

17 June 2009



**Dear Colleague**

**Carers Direct**

We are pleased to let you know that Carers Direct – a comprehensive information, advice and support service for carers, including young carers – has recently been launched. Further detail is given at Appendix A.

Developed in conjunction with carers and the national carers' charities, the service is available both online at [www.nhs.uk/carersdirect](http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect) and through a helpline (freephone - 0808 802 0202, email - [carersdirect@nhschoices.nhs.uk](mailto:carersdirect@nhschoices.nhs.uk) and post - PO Box 4338, Manchester, M61 0BY), seven days a week.

You may wish to ensure that your staff and volunteers who work with carers, especially those working on telephone advice lines, counsellors and support centre managers are aware of Carers Direct. An electronic toolkit is available at [www.nhs.uk/carersdirect/toolkit](http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect/toolkit) if you require assistance.

Postcards that provide key details of Carers Direct are available, if you would like to order some, these can be ordered free of charge from:

Carers UK publications line: 0845 241 0963 (quote the publication code CDPOSTCARD).

We formally launched Carers Direct on 10 June, as part of Government's engagement with Carers Week. We hope you will draw this new service to the attention of your staff, volunteers and service users.

Handwritten signature of Phil Hope in black ink.

PHIL HOPE

Minister for Care Services  
Department of Health

Handwritten signature of Jonathan Shaw in black ink.

JONATHAN SHAW

Minister for Disabled People  
and Minister for the South  
East

Department for Work and  
Pensions

Handwritten signature of Delyth Morgan in black ink.

DELYTH MORGAN

Parliamentary Under Secretary  
of State for Children, Young  
People and Families

Department for Children,  
Schools and Families

## Appendix A – Background to Carers Direct

### Carers Direct (formerly known as the Information Service/ Helpline for Carers)

1. The five million carers in England make a vital contribution to those they care for, their communities and society as a whole. To carry out this role carers need accessible and reliable information that enables them to access services and support for themselves and the person they care for. Presently a number of local and national services exist to provide such support to carers and whilst the value of these services cannot be overstated, what has been lacking until now is a well-funded and comprehensive nationally available information service.
2. Working with carers, the national carers' charities and other stakeholders, DH has established Carers Direct to provide such information via a website ([www.nhs.uk/carersdirect](http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect)) and a helpline available by freephone (0808 802 0202), email ([carersdirect@nhschoices.nhs.uk](mailto:carersdirect@nhschoices.nhs.uk)) and post (PO Box 4338, Manchester, M61 0BY), seven days a week. It is expected that carers will receive assistance from the service directly, or be referred to an existing service that is more appropriate.
3. The web component of the service went live in June 2008 in limited form. It has now been completed, having some 800 pages of information, and will be regularly developed and updated. The helpline went live on 1st April 2009.
4. Carers Direct will also work with other similar services to develop the integration and through that the value, of information provision for carers.
5. Initial reaction by carers and the national carers' charities and similar organisations to the website has been positive. Funding has been set aside for an annual evaluation of the service.
6. DH is making in excess of £2.8m a year available to support this service.
7. Carers Direct fulfils a Government commitment made in *Our health, our care, our say* as well as *Carers at the heart of 21st-century families and communities*.