

Unite Carers in Mid Devon



Spring Newsletter 2023

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A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR

April and already there are lots of green shoots heralding spring despite the wet and dreary weather. This time of year is special for me. Having managed to occupy myself through the dark evenings and become a couch potato, I can now look forward to enjoying the garden and the increasingly lighter evenings. I am sure that many of you would like to have more time for things like gardening and other hobbies or non-essential work. If you are caring for someone I know how difficult it can be to snatch a few minutes or a luxury hour for yourselves. It's hard.

Unite Carers are here to offer you support. It is so important to try and do something for yourself; to keep a little time for yourself; to look after yourself.

The work of Unite's wonderful team of volunteers continues, supported by our two dedicated members of staff, Sharon and Tracy. Our 3 new Trustees are a great asset helping to share the work of the board. The groups are flourishing and will welcome you if this is where your need is. The Befriending and Telephone Friendship service can sometimes be an unpaid Carer's only link with the world outside the home. Our staff are happy to talk to you about any of our services that might help you to cope with your situation. Give the office a ring, they are there for you.

In February myself and one of the Trustees accepted an invitation to meet with the manager of the Co-Op in Willand. We are one of the Willand Co-Op's chosen charities this year. The manager accompanied by Jannine Steadman showed us around the store explaining their support for the community. They do a remarkable amount of good work. Jannine is involved in several community ventures and is a member of the Tiverton Soroptimists. We are the chosen charities for the Soroptimists also this year. If you use the Co-Op, please do ask



Our Trustees Bernice and Pat meeting with the Willand Co-Op and Jannie Steadman from the Tiverton

about becoming a member and help to support Unite Carers. Thank you to the Willand Co-op and the Tiverton Soroptimists.

Some of you may have heard that Pat, one of our Trustees, recently fell and sustained a severe fracture to her leg. After a few weeks in hospital Pat is now thankfully back at home. We wish her well and a speedy recovery. We are all thinking about you.

I hope we all have some better weather coming our way, I do hope that you can enjoy some of it and do remember to look after yourself.

Bernice Philbrick – Chair of Trustees

NEWS FROM OUR SUPPORT GROUPS

NEW GROUP – Witheridge Safe Stop

We are very pleased to announce the arrival of our new rural outreach group, Witheridge Safe Stop. Following the model of our Tiverton Safe Stop Sitting Service, the group offers unpaid Carers an opportunity to take a break from caring while their loved one is kept safe and thoroughly entertained by our Safe Stop team lead by Jenny Tower (see Spotlight On below). The first session of the new Witheridge Safe Stop is on 18th April starting from 10.30am- 12.30pm at Witheridge Parish Hall and thereafter continues on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. There is a cost of £10 for the entire session, which includes refreshments. We are very flexible and encourage Carers to stay with their cared-for person if they wish, leave them safely with us if they wish, or a combination of both – whatever is best for you. If you would like to go along to either the Tiverton or the Witheridge group, and you haven't been before, please do give us a call at the office. The Tiverton Safe Stop runs on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at Cherith Church, Tiverton from 10am-12.30pm.

Let's Unite Outdoors 2023!

It's back, by popular demand – our Let's Unite Outdoors group for children with additional needs and their families. This year we have extended the group to children who are either of primary or secondary school age (from just primary age children in 2022) and added an extra month. Once again Forest Schools teacher Katie will be facilitating the group, ably assisted by our exceptional volunteer Steve and Unite staff. The first Let's Unite Outdoors is on Saturday, 29th April and thereafter continues on the 3rd Saturday of each month until October (inclusive), from 10am-12pm at Wilcombe Primary School. **There will be no session in August.** For a booking form, please contact the office. **This group is free.**

Tiverton and Cullompton Ex-Carers Lunch Group

The Tiverton and Cullompton Ex-Carers Lunch Group is an extremely popular lunch group facilitated by our wonderful volunteer Veronica (Ronnie) Stone. It's on the first Monday of each month at different lunch venues each time and if you are a former unpaid carer looking for fun and friendship, you can find it here. Please call the office to find out the venue for the month.

Singing To Remember

Singing To Remember is a wonderful group for people with dementia and their carers. They meet at St James' Church Hall, Old Road, Tiverton every Monday from 2.00pm – 3.30pm, and are looking forward to welcoming old and new friends to an afternoon of chat and singing.

Updated Groups List

Our updated Groups List is below. We would like to reassure you that you are welcome to attend our groups if you are an unpaid carer or an ex-carer. If you have attended our groups and then found that you are no longer in a caring role, we are still here for you. This may be because you have been bereaved or your loved one has moved into residential care. We don't want you to feel alone. Come along to a Group, we can even help to support you to attend, just give us a call.

NEWS FROM OUR BEFRIENDING TEAM

Our dedicated volunteer Befriending Team continues to provide friendship and support to unpaid Carers through our free face-to-face Befriending and Telephone Friendship services. For the period January to March 2023, we have had 22 new unpaid Carers register with us and 8 new requests for 1:1 Befriending support. We warmly welcome each and every one of you to Unite Carers.

Following a recent volunteer recruitment drive and several Befriending matches coming to an end this quarter, we are in the extremely lucky and enviable position to have volunteer Befrienders available for support. Befriending Support can be either in person over a coffee and a chat or through telephone support, or a combination of both. We try our best to match you with a like-minded person and if there's ever any problems, we're here to help.

Befriending Support isn't only available for new Carers to Unite. If you are feeling lonely and would like someone to talk to on a regular basis, please do get in touch with us; we're here to make life just a little bit easier for you. We are also able to offer free form-filling support and IT support in the home or in our offices if you prefer. Perhaps you or someone you care for would like to know how to use emails, look at social media or make Zoom calls? If so then please do get in touch.

We would also like to express our sincere condolences to everyone who has lost a loved one this year. We know that losing the person you care for will be an extremely difficult and sad time for you, and we are here for you to offer a hand of friendship, comfort, support and advice.

COUNSELLING FOR CARERS

Following the covid pandemic, we are once again proud to offer our new Counselling For Carers service to unpaid Carers registered with Unite. Counselling is offered free to unpaid Carers either face-to-face in a private and safe space at our meeting room at No. 4 Bridge Street, Tiverton, or via telephone or video call. The choice is yours. If you would like to be put in touch with our counsellor please call or email the office for a contact number. Counselling For Carers is completely confidential. The course of sessions usually run for 8 weeks but can be extended if needed. Whilst Counselling For

Carers is free to you as an unpaid Carer, a small donation, if you are able to afford it, would be appreciated to help to pay for electricity and heating.

NEWS FROM OUR DEVON CARERS AMBASSADOR – FIONA BLADON

15 to 21 May 2023

Mental Health Awareness Week



Asking the same question

over and over again. over and over again.
over and over again. over and over again.
over and over again. over and over again.
over and over again. over and over again.

It's not called getting old,
it's called getting ill.



It's Dementia Action Week and Mental Health Awareness Week from 15 to 21 May.

Look out for events to highlight both of these important health conditions in May – Event updates will be posted on the Unite Carers Facebook page and the Devon Carers website. The theme for this year's Mental Health Awareness Week is Anxiety.

If you would like to read my blog, which I am revamping for Mental Health Awareness Week on the theme of nature and wellbeing, you can see it here: [Bog Blog \(bladonbogblog.blogspot.com\)](http://bladonbogblog.blogspot.com)

Carer's Support Public Consultation

IMPORTANT - Have YOUR Say regarding Devon County Council's plans to change support for carers. The link to the consultation document is here:

[Consultation on the Carers Support contract and the wider 'carer offer' \(Page 1 of 15\) \(office.com\)](#)

CARER'S CORNER

Carer's Support Public Consultation

The DCC's Carer's Support Public Consultation survey is available for unpaid Carers to complete online using Fiona's link above, or we also have several paper copies of the survey for Carers to use if you prefer. Please collect from the office at No.2 Bridge St or call us for a copy to be sent to you. The closing date for the consultation period is Wednesday, 17th May 2023.

Dementia Action Week in Cullompton

Dementia Action Week 2023 – Event at Cullompton Library 15th-21st May.

Cullompton Library will be organising their annual Dementia Action Week 2023 display in the main reception area at the Library on Monday 15th May 2023 and Unite Carers will be helping to staff the stand. The aim is to promote understanding of dementia and encourage the local community to share in what we can all do to help families, friends and those living with dementia. Dementia has become one of the biggest healthcare challenges of the 21st century. More info on this soon but for now, thank you to our lovely volunteer Jean and our Chair of Trustees Bernice.

Healthwatch Survey Results - The Impact of Providing Unpaid Care at Home

Nearly 85,000 people in Devon provide unpaid care, with one third (33.4%) providing more than 20 hours of unpaid care per week. To learn more about the experiences of unpaid carers and the impact of providing care at home, Healthwatch developed a survey in conjunction with carer services organisations across Devon last year. You see the outcomes of this survey by clicking here:

[The impact of providing unpaid care at home - Healthwatch Devon](#)

TOGETHER Drug and Alcohol Services - New support Cafe started up in Tiverton

Together, the organisation that give valuable support to people with addictions, have started a new Café in Tiverton. It's on every Friday morning at the Old Healthcoat School Community Centre at 9.30am-12.30am. Whether you are an existing service user, have recently finished treatment, or interested in their service, everyone is welcome. This group is free.

The Mid Devon Messenger

The Mid Devon Messenger is a free local talking newspaper for the visually impaired, bringing local news, information and entertainment to people with sight loss or chronic illness who find it difficult to read.

You can contact them by email: enquiries@middevonmessenger.org.uk or by calling Helen on 07834 688838 or by clicking on the link here:

[Mid Devon Messenger | A Talking Newspaper for the Visually Impaired](#)



The Living Room

Are you lonely and looking for company? The Living Room is a drop-in community café in Tiverton with free refreshments open from 10am-12pm every Tuesday at St George's Extension (in Beck's Square Car Park, behind Boots). Everyone welcome!

Walking For Health Groups in Mid Devon

Rollers and Strollers – Cullompton – on the 1st Friday of each month – 10.30am-12pm
For people using wheelchairs, mobility scooters and pushing buggies, as well as people on foot.

Tiverton Twalkers – Wednesdays weekly - At various locations across Mid Devon

Friday Strollers – Tiverton – Fridays monthly

Both Twalkers and Strollers meet at 10.15 am for a 10.30 am start.

Please call the office for more information or see Facebook:

[Unite Carers in Mid Devon | Tiverton | Facebook](#)

JUST FOR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer ID Badges

Are any of our face-to-face Befriending Volunteers without an ID badge? If so, please do get in touch with us, preferably by email with a head and shoulders picture of yourself, and I will send you a new-style ID badge with a lovely new lanyard. If any of our Group Volunteers would also like a new ID badge and lanyard, please do feel free to get in touch – all welcome to apply!

Volunteer Training

Our recent offer of a free NCFE Level 2 Award in Volunteering qualification, in collaboration with South Devon College wasn't taken up by volunteers. This may be because it was an online course. Please do get in touch with Unite, a staff member or trustee, if there is any training you would like and would be beneficial to your volunteer role, or if you have any comments on volunteer training and will be happy to help.

Individual Volunteer Support Meeting

Did you know that, as a Unite volunteer you are entitled to an annual volunteer support meeting (Annual Volunteer Review) with a member of staff or a Trustee?

You may have already been invited by email to attend an annual Volunteer Support Meeting if it has fallen due. If you have been with us for a year or more and would like a support meeting with us but have not yet had the opportunity to talk to us about this, please do get in touch to arrange a convenient date. This can be with us here at the office face to face, from the comfort of your own home via video link (Teams/ Zoom) or by telephone.

We'd also like to assure every single one of our Volunteers that we are here to support you should you have any questions, worries or concerns regarding your volunteer role or the Carers that you support. Please do get in touch with us at the office. - the telephone number is 01884 257 511.

FUNDRAISING NEWS

Tesco Bags of Help

Our application to Tesco's Bags of Help has been successful and Unite Carers are now in the in-store community vote in the Tiverton Tesco Superstore and Tiverton Tesco Express from April until June. Please do put your little blue voting tokens in the box for Unite Carers – Let's Unite Outdoors.

I've also made an application to Tesco Bags of Help and the Cullompton store and we are waiting to hear back to hear if we have been successful – shouldn't be too long now. This will help support our Cullompton Carer's Coffee Group.

Co-op Local Community Fund

Just a reminder that Unite Carers is part of the @Co-op Local Community Fund. This means that you can go into your local Co-op Store and sign up for a membership card to support Unite Carers. Each time you shop, a little of your spend is matched by Co-op to be donated directly to Unite Carers. You can sign up in store (nearest is Willand but there are others in Dulverton, Exeter and Wellington) or to find out more about the project and to choose Unite Carers as your cause, Ctrl Click here:

<https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes>

Tiverton Soroptimists

Unite Carers are the chosen charity of the year for the Tiverton Soroptimists and on 13th April our Chair of Trustees Bernice and our General Manager Sharon attended the Soroptimists AGM to receive a cheque for the fundraising they have kindly done on our behalf. We'd like to take this opportunity to say a massive THANK YOU to the Tiverton Soroptimists; we have certainly enjoyed taking part in some of your fundraising events too. Photos to follow in the next edition of the Newsletter.

AND IN OTHER NEWS....



20 YEARS OF UNITE CARERS IN MID DEVON

Unite Carers in Mid Devon was founded on the 8th April 2003 by a lovely lady, and our first Chair of Trustees, Carole Benn. It was initially run from within Involve until premises were secured at No 2 Bridge Street in Tiverton, where it has been ever since. It was set up with the express purpose of supporting Adult Carers in Mid Devon and giving them a voice.

Carole sadly passed away with Dementia in September 2021, whilst being cared for by her family of unpaid Carers, the like of which we, Unite Carers, the charity that Carole set up, now supports. We have our 20th anniversary in 2023 and we hope that we can keep her legacy striving forwards, stronger than ever before, for many more years to come!

Congratulations on your 20th Anniversary Unite Carers! We shall be hosting a celebration this Summer and we hope that you can join us.

The Cameo Group, Willand

On the 2nd February I was asked to go along to meet the Cameo Group in Willand, to tell them all about Unite Carers and how we support unpaid Carers in Mid Devon. The Cameo Willand is a friendly and welcoming women's group which meets on the first Thursday of the month at 7pm in Willand Village Hall. The group organises an incredible array of trips and activities for their members, as well as their monthly social meeting, and they were an absolute pleasure to meet

Thank you so much Cameo Willand for your kind donation to Unite Carers.

And finally...

Spotlight On – In this edition we turn the spotlight on **Jenny Tower**



Hi, I am Jenny Tower and I know many of you but not all. I am a volunteer with Unite Carers and first became involved with Unite when my then husband John was diagnosed with dementia. He was 60 years old then and died 10 years later which was over 8 years ago now. I have been involved with Unite for about 18 years. Initially it was when I was being supported by Judy Seymour from Unite to help me to manage John as long as I could at home. Being younger and him having to stop work I needed to carry on working to pay the bills. He eventually needed to go into Residential Care to ensure his safety. I was supported all the way by Judy for which I will always be grateful.

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Once John had gone, I then became a volunteer befriender for those coping with caring for a loved one with dementia. More recently I have also been befriending carers who have children who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder. Befriending works both ways, I enjoy coffee and cake and company and the carer gets a little respite and a chance to talk about their worries should they wish to or just have a good natter.

During my volunteering journey with Unite I have also been a trustee on the Board where I developed skills for reviewing and writing policies and procedures. Skills I still use today. I even chaired the Board for a while.

I have done a little paid work at Unite when staff have been short. For a while I carried out volunteer reviews and assessed and reviewed carers around the support they needed. That took me to many parts of Mid Devon I have never been to before and I met some wonderful people. I loved it.

For a couple of years now I have become involved in facilitating some of the groups as a volunteer, as well as still befriending. Unite and I set up the Safe Stop Group in Tiverton where carers can safely leave their cared for, for a few hours. There is a team of amazing volunteers in this group who assist to make the morning great fun, full of laughter, chat, stimulation and joy. Often carers choose to join us as well in the fun which they can enjoy with their loved one. A similar group to this is now starting in Witheridge in April.

I also facilitate the Let's Unite at No. 4 peer support group for parents and carers of school age children with additional needs and the Parent Carer Group for those who care for adults and older teens with additional needs. At these groups the parent or carer comes along and we chat about all sorts and try to share knowledge to help each other out. They quickly become friends with each other.

For me it has always been a privilege to be involved with this very creative and supportive charity for unpaid carers.



Unite Carers Support Groups Spring 2023

Who is it for?	Group Name	Location	With	Day in month	Time
All Carers	Bampton Carers' Coffee Group	The Swan, Bampton	Denise	1 st Tuesday	10.30am-11.30am
All Carers	Cullompton Carers' Coffee Group	The Hayridge Centre, Cullompton	Jean	2 nd Wednesday	10.30am-12 noon
All Carers	Tiverton Carers' Coffee Group	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Denise	4 th Tuesday	2pm
All Carers and Ex-Carers	Uffculme Support Group	Locations change monthly – Please call the office	Jackie	4 th Monday	12.30pm
Cared-for-people	Tiverton Safe Stop Sitting Group	Cherith Church, Tiverton	Jenny	2 nd and 4 th Wednesday	10.00am-12.30pm
Cared-for-people	Witheridge Safe Stop Sitting Group	Witheridge Parish Hall, Witheridge	Jenny	3 rd Tuesday	10.30am-12.30pm
Carers of adults and teens with additional needs	Carers of Adults and Teens with Add. Needs	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Jenny	3 rd Wednesday	10.30am-12 noon
Carers of school-aged children with additional needs	Let's Unite Outdoors	Wilcombe School, Tiverton	Katie	Seasonal April-October	Please call the Office
Carers of school-aged children with additional needs	Let's Unite at Number 4	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Jenny	1 st Wednesday	9.30am-11.30am
Dementia Carers	Culm Valley Oasis	Padbrook Park Hotel, Cullompton	Audrey Veronica	3 rd Monday	2.30pm-4pm
Dementia Carers	Exe Valley Oasis	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Denise Fiona	2 nd Thursday	10.30am
Dementia Carers and Cared-for-people	Tiverton Forget Me Not Cafe	Cherith Church, Tiverton	Denise Fiona	3 rd Tuesday	2pm-3.30pm
Ex-Carers	Tiverton and Cull Ex-Carers Lunch Group	Locations change monthly – Please call the office	Veronica	1 st Tuesday	12 noon

Contact us:

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Email: info@unitemd.org.uk

[Unite Carers in Mid Devon | Tiverton | Facebook](#)

Your notes to remember: