

# BRIC Bath Research Institute of Caring

## Caring is on a precipice

Traditionally caring is an expression of concern for others, the practice of looking after those unable to look after themselves. We took those values and as a nation we created the welfare state and a health service free at the point of access by the end of the first half of the twentieth century. Sixty years later we have nearly seven million unpaid people in a caring role.

Health and Social Care in Great Britain has faced its biggest reform yet. 2012 saw the Health and Social Care Bill offer greater personalised funding of care and greater competition in services to deliver that personal care. This year sees the new Care Bill arrive. It has been described as a quiet revolution in our attitudes towards care and carers will for the first time be recognised in law in the same way as those they care for.

Has this denationalisation of both health and social care fundamentally changed our understanding of caring? At the very top of society we now have devolved responsibilities of care - the formation of NHS England means the minister for health no longer ministers to the health of the nation but instead has oversight. At the very bottom of society the health and social care reform places a market value on caring, and with one hand offers rights to carers who freely give their time to the vulnerable and elderly and with the other hand charges them for supporting them in their role.

## Caring for Carers

The 2010 IMPACT study across five European countries - including our own local carers - revealed that carers are ready and waiting for increased participation in research, but that awareness of research opportunities in their area was very poor.

I feel we have a duty to act on carers' willingness to be part of research. It is important to link up carer organisations such as the BaNES Carers' Centre to create a network providing carers with greater opportunities to contribute to research and give researchers a broader and richer population to study.

## Our priorities

Carers are individuals that reach across the entire medical, health and social spectrums - there is no specialty that doesn't have the potential for creating dependency - this is the first research institute for carers, of carers and by carers.

As an independent institute we will look to independent researchers who will come to see us as a natural home for their studies.

Forge relationships with local established research institutes and networks who we hope will look upon us a friend who has something new and different to offer.

Working together we will be asking researchers and professionals to take a different look at their area of interest and...

To look at things from a carer's point of view  
And to ask research questions about caring

An independent institute needs to be bold, innovative and forward thinking and within our first year we will be seeking funding for both research and feasibility studies on a range of projects.

We want professionals who work every day with carers to be empowered to ask questions and contribute their expertise to research. With that end in mind **WE WILL create research practitioners from carer support teams from around the area.**

Carers' issues do not have the prominence in academia that other disciplines or topical issues have enjoyed and yet carers number in the millions, they save the economy billions but remain in the shadows. To this end **WE WILL create the first endowed chair in the south west who will challenge academia to increase our understanding of carers' issues through funded research and champion carers' interests nationally and publically.**

Studying carers is not restricted to academic research. Many health and social care workers who encounter carers every day in their professional roles remain unaware of the real impact and consequences of being in a caring role, as they lack a carer awareness resource in their education and training. **WE WILL do a feasibility study to create an accredited distance learning resource - the first of its kind - to help raise standards in caring for carers.**

This institute doesn't just look at carers as potential research populations. Our values include treating carers as partners in this research and to achieve this **WE WILL be giving carers the resources and training to become researchers themselves.**

The BRIC can achieve through coordinated research a renewed understanding of how we as a country care, who does the caring, who we are caring for, the impact of that caring and how that care is delivered. We will re-embrace the concept of caring.