000 of you on our books at the moment - includes our all-important helpline and extends to training sessions (we are still advertising some of these), outreach work and support groups.

These groups have been encouraged



recently to become self-organised in the future.

Carers have enjoyed numerous social occasions, including a wonderful boat trip I was able to join last summer: the noise level of conversation showed how greatly everyone was enjoying themselves.

Our work with GPs, to identify carers and link them with us, has been fruitful and we have helped carers have imaginative kinds of respite including having a chance to learn a language for fun.

Our committed and highly qualified staff have been able to reach a diverse range of carers, including those with



*• This stunning artwork was created by carers in the early days of the service and has had pride of place on the walls of our offices ever since*

particular language and other needs.

Services to carers will continue in some form to be offered on behalf of local authorities by other organisations.

In West Berkshire and Reading the contract has been awarded to Carers Trust East Midlands, which has taken over Reading Crossroads.

In Bracknell the contract is with a local consortium led by The Ark.

Wokingham Council will provide its own carers' services and the contract for Windsor and Maidenhead has still to be decided.

Consistent with the picture nationally, Berkshire Carers Service, as a

small local charity, has fallen victim to reduced funding and the rise of much larger organisations moving into the area.

However, we plan to continue to provide services in a redesigned form and trustees are taking time to consider a number of options.

You can follow our progress on our website which will continue to keep our supporters up-to-date.

Once again, thank you for your support for Berkshire Carers Service.

On behalf of the trustees and staff I wish you all the very best for the future in your caring journeys.

## 'Thank you for your support'

# How it all began back in the 90s

## Royal seal of approval for new carers centre



• A smiling Princess Royal leaves Reading Carers Centre. *Below:* Signing her photo



HER ROYAL Highness The Princess Royal gave the royal seal of approval to what was then Reading Carers Centre at its official launch in May 1995.

Based in Cross Street, Reading, the centre was opened with the help of the Prudential who donated £3m in a five-year project to set up 13 centres across the UK.

During her visit, Princess Anne unveiled a plaque and chatted to staff in her capacity as president of The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, which was created on her initiative in 1991.

At that time people caring at home for family members or friends with disabilities and chronic illnesses were still scarcely recognised as requiring support.

Our service expanded to provide services in other local authority areas, changing our name to the Princess Royal Trust Carers Service and in 2012 to Berkshire Carers Service.

Last year we celebrated 20 years of delivering free information, advice and support to unpaid carers of all ages.

# Rights for carers have become enshrined in law over the years

OVER THE past 20 years the profile of carers has been raised and their value increasingly recognised by legislation, which has led to important new rights.

Back in 2008 the Government published *Carers at the Heart of the 21st Century Families and Communities*, which outlined its vision of how carers would be universally recognised.

In 2010 the Government set out four priority areas in *Recognised, Valued and Supported: Next Steps for the Carers Strategy*:

- 1) Supporting those with caring responsibilities to identify themselves as carers at an early stage
- 2) Enabling carers to fulfil their educational and employment potential
- 3) Personalised support
- 4) Supporting carers to remain mentally and physically well.

In May 2014 NHS England published its commitment to carers '*NHS England's Commitment to Carers*' setting out its plan with 37 commitments to respond to the growing number of carers, raising the profile of carers and giving them the recognition and support they need.

The commitments were developed in partnership with carers, patients, partners and care professionals.



The Children and Families Act 2014 gives greater protection to the welfare of children and gives young carers the right to have an assessment of their needs.

The Care Act 2014 brought in important new rights for carers from April 1 2015.

Carers now have:

- The right for all carers to have an assessment of their needs
- There is a new minimum national eligibility criteria which all local authorities in England must comply with
- Carers have the right to personalised support from the council if they meet the conditions of the eligibility criteria
- Better planning of transition arrangements for young carers approaching adulthood
- Carers have a right to an independent advocacy service if they need help and support with any aspect of the assessment process.

# Make sure you know if you are entitled to any benefits as a carer

KNOWING what benefits you and the person you care for are entitled to can make a real difference.

You might be able to get help with paying for certain costs or make a difference to your pension entitlement.

There are three main types of benefits:

- 1) Benefits if you're not in paid employment - *earnings replacement benefits*
- 2) Benefits that help pay for extra costs, such as those relating to disability or having a child
- 3) Benefits and tax credits that top up low income if you're in work - *means-tested benefits*

Carer's Allowance, an earnings replacement benefit, is the main benefit for carers. You may be eligible if you are looking after someone for 35 hours a week or more.

You may be entitled to only one benefit or a combination of all three types. To work out which benefits you're entitled to, follow the steps below:

## **Step 1 - check earnings replacement benefits**

Carer's Allowance is one of the earnings replacement benefits. Check if you're entitled to Carer's Allowance or another earnings replacement benefit.

If you're entitled to more than one of these benefits, the one that offers

the highest amount of money will be paid.

If you are over pension age and retired, you will be eligible for the State Pension. Between 2010 and 2020, the State Pension age for women will move gradually from 60 to 65. You can check your retirement age on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

Usually, you will not be able to receive Carer's Allowance once you receive your State Pension. However, you will still have an "underlying entitlement" to it, and this can help you qualify for other means-tested benefits and related payments such as the carer premium.

## **Carer Premium**

The carer premium is a payment included in the calculation of any means-tested benefits you get if you're also paid Carer's Allowance or have an underlying entitlement to it.

The exact amount you receive depends on your financial situation. Not everyone will receive the full amount.

## **Step 2 - check for benefits that can help with extra costs**

Many carers not only look after someone, but are ill themselves. If you're aged 16 to 64 and have a long-term illness or disability, you could be entitled to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), or Attendance Allowance (AA) if you're 65 or over.



PIP helps with some of the extra costs caused by long-term ill health or a disability. AA is paid if you're severely disabled and need help with personal care.

If your child is disabled, you can claim Disability Living Allowance on their behalf until they turn 16.

These benefits can be paid in addition to any earnings replacement benefit.

### **Step 3 - check for means-tested benefits**

Check if you're entitled to any means-tested benefits or tax credits.

Means-tested benefits - sometimes called top-up benefits because they "top up" your income - can be paid in addition to other benefits you might also be getting. You can check online - see the panel.

The main means-tested benefits

you may be eligible for are:

Income Support, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or Pension Credit.

## **Where to get more information**

The most up-to-date source of information on benefits is [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

You can use online benefits calculators at:

[www.entitledto.co.uk](http://www.entitledto.co.uk) and [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)

Other information is available from: Carers Direct 0300 123 1053 [www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide) and Carers UK. [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

# Has the Care Act made a difference?

CARERS Trust has launched a review of the Care Act to look at what difference it has made to unpaid carers one year on.

It will be working with former care minister Paul Burstow. He will chair a commission receiving evidence from carers and carers organisations to hear their views on how well they think the act is working - what has worked well and what still needs to be improved.

The new Care Act, which came into force on 1 April 2015, gave carers rights on a par with the people they care for, which includes an entitlement to an assessment of their own needs.

This includes taking into consideration the carer's health and wellbeing, family relationships and their need to balance their home life with their education or work.

If they are found to be eligible they are entitled to support funded by their local authority. In addition, all local authorities must provide advice and information and prevent carers' needs from getting worse.

The Commission is inviting anyone who is a carer, or supports carers, to get involved and share their experience of what is working well in the new rights for carers, and what needs to work better.

You can take the survey online at [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/JMG7CGD](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/JMG7CGD)

In particular the Commission would like to hear from:

## *Commission seeking evidence from carers*

- Carers, especially anyone who has received a carer's assessment or support as a carer from their local authority since 1 April 2015
- Organisations which support unpaid carers
- Local authority and NHS carers leads and commissioners
- Health and care professionals who support carers

Former Care Minister Rt Hon Prof Paul Burstow said: "The Care Act introduced vital new rights for carers. One year on is a good time to hear about the difference this is making to carers' lives - the positives and the negatives.

"I am pleased to be asked by Carers Trust to chair this commission to shine a spotlight on the difference the new rights are making, as well as identifying the lessons that can help ensure carers get the support they are entitled to."

The call for evidence opened on 1 February 2016 and will run for seven weeks until 18 March.

The Commission will also hear oral evidence in April, as well as written submissions, and will report on its findings in July 2016.

For more information and to download a Microsoft Word document, visit Carers Trust website at [www.carers.org/CareActCarers](http://www.carers.org/CareActCarers)

# Victory hailed as benefit cap on full-time carers of adults to be scrapped

THE GOVERNMENT has announced it will change the law to exempt all carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance from the benefit cap.

The welfare reform minister, Lord Freud, told peers during a debate on the welfare bill that all those who spend more than 35 hours a week in a caring role would be exempt from the cap.

The announcement came in response to an amendment tabled by Baroness Pitkeathley following a landmark ruling from the High Court on carers affected by the benefit cap.

Charities welcomed the U-turn as "a significant victory" for carers and carers' rights

In his Judgment Justice Collins cited Carers UK evidence extensively and ruled that the Government was unlawfully discriminating against disabled people and their carers.

Carers UK has campaigned for changes to the benefit cap rules since the policy was first announced in 2010, highlighting the iniquity of



further reducing the incomes of carers who already contribute so much to society.

Heléna Herklots, Chief Executive of Carers UK, said: "This is a significant victory for carers and carers' rights. By changing the law to exempt carers who receive Carer's Allowance from the benefit cap, the Government has shown that it recognises both the valuable contribution that carers make to society and that the benefit cap unfairly penalises carers - many of whom are already facing significant financial hardship as a result of their caring role."

## New living wage for over 25s becomes law

IN APRIL the Government's new National Living Wage will become law.

If you're working and aged **25 or over** and not in the first year of an apprenticeship, you'll be legally entitled to at least **£7.20 per hour**. That's an extra fifty pence per hour. The Government is committed to increasing this every year. If you're an employer, you'll need to make sure you're paying your staff correctly from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016, as the National Living Wage will be enforced as strongly as the current National Minimum Wage.

# £80 million boost to ensure children with SEND can 'dream big'

A MULTI-MILLION pound package aimed at ensuring thousands of children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) have the same opportunities as any other child has been announced by the Government

Children and Families Minister Edward Timpson said the £80 million would ensure every child, regardless of the challenges they face, can 'dream big' and fulfil their potential.

This announcement will increase funding for councils and charities who work with some of the most vulnerable young people in the country.

The government's reforms mean for the first time ever the needs of children with complex SEND are all set out in one education, health and care (EHC) plan.

It also means councils are legally required to take the views of families into account when deciding on what support to offer.

Children and Families Minister Edward Timpson said: "Our vision for children with special educational needs and disability is simple: that their aspirations are as high as any



other young person, that they dream big, achieve well at school and college, and lead fulfilling, happy lives."

The funding includes:

- £35.8 million in implementation funding for local authorities in 2016 to 2017

- £27.3 million for the Family Fund Trust in 2016 to 2017 to support low income families with disabled children. They provide small scale grants

- £15 million to fund the independent supporters programme in 2016 to 2017, run by the Council for Disabled Children. This is a crucial catalyst for change, helping to support families and young people to navigate the system and creating overwhelmingly positive experiences for them

- £2.3 million for Parent Carer Forums in 2016 to 2017, who bring parents together to provide invaluable support and advice for families

In addition, the government is also pledging to fund this work for an additional year in 2017 to 2018, to ensure the transition to the new system is seen through by April 2018.

# Samaritans are available 24/7 to support you through difficult times

-----  
Emma Campolucci, outreach and partnership director with Reading Samaritans, explains how Samaritans is a service for everyone  
-----

MENTAL wellbeing is important to us in our busy lives, helping provide the resilience to cope when times are tough.

One way you might do this is to take time to discuss the difficulties that you are facing.

Contacting Samaritans could give you the opportunity to talk through your problems in a confidential and environment. It provides a safe place for anyone struggling to cope, whoever they are, however they feel, and whatever life has done to them.

## Who contacts Samaritans?

Men, women, children, old and young, all religions and ethnicities - we are a service for everyone. You don't have to be suicidal, **anyone struggling to cope can contact us.**



## How can talking to Samaritan's help?

We can help you explore your options, understand your problems better, or just be there to listen. ·

We want you to feel safe while talking to us, so you can tell us how you're really feeling.

That's why we're totally confidential. You don't even have to tell us your name. We won't tell you what you should do. We won't make decisions for you, and we'll support the decisions you make.

## How you can get in touch with Samaritans

Samaritans is available 24/7. Telephone: 116 123 in the UK (Freephone). email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Face-to-face. Visit [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) to find details of your nearest branch as well as further information. There are branches in Reading (0118 926 6333), Bracknell (01344 455 556) and Basingstoke (01256 462 333). Local call charges apply when using these numbers.

# Irregular heart beat poses health risk to women



HAVING an irregular heartbeat poses a greater health risk to women than men, a review of 30 studies, involving more than four million patients, suggests.

The women with atrial fibrillation (AF) were almost twice as likely to have fatal heart disease and strokes.

Women may respond less well to AF drugs or are being diagnosed later than men.

“One possibility is that women with AF are undertreated relative to men,” Connor Emdin and colleagues, at the University of Oxford, told the British Medical Journal.

In the meantime, experts say doctors should be aware of the findings in case more can be done to avert avoidable deaths.

About a million people in the UK have AF.

You can check if you might have it by feeling your pulse for about 30 seconds.

An occasional irregularity in pulse, such as a missed beat or extra beats, is common and nothing to worry about.

But if your pulse is continuously

irregular with no pattern, you should see your doctor.

It may also be very fast, more than 100 beats per minute even when resting, leading to dizziness and shortness of breath.

Medicines can control AF and reduce the risk of a stroke (a clot or bleed in the brain).

In patients with AF, the heart’s upper chambers - the atria - contract randomly and sometimes so fast the heart muscle cannot relax properly between contractions, reducing its efficiency.

June Davison, from the British Heart Foundation, said AF was under-diagnosed in both men and women.

She said: “It is important that healthcare services for the prevention and treatment of AF take into account the different effects of gender on the condition.

“More research is needed to find out more about the underlying causes of these differences.”

For more information about maintaining good heart health, you can visit the British Heart Foundation’s website at [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)

# Eating well to stay healthy

EATING healthily can reduce your risk of many health problems and help you to feel better. There is a lot of advice out there which can be confusing, but here are the key things to remember, *writes our health and wellbeing officer, Susie Jennings, who has a PHD in nutrition.*

**Fruit and vegetables:** Eating at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day helps to keep your heart healthy and reduce your risk of diabetes and some cancers. Aim for as much variety as possible.

**Fish:** It is recommended you eat at least two portions of fish a week, with at least one of them being oily such as salmon or mackerel. Omega-3 which is found in fish can improve symptoms in rheumatoid arthritis and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

**Fibre:** Wholegrains and high fibre foods, such as wholemeal bread, pasta and cereal, brown rice and pulses reduce your risk of heart disease and diabetes.

**Calcium:** Calcium is essential for healthy bones. To get enough calcium you should have 3 servings a day of dairy products or other foods with added calcium, such as fortified bread.

**Iron:** Iron is an important component of the diet as it prevents anaemia, a major cause of tiredness. Meat, dark green leafy vegetables and fortified products such as cereals are all good sources. Having something



that contains vitamin C, such as citrus fruit or juice, helps the body to absorb the iron from food.

**Water:** 6-8 glasses of fluid a day will stop you becoming dehydrated and help your body to work properly.

**Fat:** Saturated fat is found in meat and dairy products. These foods are essential in the diet as they provide protein, but it is best to go for lower fat options such as chicken, fish and low fat dairy products. Avoid using a lot of fat in cooking. Lots of saturated fat in the diet increases the risk of heart disease and diabetes.

**Salt:** A high salt intake can increase your risk of stroke, heart disease, some cancers and diabetes, so try to avoid using it in cooking.

**Sugar:** Too much sugar in the diet increases the risk of diabetes.

**Supplements:** Some vitamin and mineral supplements may be helpful, particularly for older people, but always consult your doctor as they may offer no benefit or even be harmful.

# Make sure your GP knows you're a carer



AT BERKSHIRE Carers Service we have always encouraged carers to let their GPs know they have additional caring responsibilities so they can offer support and advice.

And this is being backed up by Berkshire's Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) who believe many carers are unknown to their GPs.

There are 75,000 carers in Berkshire and the number is set to rise as the population increases and people live for longer.

Dr Andy Ciecierski, Chair of North and West Reading CCG said: "When

looking after a loved one at home many of us don't think of ourselves as a carer.

"People tend to see themselves as a spouse, parent, sibling or friend and they don't realise that it's important for them to let their GP know about additional caring responsibilities.

"In addition to a free 'flu jab, carers can access protected appointment times at many GP surgeries, and some practices will offer additional healthchecks and support for the carer to stay fit and well."

## Inspectors rate Wexham Park as 'good'

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has rated the services provided by Wexham Park Hospital, Slough as Good following a recent inspection.

The finding marks a very significant improvement since the hospital was last inspected in 2014, when it was rated Inadequate. Subsequently the hospital was acquired by Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust.

In the latest inspection, the hospital's emergency service and critical care service have both been rated Outstanding, with the six other core services rated as Good. To see the full report, please visit [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

# New NHS campaign puts bladder and kidney cancer in the spotlight

DID YOU know that blood in your pee could be a sign of bladder or kidney cancer?

The current NHS Be Clear on Cancer campaign encourages people to go to their doctor if they notice blood in their pee, even if they only see it once. The chances are it's nothing serious, but if it is cancer, finding it early makes it more treatable.

Around 17,450 people in England are diagnosed with bladder or kidney cancer each year. These cancers can affect people of all ages but are most common in those over 50.

Blood in your pee is a key symptom for both bladder and kidney cancer.

Other bladder cancer symptoms include:

- Cystitis (a urinary tract infection)



that is difficult to treat or comes back quickly after treatment

- Pain when peeing.

Other kidney cancer symptoms include:

- A pain in the side, below the ribs, that doesn't go away
- Weight loss.

You're not wasting anyone's time by getting your symptoms checked out. If you've been to the doctor but your symptoms haven't gone away, go back - they'll want to know.

Want to know more?

Visit [nhs.uk/bloodinpee](https://www.nhs.uk/bloodinpee)

## Where to go for advice or treatment

If you are feeling unwell or have hurt yourself there are a number of options for treatment other than going straight to A&E. They include:

- Visiting local pharmacies
- Calling NHS 111 for advice.
- Making an appointment with your GP
- Reading's Walk-in Centre in Broad Street Mall, which is open every day including weekends from 8am to 8pm.
- The Minor Injuries Unit at West

Berkshire Community Hospital, Benham Hill, Thatcham which is open 8am to 10pm

- Urgent Care Centre, Brants Bridge, Bracknell
- Urgent Care Centre, St Marks Hospital, Maidenhead (
- Walk-in Centre, Upton Hospital in Slough 8am - 8pm all year
- Townlands Hospital Henley Minor Injuries Unit. 9am - 8pm.

# Fraud Bureau warns householders to beware doorstep tricksters who want your signature

THE NATIONAL Fraud Intelligence Bureau's (NFIB) Proactive Intelligence Team is warning people to beware of fraudsters that turn up on your doorstep and ask for your signature.

The Proactive Intelligence Team debriefs convicted offenders to identify emerging trends and have found that your signature is one part of a puzzle that the fraudsters are putting together. Your signature could be the final piece - once they get hold of it they could drain your bank account or commit identity crime.

A convicted fraudster said: "If we want to get someone's signature it's really easy. All we do is put on a fluorescent coat or vest, knock on the door and ask the person to sign for a letter or a flyer.

"They don't need signing for but nobody ever questions why and we don't hang around for a chat! Once we have the signature we can make changes on their bank accounts and authorise fraudulent money transfers." **Protect yourself:** Not expecting a ~



delivery? Be suspicious.

Question what you are signing for, look for official identification and if you do sign, just print your name.

Check your bank and financial statements carefully and report anything suspicious to the bank or financial service provider concerned.

Criminals commit different frauds depending on the type of the personal information they manage to steal.

Your identity is a precious commodity; you should take every precaution to ensure that it isn't abused or stolen.

The Bureau estimates that one in four of us has fallen victim to an identity crime, losing on average £1,200 each.

The knock-on effects can also be huge, causing massive personal distress and inconvenience and taking up to 200 hours of a persons' or businesses' time to fix.

To report a fraud and receive a police crime reference number, call Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040.

# Research reveals 80% of young carers miss out on childhood experiences

NEW SURVEY results published by Carers Trust reveal that up to 80 per cent of young carers are missing out on childhood because they are caring for family and friends.

Instead of seeing friends, enjoying hobbies and completing their homework, these children, as young as 10-years-old, are cleaning, cooking, administering medicine, shopping and looking after a brother or sister - along with many other daily tasks.

The survey results reveal that:

- 80 per cent of young carers say they miss out on what other children their age are doing

- 82 per cent said they miss out on seeing friends - 60 per cent said they miss attending events and other activities and 45 per cent struggle to get their homework done on time

- 80 per cent carry out their caring role every day

- 50 per cent help to administer medicines to family members.

- Almost a quarter of those surveyed care for more than 20 hours a week

- 41 per cent help with personal care, such as washing and helping the person they care for to get dressed.

Gail Scott-Spicer, CEO of Carers Trust, said: “Thousands of young carers across the UK are missing out on their childhoods because they are caring for



an ill family member. For many young carers their reality is cleaning, shopping and cooking.

“Young carers are constantly burdened with the worry of what is happening to the parent or sibling they care for at home. Their caring role never stops - whether they are at home or school.

“We want these children to be able to live a full life, like their friends, which means they won’t be missing out on their childhoods - getting the help and support they desperately need.”



WORKING with colleagues from the health sector to raise awareness of carers' issues among medical staff and to help carers recognise themselves as such has been an important part of our work. Our team from Maidenhead office took part in Carers Day at Frimley Park Hospital recently, which was a resounding success.

## Crafty, keen and over 70? RVS needs you!

THE HUNT is on for keen and creative people who are 70 plus to showcase skills at this year's Royal Voluntary Society GrandFest.

They are searching for inspiring older people with skills that they would like to share with others.

GrandFest is a mini festival to celebrate talented older people and the heritage skills that they can share with the younger generation.

This year's event will take place on Sunday 5 June in East London. The festival will take over museums, shops, cafes and bars in and around

the creative hubs of Hoxton and Spitalfields with a series of master-classes held by people all 70 years and over.

RVS are looking for talented people to hold two 45-minute master-classes in their specialist skill.

Do you know an older person who has a particular hobby to share? They're looking for everything from gardening to basket making, jewellery making and knitting. For further information, please visit <https://grandfest.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/>

# What it means to be a carer

With thanks to Jayne Mohseni

A carer's role has many a guise, from mother to daughter to sons and wives

There is no division when it comes to this role - it's done out of love with heart and soul

It's exhausting, frustrating. It can come out of the blue. It changes the lives of your loved ones and you

The person you care for still looks the same. They still hold your hand and call out your name

They need you to be there through the day and the night, and you're sometimes afraid to be out of their sight

You feel guilty for leaving albeit for ONE hour, for something as simple as taking a shower

What if they stumble, what if they're sick. I can't be too long, I have to be quick

I must get back home I have so much to do; my life is on hold and all about you

Do I feel angry and sad this has happened to us? No I keep quiet and try not to fuss



There are people to help us, well they do what they can, they gave us some leaflets and I have a care plan

I can ring if I'm troubled and go on a list, I can hit out at walls if I get that red mist

I cry in my coffee and I cry on my own. I can be in a group but still feel alone

Yes, the role is challenging and the same every day but ask me to change it and all I would say;

A carer's life is rewarding but also it's long, and why do authorities get it so wrong?

We need to be heard, we do have a voice. Sometimes we carers are given no choice

So give us a break, just a day here and there and support us and show us that you really do care

And finally...

# Do you want your details passed on?

IF YOU would like your contact details to be passed on to the new providers of services for carers we need your permission.

Berkshire Carers Service holds records for all carers who are registered with our service.

However, due to data protection legislation we will NOT be passing on any details about carers to other organisations without the express permission of the carer.

Therefore, if you wish for your name and contact details to be passed on to the organisation which is providing services for carers in your area you need to tell us,.

Please either:

Call us on 0800 988 5462 to give your permission.

Email [helpline@berkshirecarers.org](mailto:helpline@berkshirecarers.org) with your name, address and telephone number and state you are



giving your permission for these details to be passed on.

Or, fill in the form below and return to us at Berkshire Carers Service, Suite 11, Beacontree Court, Gillette Way, Reading RG2 0BS.

We will only be passing on your name, address, email and telephone number in order to comply with current data protection legislation.

Please let us know as soon as possible - remember, we won't be here after 31 March.

---

**I give permission for my name and contact details to be passed on to the new provider of carers services for my area.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_