

Carers Together in Hampshire ***July 13, 2009***



The Public Guardian meets Hampshire carers, health and voluntary representatives

PHOTO

Pictured are Public Guardian Martin John (young, in suit); carer Horace Daubney (with walking stick and glasses); carer Tracey Eldridge (orange top); Felicity Hindson, Executive Member for Adult Social Services, Hampshire County Council (blue jacket); carer and Carers Together in Hampshire Chair Janet Chierchia (blue and white dress); and Anne Meader, carer and Carers Together in Hampshire Chief Executive (black top).

The Public Guardian, Martin John – who is responsible for safeguarding the interests of people unable to make decisions about their own well-being or property due to accident, disability or old age - met with over 140 Hampshire carers, health and voluntary group representatives last week.

Mr John, Chief Executive of the Office of the Public Guardian, a body created by the Mental Capacity Act 2005 to protect the vulnerable, attended a conference organised by Carers Together in Hampshire at Winchester Guildhall on Tuesday July 7. The event was also supported by Hampshire County Council Older People's Wellbeing Team and Adult Services Department and was attended by an audience of carers, people with a disability and professionals from statutory, voluntary and health organisations.

The aim of the day was to explore how people of all ages can take control of their own lives and plan for the future. The Public Guardian gave carers an advance preview of new, simplified forms for the Lasting Power of Attorney, (LPA) which will be introduced by the Office of the Public Guardian in October.

An LPA is a form that can be filled out by anyone, outlining what would happen to them and who would make decisions on their behalf in the event of them losing mental capacity in the future. LPAs can be completed in respect of both health and welfare and property and financial affairs, and are then registered with the Office of the Public Guardian for a small fee before they can be used. The OPG supervises and regulates the scheme and works with the courts, local authorities and other agencies to make sure that the vulnerable are properly protected.

Mr John said people of all ages, not just the elderly, should plan for the possibility of being unable to deal with their own affairs.

"People don't want to think about it, but accidents can happen at any time. If you plan ahead and make decisions about your own future through a Lasting Power of Attorney, you will have more choice about your future well-being. It is much better to think about this subject in advance, even if you never need to use the LPA."

Councillor Felicity Hindson, Hampshire County Council's Executive Member for Adult Social Services, said: "I'd like to congratulate Carers Together on holding such a useful and informative conference. One of the key messages to come out of this conference was the importance of ensuring people can maintain their dignity and can make their own choices about their care both now and in the future when they may become incapacitated and reliant on others to care for them.

"I was delighted that it was so well attended and that it provided the opportunity to highlight the aims of personalisation and the benefits that model of care will bring to Hampshire residents."

Other speakers at the conference included Lucy Butler, Assistant Director, Hampshire County Council Adult Services; Stephen Godfrey, Project Manager, Adult Services, Hampshire County Council; and Dr Mark Roland, End of Life Care Clinical Director for South Central Strategic Health Authority.

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Note to editors:

The Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) supports and promotes decision making for those who lack capacity or would like to plan for the future in England and Wales, within the framework of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. The OPG is an agency of the Ministry of Justice, and supports the Public Guardian in registering Enduring Powers of Attorney, Lasting Powers of Attorney and supervising Court of Protection appointed Deputies. For more information visit www.publicguardian.gov.uk

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

Further information is available from www.carerstogether.org.uk