

AGE Concern

AGE CONCERN INFO

A Few Crumbs of Comfort for Pensioners in a Depressing Budget

The chancellor said in his budget that he would increase the limit on savings that can be disregarded for pension credit benefit from £6,000 to £10,000 but this will not come into force until November.

Pension credit is a lifeline to some of Britain's poorest pensioners (those who take the necessary steps to claim it), topping up their weekly income to £130 a week for single pensioners and to £198.45 for couples. However, the means-tested scheme still assumes that pensioners receive a pie-in-the-sky 10% on their savings!

Many pensioners do not realise that they are eligible for the pension credit top up, as well as the associated council tax benefit – BOTH OF WHICH HAVE TO BE CLAIMED.

The Chancellor promised to increase the basic state pension by at least 2.5% in September. This means a rise from £95.25 a week for a single person to £97.63 a week and to £156.10 for a couple. This is not a new promise, however, as it has been said since 2002 that pensions would always rise by the rate of inflation or 2.5%, whichever is the higher.

Mr Darling said that he would maintain the winter fuel allowance (which helps older people heat their homes) at the higher level introduced last year ie £250 for the over 60s and £400 for the over 80s. There will be more information on how to claim the winter fuel allowance from July this year on www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel. There is also a helpline for anyone who has not claimed previous years' payments or who has any queries on: 08459 15 15 15.

The total yearly amount anyone can put into a tax-free ISA (Individual Savings Account) has risen from £7,200 to £10,200. It will be possible to put the entire amount into a stocks and shares ISA or up to £5,100 in a cash ISA and up to £5,100 in a stocks and shares ISA. However, you will not be able to invest the increased amount until October this year if you are aged over 50 and in April 2010 if you are under this age.

Age Concern Walks – More Walkers (and Non-Walkers) Needed

Last year we raised a superb £6,500 but we need to make this year even more successful for the frail and needy older local people who rely on us. The money makes a real difference to the services which Age Concern Leicestershire and Rutland is able to provide.

If you can't participate, please think about sponsoring Peter Ralphs, one of our staff who enjoys matching £ for £ sponsorship from his previous employer, Barclays Bank. With Gift Aid, each £1 pledged to him will end up being worth £2.28!

If you can come along, please join in with one of the following:

- Abbey Park – meet at Abbey Park Road car park, 10am June 7
- Birstall Watermead Country Park – meet at St James Centre, 10.30am or Meadow Lane Car Park, 11am June 14
- Bradgate Park – meet at Newtown Linford car park 11am June 14
- Melton Mowbray Country Park – meet at Gloucester House, 11am June 14
- Rutland – meet at the Plough Braunston, 10am August 27.

If getting sponsors is difficult, please still

come with all the family and consider making a donation.

Any queries to 0116 2237344

Elder Abuse

Unfortunately elder abuse is a terrible reality although it seems that it is often hidden and goes unreported.

One definition states: Elder abuse is a single or repeated act or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.

Abuse can take many forms including:

- Physical abuse – hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions

- Sexual abuse – including rape, sexual abuse or sexual acts in which the vulnerable adult has not consented, could not consent, or was pressured into consent

- Psychological abuse, including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercing, humiliation, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

- Financial or material abuse, including theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits

- Neglect and acts of omission – including ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate healthcare, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating

- Discriminatory abuse, including racist, sexist, that is based on a person's disability, or other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

It is important, and indeed urgent, for the Government to listen to and respond to statutory organisations who are lobbying for legislation to protect the vulnerable, elderly persons in the same way as children are protected.

Disability Living allowance : Extension for Blind People

The Government has announced that 20,000 severely visually impaired people will be entitled to the higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance in the future. The change, which is part of the Welfare Reform Bill, is due to come into effect from 2011. (Only those disabled before the age of 65 can claim Disability Living Allowance)

Tax on Small Pensions

For many years some pensioners have not been taxed correctly on small occupational pensions. This year nearly 100,000 pensioners will receive letters from HM Revenue and Customs stating that tax will now start to be collected. However, following a campaign led by the Low Income Tax Reform Group and including Age Concern and Help the Aged, there will be no attempt to claw back tax owed for any previous years.

Direct Payments and NHS Budgets : High Court Ruling

The High Court has ruled that there are no powers under the NHS Act 2006 for direct payments to patients. The case involved disabled people who had employed their own

staff, and wished to continue doing so when it was established that they were the responsibility of the NHS under NHS Continuing Health Care. The Health Bill currently going through parliament will amend the law to allow pilot schemes to be set up to make such direct payments.

Disability-related Expenditure : Court Ruling

The High Court has quashed a decision to increase charges for home care from nil to £68.50. It held that the local authority had acted unlawfully in failing to consult the service user or his parent as required by directions and guidance. The judge found clear evidence within the care plan justifying disability-related expenditure. He criticised the local authority guidance's exclusion of holiday expenses, and found that guidance was so rigidly followed that it effectively fettered discretion.

Disabled Living foundation : Re-launch of 'AskSARA' website

AskSARA is an online guided advice tool produced by the Disabled Living Foundation (DLF). It enables people to obtain product advice from the DLF's database. It has now been updated and relaunched, with a new layout and inclusion of the DLF's product rating system. New topic areas, including driving, transport, hobbies and leisure have been added.

A telephone helpline also operates from 10am until 4pm, Monday to Friday, for those without internet access.

Advice from AskSARA. Online information.



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BIRSTALL PARISH COUNCIL

Council Office, Birstall Road, Birstall, LE4 4DH

NOTICE OF VACANCIES FOR TWO COUNCILLORS

Birstall Parish Council currently has two vacancies for Councillors: in the Riverside Ward and in the Greengate Ward, following the resignation of Iain Bentley and Christopher Clarke respectively.

For each of these positions, we are looking for someone who wishes to make a difference to the community of Birstall. You will need to be willing to contribute to the work of the Council both at its regular monthly meetings and possibly through one of the three committees which deal with Planning, Estates and Recreation and the Gala.

If you are interested in serving the Council please submit a short written application which should include your name, address and occupation, how long you have been a resident of Birstall, any voluntary activities which you may have undertaken, and reasons for wishing to serve on the council.

For an informal discussion, please contact the Parish Council Office on 0116 267 6191 during office hours (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday between 9.00 am and 2.00 pm).

Applications must be received by Monday 6 July. The Council will invite all applicants to address its meeting on 13 July then proceed to co-option at the same meeting.
S C Blackburn
Parish Council Manager

Tel: 0845 470 7272 (AskSARA helpline)
www.dlf.org.uk/public/sara.html

Role of Grandparents and the Wider Family : Grandparents Plus Report

This report on the role of grandparents in the UK draws on a range of evidence, including a new survey of over 2,000 people. It concludes that the current economic crisis will result in an increasing number of parents turning to their own parents for childcare and financial support. The report makes a number of recommendations, including additional tax and national insurance credits and entitlements to special family leave.

www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/

New Rules for Energy Suppliers : Ofgem Announcement

Ofcom has unveiled new rules for energy suppliers to give consumers more power and help seal the flaws in the retail market. Ofgem will consult on details of the ban on unjustified pricing, including:

- a standard annual statement giving the tariff name, customers' consumption and reminder of their right to switch;
- simplified information on tariffs;
- written quotations following doorstep sales; and

- greater financial transparency to show consumers that the market is competitive and fair.

Warm Front Improvements : DECC Announcement

The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) has improved its Warm Front Scheme, which provides grants for disabled people and those on income-related benefits to install insulation or energy efficient heating in their homes.

Grants have been increased with immediate effect to:

- £3,500 for households connected to the gas grid; and
- £6,500 for those outside the gas grid

The scheme will also pilot the installation of technologies which could enable householders to generate their own low-cost, renewable energy.

From Jex Woods

Small Ads

Small ads are 25p for the first 16 words. 17-32 words: 50p. Enclosing payment, post your ad to us or hand it in (inside an envelope) at Birstall library.

Trade/business rates for small ads are 25p a word. You are liable for the trade/business rate if you are offering a service for which you are asking for payment, or if you are advertising new goods for sale. All text will be printed bold. Box outline £1 extra. Max 50 words. Phone numbers count as one word.

AIRPORT CARS Birstall. Airports, Seaports, Long Distance, Courier. Tel: 0777 1984806

TELEPHONE EXTENSION Sockets fitted by ex-BT engineer. Cable, BT and digital TV. Over 25 yrs experience. £28 complete. John 2675132

ARCHITECTURAL DRAUGHTING. Plans, extensions & alterations drawn and submitted to council. All types of draughting undertaken. Over 15 years experience. Tel: Mark 0116 2677721

PARTIES? PRIVATE room hire. All types of occs catered for, hen, stag, b'day etc. 0116 2666102 or 07969 005890

POLE DANCING lessons. Have fun getting fit! Tue & Thur evenings, beginners welcome 0781 8800774

FREE 17 24x24 slabs; 4 24x30 slabs. Tel: 2674148

FOR SALE Silver Grey Grundig 40" TV with remote, stand available £30 ono. Tel: Leic 2841869

1,000 SMALL Manilla window envelopes, size 89x152 mm £10, 0116 2673925
BARBEQUE 'LUCIFER 1155 Festival' with motorized spit roaster. Unused. Also 5lb bag charcoal briquettes. £15. 0116 2673925

The July issue of
THE BIRSTALL POST
will be published on Jul 4.
The copy deadline is Jun 19.

Dave Rouse

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