

Health checks for Carers

One in 10 people in Devon is a carer. Are you one of them?

A carer is someone who looks after a member of the family, a partner or friend in need of help because they are ill or have a disability. The care provided is unpaid and often without support.

Many people who care for someone else still do not realise that, as a carer, they may be able to get extra benefits and help with things such as Council Tax. Carers have certain legal rights to benefits and other support, and every year £740 million of carers' benefits are unclaimed.

Jim, from East Devon, cares full time for his wife who has rheumatoid arthritis, although a few years ago he thought he would be the one needing to be cared for. He had what he refers to as 'an adventure with cancer' which meant he had to retire at 69 after major surgery.

At an Occupational Therapy assessment for their house, Jim and his wife were given a bundle of leaflets which included information from Devon Carers Link and, through them, Jim got in touch with his local carers group. At the first meeting, he learnt something he hadn't known before – that he and his wife were entitled to a reduction in their Council Tax because she is in a wheelchair. He also learnt that a free health check was available at his local GP surgery, because he is a carer.

"My health as a carer is now more important than ever," he says. "I keep myself fit, go to the gym daily, eat a healthy diet and had had frequent blood pressure checks which were all perfectly normal, so it came as a really big surprise when, at the Carer's Health and Wellbeing check, they found my blood pressure was sky high and I was at risk of a heart attack



Jim with nurses from the Coleridge Medical Centre

Many carers do not know about their rights or how to get help.

Devon Carers Link exists to make sure carers know about their rights and what is available. It provides information, support and opportunities for involvement to all carers in Devon.

Find out more at devoncarerslink.org.uk

or a stroke. Now I am on new medication and being closely monitored, thank heavens.

"I applaud the scheme and cannot praise highly enough my GP and the nurses at the Coleridge Medical Centre. I'm really glad that I went along for the health check and I would urge anyone who cares for a friend or relative to go along for a check too."

More providers are gearing up to offer a Health and Wellbeing check to carers. However, because this is a pilot scheme, they're not available in all GP practices or all areas of Devon yet. A list of current providers can be found at devon.gov.uk/carers.

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