



The **MASE** Monthly Newsletter

July 2012

Jubilee Celebrations



Thank you to everyone who joined in the Jubilee Celebrations during June. All the volunteers had a great time and are sure you will agree that it was a spectacular month; every MASE Group was full of energy and laughter. Thanks also to our great entertainers, who all joined in the celebrations and helped to make the evenings so wonderful.



Could drinking coffee reduce your risk of dementia?

Research has suggested drinking coffee could protect people over 65 against the onset of Alzheimer's disease. The study, published in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease, involved 124 people aged 65 to 88 over two to four years, and monitored their memory and thinking processes. It reported that those with mild cognitive impairment who had higher blood caffeine levels did not develop Alzheimer's disease within the timescale of the study. With coffee being the main or only source of caffeine for participants, the study claims to provide the first direct evidence that moderate coffee intake is associated with a reduced risk of dementia. **Alzheimer's Society comment:** 'This small study adds some further weight to the emerging evidence suggesting caffeine could prevent or delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease. As one of the first studies to include people with mild cognitive impairment, the results are significant. Further clinical studies and research into the link between caffeine and dementia are now needed.'



New Prototypes to help people with dementia

A fragrance-release system designed to stimulate appetite, specially-trained 'guide dogs for the mind', and an intelligent wristband that supports people with dementia to stay active safely... these are just some of the design prototypes to help people with dementia, unveiled by Care Services Minister Paul Burstow at the Design Council in April.

The Design Council, in partnership with the Department of Health, ran a national competition to find teams of designers and experts who could develop new ideas to help improve the lives of those affected by dementia. Guided by in-depth research and working with those affected by dementia, the five teams developed the innovative concepts for products and services.

The resulting prototypes will now be further tested and developed with commercial partners with the aim of making some or all of them generally available as soon as possible.

The five designs are:

- ※ Ode: A plug in device which gives off the smell of foods at mealtimes in the person's living space, to stimulate their appetite and remind them to eat
- ※ Buddiband – a discrete wristband which uses cutting edge technology to keep carers informed of the welfare of the wearer, and respond if needed
- ※ Dementia Dog – a new approach that trains specially-selected assistance dogs to help and protect the wellbeing of people with dementia
- ※ Groupole – an online network which helps families plan and share care, engaging a wider support circle
- ※ Trading Times – a website to help carers find flexible employment

Care Services Minister Paul Burstow said: "Fear of dementia can leave people feeling powerless and trapped, leaving them isolated and unsupported. That is why we have worked with the Design Council to drive innovation in dementia care. The five winning ideas have the potential to make a big difference for people with dementia and their families.

"The Design Council work is part of our wider drive to make our country dementia friendly."

Jeremy Hughes, Chief Executive of Alzheimer's Society, added: "These innovative products have the potential to make a big difference to the quality of life of people with dementia and their carers. They could help people feel supported and enable them to live independently for longer.

"The Prime Minister has thrown down the gauntlet to all of us to help improve the picture for people with dementia. This competition provides one example of how this can be done. We now need to rally more people behind the cause."

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David Cameron asked to transform provision of care for the elderly

David Cameron recently came under unprecedented pressure recently to transform provision of care for the elderly. In an open letter, a coalition of 78 charities and campaign groups warned the Prime Minister that unless he acts, millions more pensioners will be condemned to a life of 'misery and fear'.

They said that a postcode lottery of access to care is leaving many in 'quiet desperation', as hefty care bills put them at risk of losing 'their savings, their dignity, their independence'.

Under the current system, pensioners have to pay the cost of their own care if they have savings or assets worth more than £23,500. It has led to the scandal of tens of thousands of pensioners every year having to sell their house to fund the costs of their residential care. Countless others have to make do with 15-minute home help visits, even though they need more assistance, because council services are so under-funded.

A much-delayed White Paper on long-term care should be published in June, but it will focus on the quality of care provision, with the issue of paying for it relegated to a 'progress' document. There are also signs that a new funding system may not be fully in place until 2025.

Now a total of 78 organisations including Age UK, Saga, the Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services have banded together to write the open letter to the Prime Minister.

THE DAMNING LETTER FROM CAMPAIGNERS

Dear Prime Minister,

Social care is in crisis – the system is chronically under-funded and in urgent need of reform. Without this, too many older and disabled people will be left in desperate circumstances: struggling on alone, living in misery and fear.

The system is a lottery – some of us will be lucky enough never to need care, but there are many of us who need support at some stage in our lives to carry out everyday tasks and could lose everything: our savings, our dignity, our independence. We agree with your comments in March that action is needed to reform a system which can currently leave people helpless, in the dark about their care and suffering massive losses as a result of care bills.

The right care and support can enable older and disabled people to live independent and fulfilled lives – but we currently face a vicious circle where limited resources are focused on only those with the very highest of needs. This only worsens the crisis in care as many older or disabled people are left without support – in quiet desperation, trying to cope alone, often ending up in hospital or crisis care. Families are paying the price too, as experienced staff are forced out of work to care for relatives, and many carers pushed to breaking point caring for loved ones.



There is widespread and increasing support for urgent reform – from across society and the political spectrum. That is why we are calling on you to take forward social care reform as your personal mission, your legacy to future generations. Whilst we know decisions, particularly on the funding of care, will be difficult, they must be made now. We want disabled and older people and their families to be able to live without fear of what tomorrow might bring. We are asking you as Prime Minister to show the vision and courage to make this a reality.

Signed by 78 organisations including Age UK, Saga and the Local Government Association

On a lighter note!



For people taking their annual holidays in July, we wish you a happy time and hope that the sun breaks through and the rain clouds disappear for you. Have a great time, relax as best you can, recharge your batteries, and we look forward to seeing you in August. Remember wine does not make you FAT it makes you LEAN (against tables, chairs, floors and walls!!).

Thought for July: Lost time can never be found.

Be kind when necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle.