

Volunteer News

The newsletter for our volunteers who support unpaid family and friend carers



16th June 2020

Over the next few months whilst our normal work is affected by COVID-19, we will be sending you more regular Volunteer Newsletters. We would appreciate your contributions.

To contact us:

Call: 01992 58 69 69

Email: volunteer@carersinherts.org.uk

Visit: www.carersinherts.org.uk

Carers in Hertfordshire, The Red House, 119 Fore Street, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG14 1AX.

Your Volunteer Team:

Alex Daar, Nicki Bird, Amanda Feron, Jules Josephs and Julie Hayes.



Making Carers Count

For the latest advice to carers, please see our website:

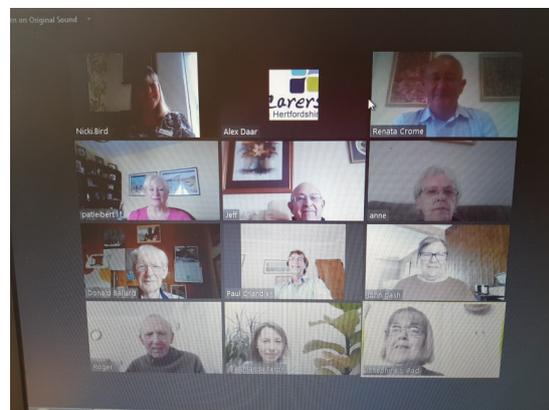
www.carersinherts.org.uk/taking-care-of-you/coronavirus-guidance



Welcome

We are really missing seeing Volunteers and Carers face to face. We have come up with several Zoom / video solutions to cover some of the gaps but realise this won't meet everyone's needs. We are working with some Leaders on face to face outdoor options with very small numbers provided all the risks have been fully assessed. At the moment, we are hoping we may be able to resume some Hub groups indoors from August or September and are discussing the options with current venues that we use.

We are planning Zoom meetings for 9 out of 16 Hubs to start with and are discussing plans for the other groups with the Leaders. We have run Mentor Training and Support on Zoom and offer a weekly drop in meeting for Mentors now. We are planning a New Mentor Training programme for July on Zoom.



Carers Week Watford Hub on Zoom

The new Keep In Touch Service continues with 1108 completed conversations with carers made by volunteers on the phone. We are so grateful to those who are now stepping back from helping and very thankful to those of you who are able to continue.

This is a bumper issue with 4 pages. Many thanks for the extra articles - keep them coming! We are very keen that this Newsletter is based on what you want to see in it and contains content from you, particularly if you find Zoom difficult. Please contact the Volunteer Team with any ideas, copy, or just to say hello!

Keeping Well Ideas

If you are interested in improving your skills during Lockdown, the Open University has a free course called 'Using voluntary work to get ahead in the job market'. This is an introductory, 12 hour course which explores how voluntary work can enhance your skills and employment opportunities.

If anyone is interested in taking the course and would like to review it so that we could recommend it for our volunteers, please let us know.

For further information on the course, please click [here](#).

The full list of free Open University Courses is available at:

www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses/full-catalogue

Mentoring Update

On Tuesday 9th June we held a pilot Zoom Drop In session from 3pm to 4pm for Mentors. Alex and I were delighted that eight Mentors joined us.

We are now launching a Mentors Drop in every Tuesday from 3pm to 4pm. If you would like the joining link please email or ring Alex or myself.

We hope it will develop into a safe space where you can share how your mentoring is going and to seek ideas and support from each other.

*Jules,
Mentoring Co-Ordinator*

Men's Carers Group Update

As part of our lottery bid we launched a new interest group in December: The Men's Carers Group.

Our first meeting was well attended. We brainstormed ideas about what type of group carers would like, discussed local support and support needs, and had time for a chat and icebreaker boardgames at the end of afternoon.

Rod Cotterell very kindly stepped up and volunteered to co-lead the group. At the second meeting, he was really helpful at thinking of topics to discuss and ensuring that everyone in the group would be welcomed, supported and involved.

Rod led our third meeting, at which we had eight carers come along to discuss his topic of simple meal planning and meal ideas. He brought along recipes and talked the group through how to make them, including tips and advice from his experience as a chef and teacher. All the carers who came thought that this was a brilliant idea and a really good way to start a group discussion that then naturally led to a wide-ranging conversation. They also appreciated the chance to come along and have a cup of tea in a friendly, supportive, and confidential atmosphere. The credit for this goes to Rod and his gentle, caring character. I spoke to Rod afterwards to thank him for the fantastic job he had done and as usual he was simply pleased that the carers had found the meeting helpful.

We were unable to hold the next meeting due to coronavirus but hope to restart either on-line or when we are able to meet again face to face.

Very sadly, Rod passed away in March. His kindness and generosity of spirit will be a huge loss to his family and the groups and people he helped. Rod also volunteered as Chair of our Mental Health Carers Forum and attended meetings as a carer representative. We will all miss him at Carers in Hertfordshire.

Amanda, Hub Volunteer Co-ordinator



Carers at the launch meeting



Rod Cotterell

Bereavement Support Group Volunteers Needed!

Many of our fantastic volunteers have been busy making KIT calls to carers to keep in touch during Lockdown. Carers have told us that they have really appreciated the support and a friendly voice to talk to at the end of the phone to during this time.

The KIT calls have made us aware of a large number of bereaved carers who need support and someone to listen to them, and we want to respond to this need. We would like to ask for volunteers to join our Bereavement Support Service. We offer training and support to develop your skills. You need to enjoy listening to people and want to do something worthwhile. There are 2 main roles: offering phone support to a bereaved carer regularly from your home and facilitating our support group meetings in Watford and Welwyn Garden City. You may choose to get involved with both types of support.

Marjorie, a Bereavement Volunteer, has written about her experience below:

"I have been a Bereavement Volunteer for about ten years. Before that I was a Junior School Teacher, a carer for my Mother who had cancer and a Volunteer for Isabel Hospice. After Mum died in 1990, I felt that I didn't want to go back to teaching but would prefer a new direction - something worthwhile and interesting using the new skills that I had hopefully acquired. I worked as a volunteer with Isabel Hospice and a good friend there talked about her work with a Carers in Hertfordshire Bereavement Group. I felt that this would present a new and interesting challenge as the approach is a little different from my volunteering with the Hospice, i.e working in groups, as well as on the phone. I now manage to work with both organisations.



Marjorie

My role now involves helping at some of the group sessions and giving bereaved carers a phone call once a month. Listening properly and with empathy is what people need and appreciate at this vulnerable time. I also help with allocating calls round to the group once a month, as we all lend a hand with some of the administration.

As the work is reasonably well spaced out, I still find plenty of time to pursue other interests such as sewing, growing our own fruit and vegetables on our allotment, and travelling around.

Working with the Bereavement Group has given me a personal sense of usefulness and more confidence. I meet many brave, courageous people who have cared for and then lost someone very dear to them. It is quite a privilege and I am always learning from them. In addition, the Bereavement Group itself is a wonderful, caring group of people - men and women who are a pleasure to be with.

If you are considering a volunteer role with Carers in Hertfordshire or if you are already a volunteer who would like a new challenge, please do come and join in with this worthwhile and rewarding work. It has certainly broadened and enhanced my outlook on life."

If you are interested in volunteering for the Bereavement Service and would like to chat about volunteering, please contact Christine Gillham, Information and Carer Planning Service Manager for more details by calling 01992 58 69 69.

Lockdown Quiz

Nicki Bird, our Hub Volunteer Co-Ordinator has answered a few Lockdown questions for us.

What new discovery have you made and liked?

N: Zoom Calls – It's a nice way to connect with my friends and social groups.

What have you re-discovered that has helped you in the last few weeks?

N: Jigsaw puzzles – I forgot how much I enjoyed doing these.

What are you missing the most?

N: I'm missing walking my little girl to school and being free to go out.

What have you discovered about yourself?

N: Home schooling is harder than you think!

Describe a Silver Lining you have found?

N: My neighbours are great. They are amazing and such a support for everyone at this time.

Nicki,

Hub Volunteer Coordinator



Caring Community Sabre the Caring Dog

Sabre's owner, Clare, has been a carer for about 10 years and she registered with us in 2017. Clare volunteers as a Carer Trainer. When asked about her volunteering experiences, she said: *"I thoroughly enjoy the Carer Trainer role. It has been diverse and allowed me to use my training skills and share my experiences as a carer. I've also been able to network, and I usually learn something to use in my caring role or pass onto others."*



During lockdown, Sabre and Clare have been visiting friends and family to boost moral. Sabre says: *"I have recently been supporting my owner with "Paws Pathway" visits to our close family and their dedicated carers, who are feeling very isolated at the moment. I seem to cheer people up and make a difference - at a social distance, of course."*

Clare said she recently visited a friend who is also a bereaved carer, who was helped by getting out for a short walk with Sabre. She is keen to develop this idea in the future, as she is aware of the comfort animals can give in times of stress.

Clare is happy to make "Paws Pathway" visits to carers in her area.

Sabre further extends the invitation:

"If you know of anyone who needs a boost right now as they care for their loved ones and would appreciate a social distanced "Paws Pathway" hello from Sabre, just call 0776 1129311."

For further details please have a look at Sabre's blog at <http://www.sarrattvillage.co.uk/dog-blog/>