

NEWS MAY 2009

CARING WITH CONFIDENCE LAUNCHED IN HAMPSHIRE

**Mike Tomlinson - husband of Jane Tomlinson CBE
backs free and flexible carers programme**

Caring with Confidence, a free Department of Health backed knowledge and skills based learning experience, has today been launched in Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and the Isle of Wight – with the aim of helping carers make a positive difference to their life and that of the person they care for.

The new programme, which will run across England, is being provided by Carers Together in Hampshire and is set to launch in June, offering support through local sessions with groups of carers or from home using workbooks or the internet.

With around 4.9¹ million people estimated to provide unpaid care in England and 65%² of those people asked in the South East not viewing themselves as carers - despite their situation – the need for Caring with Confidence has never been greater.

Anne Meader, Chief Executive of Carers Together in Hampshire, said: “We are delighted we are now able to offer Caring with Confidence to people in the Hampshire, Portsmouth, Southampton and Isle of Wight areas.

“The new programme will be free to carers, giving them a safe and supportive environment to explore the services available to them, look at the essentials of looking after someone and how to communicate effectively with other people to help support their needs - which will improve their own health and wellbeing and that of the person they care for.

“The programme will allow those people who find themselves in a caring role the opportunity to meet other people in a similar situation, learn more about the condition they are dealing with and improve their ability to get exactly what they need from the health professionals and services available to them.”

To address this issue, the programme will offer support and help to carers, with particular emphasis on the millions of people who provide care on a daily basis but don't know where to begin when it comes to accessing the services and benefits available to them.

The research conducted as a part of the programme set-up for Caring with Confidence also revealed that more than 60% of those people asked believed their caring role affected their health (16% a lot 46% a little). As a result the need to support people looking after loved ones in a flexible manner has never been greater.

Caring with Confidence is being supported by Mike Tomlinson, husband of the hugely inspirational athlete and fundraiser Jane Tomlinson CBE, who passed away in September 2007 after a long battle with cancer.

He said: “I have personal experience of caring for a loved one and it can often be an isolated and difficult experience as you struggle to balance the needs of the person you care for with your own and those of the wider family.

“Support was available but not in such a way that it could be accessed easily. The flexibility Caring with Confidence offers means that people across England will be able to access these vital support services and meet with other people in similar situations to exchange information and share knowledge.”

Caring with Confidence is part of the Government's New Deal for Carers and the National Carers Strategy. It is aimed at helping carers build on their knowledge and strengths, sharing useful information and identifying the positive changes they can make in their own situations.

The programme has been developed over the past 12 months with ongoing support from carers, which has highlighted the need for a recognised programme of this type.

Today's launch (May 12) marks the start of the programme across England for all carers over the age of 18.

Stephen Jacobs, OBE, Caring with Confidence Project Board Chair, said: "The contribution made by carers is huge, but it is a role that is often taken on at short notice and without preparation, leaving carers to struggle with the vital responsibilities that they have assumed - this is where Caring with Confidence can help."

Research also revealed one in five people caring 50 plus hours a week are also juggling a full-time job, and 23% of those people asked had been caring for at least 10 years.

It also showed that any support or provision should explain how to deal with the benefits and healthcare system (46% and 41% said these topics would be very or extremely useful) as well as providing practical information and advice about the condition they are dealing with (38% very or extremely useful).

By working with carers and experts within the carers' arena, Caring with Confidence has been designed to enhance and supplement existing provision rather than replace it. The provider organisations through which local sessions are being delivered have been carefully selected through their capacity to meet the needs of carers and recruit them to their sessions.

For more information on how to access the Caring with Confidence programme in Hampshire, please contact Carers Together in Hampshire on 01794 519495 or email admin@carerstogether.org.uk

For carers interested in finding out more information about self-study workbooks or online sessions call 0800 849 2349.

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Notes to Editors

Caring with Confidence is a free knowledge and skills based programme for carers in England aged 18 and over, to improve their health and wellbeing and that of the person they care for.

Caring with Confidence:

- helps carers build on their strengths
- gives useful information about looking after someone
- helps carers decide what positive changes they could make in their caring role.

Carers can choose how they access Caring with Confidence, either by attending face-to-face group sessions, completing self-study workbooks, accessing online sessions or a combination of all three.

For further information, visit www.caringwithconfidence.net.

¹ Based on 2001 Census data.

² The research referred to in the press release was conducted by an independent market research company during February, March and April 2008. The study saw 1084 carers contacted and six detailed group discussions were held.