

PRESS RELEASE

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**NHS NORTH SOMERSET JOINS FORCES WITH NORTH SOMERSET
COUNCIL TO HIGHLIGHT THE NEEDS OF CARERS**

NHS North Somerset is using National Carers Week to highlight the impact of caring on the health of the area's estimated 20,000 carers. Carers who provide high levels of care for sick or disabled relatives and friends, unpaid, are more than twice as likely to suffer from poor health compared to people without caring responsibilities. A range of physical and mental health problems often experienced by them include physical strain and stress related illness such as high blood pressure, anxiety and depression.

It is estimated that there are 20,000 carers in North Somerset, of whom 290 are young carers aged under 18. A higher concentration of young carers live in Weston-super-Mare, while anticipated rises in the numbers of over-65s and people with dementia over the next 5–10 years will see the number of carers in North Somerset increase sharply.

A carer is defined as someone who regularly provides unpaid care for someone who is disabled, frail, ill, has mental health issues or substance misuse problems. Without this support, many of those individuals being cared for would require formal care packages or care home placements. The national economic contribution of carers is estimated at £87 billion per year.

Added Kathryn Benjamin, Carers Lead (Acting) with North Somerset Council; “Nationally one in ten of the population is a carer, which means that there are around 20,000 carers in North Somerset.

The actual number of carers across the patch is unknown, however at the time of the Census 2001 there were 19,438 carers in North Somerset, of whom 3,518 were providing over 50 hours a week of care. At 28th September 2009, 290 young carers under 18 had been identified locally.”

- The over-65 population in North Somerset is expected to increase from 43,000 in 2011 to 50,200 in 2016.
- The number with dementia locally is expected to rise by 30.5% from 3,171 in 2007 to 4,240 in 2020.
- The number of people with a limiting long-term illness is predicted to increase by 52% from 2008 to 2030. The number of carers in the area can be predicted to rise in line with these figures.

Susan added: “It’s easy to see from these statistics that the number of carers in North Somerset is set to rise sharply over the next decade. It is vitally important to ensure that all carers feel they have the support of the community as a whole and access to good healthcare when they need it. Caring can make the carer feel lonely and isolated and NHS North Somerset and North Somerset Council work closely with Avon and Somerset Police, Dementia Care, Carelink and the local branch of organizations such as Crossroads Care to create an infrastructure of support for carers.”

NHS North Somerset is supporting a range of events across the patch, during Carers Week, which are designed to help carers find out about the practical help and support available to them.

On Monday 13th June 2011, Crossroads Care, North Somerset will launch the Week at Weston Hospital, with an Information Stand in the Main Foyer from 9am to 4pm and representatives from the various schemes on hand during the day. On 15th June 2011, Avon Fire and Rescue Service, Avon and Somerset Police, Weston Hospital Dementia Care and North Somerset Council Carelink will join representatives of the PCT to meet carers and introduce them to the support teams in the area. The event, also organised by Crossroads Care, will take place between 10.30am and 2.30pm at Clevedon Baptist Church.

Kathryn Benjamin said: We conducted a survey last year which shows that local carers tend to be aged between 45 and 60 and are more likely than the general population to be self-employed or retired, often have disabilities themselves and tend to have low incomes. The majority look after spouses, partners or parents. The age group of those looked after is mainly 85 to 90 years old. Nearly half of all carers who answered the question relating to time spent caring responded that they spend more than 100 hours a week doing so.

“Professional agencies must work closely together with voluntary organisations and GP’s, to identify early on who the carers are and ensure that they receive the practical advice and information they need before they reach a crisis. During the summer we will be working together to make this happen.”

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

- NHS North Somerset is the local Primary Care Trust for North Somerset. The trust was established in April 2002 to ensure the provision of the highest quality healthcare services to the residents of North Somerset. It was recently assessed as one of the most improved PCTs in England by the Care Quality Commission.

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