



## ***News from Carers Together in Hampshire*** ***14 September 2009***

### **Stress busting for Southampton carers**

**People who care for a disabled or infirm relative or friend rarely get a chance to escape from everyday stress. But now a new free programme, coming soon to two venues in Southampton, will help local carers to unburden and unwind.**

Caring with Confidence sessions are starting on **Friday September 18th** at Bitterne United Reform Church, 446 Bitterne Road, **Bitterne**, from 10am to 1pm; and from **Monday September 21st** at The Switch, Shirley Warren Action Church, 107-117 Warren Crescent, Shirley Warren, from 1pm to 4pm. The sessions are run by local carers organisation, Carers Together in Hampshire and all local carers aged over 18 are invited to attend.

**Caring with Confidence** is a free Department of Health-backed learning programme that aims to help carers make a positive difference to their lives and that of the person they care for. It helps carers build on their strengths, gives useful information about looking after someone and helps carers decide what positive changes they could make in their caring role to make their lives easier and to reduce stress.

John\*, a carer from Eastleigh, has already completed the programme.

“Many people become carers due to a sudden and dramatic change in the health of a partner, parent, child or friend,” he said.

“Often in this unexpected situation, information about assistance is not forthcoming. Caring with Confidence is a major step towards rectifying this situation. The course covers all aspects of a carer’s life, especially the well-being of the carer, which is of particular importance to the person who is cared for.

“There are also practical aspects, such as how to communicate with professionals. This course is very important for carers and it should be widely publicised so that more carers can take advantage of it.”

Sarah Spencer-Stonehill, CWC Project Manager for Carers Together in Hampshire, said that around 4.9 million people are estimated to provide unpaid care in England.

“Caring can be a very stressful and demanding job, and there are many different aspects to the role, such as coping with your own emotions as well as those of the person for whom you care, learning how to access grants and financial help, or dealing with various professionals when you may be feeling alone, overworked or even angry.

“Caring with Confidence does not tell you how to be a carer, or whether you are doing it right or wrong, but it can help carers to try to balance their caring responsibilities with work and family responsibilities.

“The programme focuses on the carer and their needs, giving them time to think about themselves a little more than they might normally do. It helps to give them ideas for coping strategies that could ease some of the pressure they sometimes face. We also deal with some of the practical issues and signpost resources that can give them additional support.”

Anne Meader, Chief Executive of Carers Together in Hampshire, said she is delighted that Carers Together will be able to offer Caring with Confidence to people in the Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Isle of Wight areas.

“The programme gives carers a safe and supportive environment in which to explore the essentials of looking after someone. This can only help carers to improve their own health and well-being and that of the person they care for.”

Caring with Confidence sessions will also be taking place in Fareham in November and December and at other locations in Hampshire at a later date.

*For further information about CWC or to book a place at a session contact Sarah Spencer-Stonehill on 01794 519495 or email [sarah.stonehill@carerstogether.org.uk](mailto:sarah.stonehill@carerstogether.org.uk)*

**Media contact:** *Carers Together would be happy to provide further information on all aspects of caring and has carers available for interview. Please contact Lindsey Darking on 07775 891715 for further details.*

*\* John does not wish his full name to be used.*

## **Note to editors:**

### **1. About Caring with Confidence**

The programme consists of seven sessions, the first of which, *Finding Your Way*, is completed by everyone. Carers can then choose which other sessions they want to complete, either through face to face sessions, self study, online sessions or a combination of all three. The programme is flexible, so that anyone who misses the first session locally can complete it in another area.

The other sessions are:

- *Caring and Coping* – managing the stress and emotions involved in caring
- *Caring and Me* – health and well-being, and how to be fit for life and caring
- *Caring Day to Day* – the practical essentials of caring
- *Caring and Resources* – accessing resources which save carers money and maximise their income
- *Caring and Life* – time out to think about how the caring role fits with other aspects of life
- *Caring and Communicating* – using real life caring situations to help carers get the best from communicating with professionals and service providers.

Further information at [www.caringwithconfidence.net](http://www.caringwithconfidence.net)

**2. Carers Together in Hampshire** is the largest local independent carers' support organisation in Hampshire and supports over 40 local carers' groups and forums across the county. Carers Together is a charity and social enterprise run by carers, for carers and is one of the few carers organisations run largely by volunteers, including its management team and chief executive.

The charity organises outings for carers, runs an advocacy service, organises regular information, advice and support sessions and also runs a free listening line, the Carers Active Listening Line, on 08000 3 23456, where carers can get immediate emotional support and advice. The line is available from 9am to 11pm every day of the year.

Further information is available from [www.carerstogether.org.uk](http://www.carerstogether.org.uk)

### **3. Additional feedback from Hampshire Caring With Confidence sessions:**

"I would recommend the sessions to other carers because of all the good information, discussion, support, togetherness and friendship."

"It gives you a chance to meet other people in a similar situation and you know you are not alone."

"All the information is relevant. The more you know, the better your caring role will be."