



PRESS RELEASE

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SYMPONIA OFFERS THE ELDERLY A HELPING HAND TO STAY AT HOME

Symponia, the care fees planning and financial advice specialist network for the over 65s, is launching a working partnership with **Helping Hands Homecare**, the market leader in Live-In Care, in a bid to raise awareness of care at home as an alternative to living in a care home.

Symponia claims that January brings a steep increase in enquiries from families concerned about elderly relatives who are not coping as well as they used to, following more time spent together over the festive season.

Live-In Care vs. Care Home: The costs

Many people believe that Live-In Care is only for the wealthy; in reality, costs compare with those of living in a care home, which can cost anything from £400 up to £1,500 per week (the latter is in the South East), with average costs in the region of £750. Most people associate care at home with an hourly rate, and based on say, £20 per hour, costs can easily run into £1,000 per week. If a person is funding 24 hours' worth of care on an hourly basis, costs can run to a whopping £2,400 per week.

However, Live-In care is costed differently; Helping Hands Homecare charges between £650 and £800 per week, making it comparable with the average UK care home. And although the elderly person still has to pay household bills, which vary from person to person, many people find staying at home is much more appealing as it provides an ongoing sense of independence and the continuity of living among friends and neighbours in familiar surroundings.

Live-In Care can be funded in the same way as care home fees and no one solution will fit all. Symponia is urging families throughout North Yorkshire to seek specialist advice to make sure that *all* options have been explored. A family may decide to use existing savings to purchase an Immediate Care Plan (ICP), funding the plan from liquid capital or possibly by arranging a lifetime mortgage. Non means-tested state

benefits are available, for instance people living at home are still entitled to Attendance Allowance. People needing Live-In Care often pay little or no Council Tax. The Local Authority is obliged to provide care at home, but it is more usually means tested and sadly the service offered by the LA doesn't always suit the needs of the elderly person.

The government wants people to stay in their own homes and communities for as long as is practically possible (as outlined by Alistair Darling's announcement in December 2007; Cash for Care). Unfortunately not enough people realise that Live-In Care can provide a suitable and realistic option to moving into a care home.

Stephen Wilkinson a financial planner and Symponia Member for Harrogate, York and North Yorkshire says:

"I am very excited about working with Helping Hands Homecare, a company which Symponia regards very highly and which was awarded an 'Excellent' rating by the care industry's regulator the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). It is so important that older people and their families realise that they continue to have *choices* in life. Nobody likes the idea of being old, or in poor health but psychologically, it is vital to our society as a whole that we continue to see elderly people as consumers and clients with options, rather than as victims. Care homes have a hugely important role to play but do not suit everyone and we want families to understand the whole spectrum of care available to elderly family members."

Lindsey Edgehill, Head of Marketing for Helping Hands Homecare agrees, saying: "The number of people we support with live-in care has trebled over the last three years and the short term forecast is for similar rapid growth. This demand reflects the need for a service that enables people to remain in the comfort and familiarity of home without compromising the level and quality of care received. However, there is still an educational job to be done and with the help and expertise of Symponia we aim to grow this market and make care at home accessible to thousands more elderly people across the UK."

For further information, people should call Symponia on: 01789 774595 or visit www.symponia.co.uk ; or call Helping Hands Homecare on 0808 180 9488 or visit www.helpinghandshomecare.co.uk .

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Notes to Editors

About Symponia

Symponia (which is the Greek word for compassion) was created by Jeremy and Janet Davies who have 20 years' combined experience in long term care. Founded in January 2005 Symponia is committed to raising standards and increasing training and compliance levels within the long term care advice industry.

- All members are qualified IFAs who are selected by invitation only, after a rigorous selection process designed to make sure that members have the right people skills as well as technical competence. All members are subject to a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. Symponia is the only advice group to carry out this procedure.
- Each member must pass a bespoke written examination every year. The exam is in addition to FSA requirements and tests market knowledge as well as technical competence. In addition to basic qualifications, advisers must have attained the industry benchmark examination known as CF8. Symponia is the only advice group to insist on this qualification.
- Members are subject to a Code of Practice and Conduct, and to a Customer Charter, which lays down strict service standards that the IFA must meet.
- Member IFAs pay an annual fee only (payable monthly). There is no commission split of business related fee.
- Symponia acts as an intermediary between care home providers and care fee specialist IFAs, providing the latter with introductions to providers in their area.
- Symponia is the only care fees planning advice group that has genuine national representation across England, Scotland and Wales. It is the only group to guarantee face to face consultation for clients in every part of the country.
- Symponia is proud to announce director, actor and writer Amanda Waring as its Patron.

About Helping Hands Homecare

Helping Hands Homecare, established since 1989, is the market leader in the Live-In Care sector and provides one to one care at home for people of all ages. The company provides the following support:-

- Personal care, e.g. toileting, bathing, overseeing medication, mobility
- Housekeeping, e.g. cooking, laundry, shopping, cleaning
- Companionship

Helping Hands Homecare has an Excellent rating with regulator CSCI and its own training academy. All staff are directly employed by Helping Hands Homecare.