

Volunteer News

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



31st March 2021

We would be pleased to receive contributions, photos, stories or updates for the newsletter. 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

Volunteer Vacancies

Our latest vacancies are shown on our website. Please click [here](#) to see what is on offer and to read more about each role.

If you are interested in any of our vacancies, please contact our office on 01992 58 69 69 or email volunteer@carersinherts.org.uk for further details.

For the latest advice to carers, please see our website: www.carersinherts.org.uk/taking-care-of-you/coronavirus-guidance

For our latest events and courses for carers please see our website:

<https://www.carersinherts.org.uk/events>



Welcome



Welcome to our March Newsletter.

It's hard to believe that a year has passed since the start of the pandemic. I am sure many of you, like me, have been thinking about the last twelve months and what they have meant for ourselves, our families, our communities and the world as a whole. One positive thing is that so many people have volunteered to help over the last year, including many new volunteers for Carers in Hertfordshire.

The success of the vaccination programme is also something to celebrate, with over 25 million people having had their first dose - so hopefully there is now some light at the end of the tunnel.

After a long winter, the start of Spring has been amazing. The first few days were gloriously sunny with blue skies and trees full of blossom so now is the time to get back into your garden. Our volunteer Chris, who attends our Royston Hub meetings, has very kindly written a gardening column for us this month full of useful tips to get you started. We also have details of our volunteer survey and more dates for your diary.

Amanda Feron, Hub Volunteer Coordinator

KIT Out of Hours Service

The Keeping in Touch service currently has 48 active volunteers - many thanks to you all for your hard work calling carers and offering your support by listening to them.

Alongside the current daily calls, seven of the KIT volunteers are making calls to carers outside our normal office hours. This pilot began on 11th February and calls are made only on a Thursday between 5:30pm and 7:30pm. The carers called have been identified as carers who work full time so we are unlikely to be able to speak to them during office hours. The list of these carers is separate to the office hours KIT calls, partly so we can reach this group of people but also so we can monitor the Out of Hours service more effectively.

As with the KIT service, the volunteers are supported by a member of staff from the KIT team, who they log in with at the beginning and end of their shift, and a manager, should the volunteer or carer need more support.

The first evening went very well with us reaching 17 out of the 22 assigned carers. Feedback from the volunteers and carers was very positive with many carers thanking volunteers for the call. Over the last four weeks we have aimed to call about 20 carers an evening. Most of the feedback has been relatively consistent as in the first week, although we have had a few comments that it is not a convenient time to talk.

Some volunteers find this fits in with other commitments well but others find that they prefer to make calls during the office working hours.

In the next few weeks, the KIT team and managers will be reviewing the feedback and data to assess the pros and cons of the Out of Hours service. If anyone is interested in helping with this service please contact email KIT@carersinherts.org.uk.

KIT Team

Dates for Your Diary

Safeguarding Training

Tuesday 30th March, 10am - 11.30am

Safeguarding is required training once a year for those volunteering remotely.

Volunteer Network Meetings

Wednesday 21st April, 11am

Thursday 20th May, 11am

Tuesday 15th June, 11am

Volunteer Network meetings are an opportunity to meet other volunteers in a relaxed and informal way.

To book a place, please phone our office on 01992 58 69 69 or email contact@carersinherts.org.uk.

Mentor News



We are delighted to welcome the seven new mentors who have completed their training via Zoom. The next training starts on Tuesday 14th September, 10.30am - 1.45 pm for six weeks. If you are interested in becoming a mentor, a volunteer who support carers 1:1, please contact Alex Daar via the office for further details.

Also, we have launched a new scheme for mentors who have been volunteering for some time and have shown an interest in a Senior Mentor role. We have two mentors helping with administration for mentees, four specialist mentors linked to the themed Mentor Zoom Drop In sessions, and Buddy Mentors who are about to start supporting our seven newly trained mentors with their first mentees. We will be evaluating this new development in the Autumn and if successful will look to recruit more Senior Mentors. Please let Jules or Alex know if you are interested.

Things to do in the garden in March

If you have a lawn now would be a good time to give it its first cut. Do not cut it as short as you might usually cut it, raise the distance between the lawn and the blades a notch, as we still have a chance of frost. Also a dressing of weed and feed will certainly give you a greener lawn for the spring. Westland Aftercut 4 in 1 is the one I use and if you buy it in the reusable spreader then applying it is easy.

Another task if you have a space on a sunny windowsill is to plant seeds ready for a display of flowers for the summer or to fill the vegetable patch.



Easy to grow flowers would be calendula or nasturtium and any type of container is ok to start your seeds off. The type of plastic tray that mushrooms come in is ideal if you do not have proper seed trays. It is best to obtain proper seedling compost but any soil will do. Make sure the tray or pot you are planting your seeds in has drainage holes in the bottom (if not then just make some with an old fork). Fill the tray to about half an inch from the top and then read the instructions on the packet to plant the seeds. Some seeds will need covering with a very fine covering of soil and some will do best if just scattered on the top. Make sure the tray does not dry out and also try not to overwater.

I have had a lot of fun planting tomato seeds from shop bought tomatoes. Once your seedlings start to germinate then they will either need to be thinned out to give them space to grow or carefully prick them out and transplant in to individual pots to grow on ready to be planted in the garden around mid-May.

Chris, Volunteer

Volunteer Survey

All active volunteers should now have received our 2021 Survey either by email or by post. The responses we receive help us to develop and improve our volunteer programme over the coming year.

We would be most grateful if you could find the time to complete this and share with us your experiences of volunteering with Carers in Hertfordshire. Your feedback really is important to us and will help us assess the impact of volunteering.

The survey is a yearly requirement as part of receiving Lottery funding and it is important that we get a response rate from as many volunteers as possible. We are interested to see how the feedback compares to last year's and getting your views on how we can improve support for all our volunteers.

To fill in the survey online, please click below:

[Click here for the Volunteer Survey 2021](#)

*Nicki Bird,
Hub Volunteer Co-ordinator*

Hub News

This month, Ted Maddex and Joy Watters from Adult Care Services have attended several hub meetings across the county to listen to carers and to ask them for their suggestions and observations about using the Hertfordshire County Council carers' webpages.

Louise Halfpenny, Communications Director for West Hertfordshire NHS Trust, joined three meetings to give a presentation and answer questions about the proposed hospital reorganisation as part of user engagement. Thank you to Hub Leader Jeff for initiating and arranging these sessions.

Nicki and Amanda