

Unite Carers in Mid Devon



Summer Newsletter 2024

Welcome to our
Summer Newsletter

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A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR

As I am sitting at my desk, looking out on a lovely evening, I suddenly realise that tomorrow is the longest day of the year. How did that happen? We haven't had summer yet. Well not much of it, 2 days, maybe 3 and even when the sun shines there is still that chilly breeze to deal with.

We are told to expect a couple of weeks of nice weather, I do hope it doesn't regress as the children break up for their summer holidays.

It was Carers Week 10-16th June. Carers Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, highlighting the challenges unpaid carers face and recognise their contribution to families and communities throughout the UK. It is estimated that the 5.7 million unpaid carers across the UK save the economy £162 million a year. That's enough to fund a second NHS I read. None of us are prepared for the caring role when it is thrust upon us by life events. Carers often feel undervalued and forgotten. Let's hope that as a result of Carers Week, that there will be greater acknowledgement for the huge service these unpaid carers offer to our communities.

Just One Thing

How many of you listened to Michael Mosley? What a wonderful communicator he was, suggesting small, practical things that we could try to improve our lives - "Just One Thing". This was the opening line for his weekly programme on radio 4. If you were going to do Just One Thing to transform your life, what would it be? We all want quick and easy ways to keep healthy but when it comes to diet fitness and wellbeing it's hard to separate the facts from the fads. Michael's mission was to find easy things that you could slip into your daily routine to benefit you. He discovered that VOLUNTEERING, as well as being a very rewarding thing to do, can really benefit your health too. The power of helping others can boost your mood and empathy, volunteering can lower chronic inflammation, cholesterol and even help you to lose weight. How to live a good life was his message.



*Bernice (Chair of Trustees) and
Stephanie (Trustee) accepting a
cheque from the Tiverton and
District Soroptimists*

Sadly, he lost his life in an accident while on holiday earlier this year, but his message will continue to be practiced by many of us. I think that most of you will agree on the benefits you receive from volunteering.

Over the past couple of months, we have held two drop-in days at “Number 4”, dates that were earmarked across the country to recognise Dementia Awareness Week, Carers Week and Volunteers Week. All of these days were so well supported by you and it was heartwarming to see so many people enjoying coffee, cake and a chat together and to see what an incredible job Unite Carers does. People walking down the street were keen to know what was going on at Number 4 and several went away armed with information about our support service. The importance of what we do and the appreciation of our volunteers is frequently acknowledged, but we can't recognise this too often. So dear volunteers, thank you on behalf of all our carers for your time and commitment.

So, go off, light your BBQs, enjoy your summer and remember “JUST ONE THING” and the benefits you can bring to others and yourselves too.

Bernice Philbrick – Chair of Trustees

NEWS FROM OUR SUPPORT GROUPS

Bampton Carer's Coffee Group

From August the Bampton Carer's Coffee group will be held at The Bridge House in Bampton on the 1st Thursday of each month, starting at a new time of 10.30am.

Tiverton Forget Me Not Café

This quarter at the Forget Me Not Café (memory café) we were entertained by Liam's Relics for reminiscence in April, while Alan and John joined us in May with music from 50s, 60s and 70s and in June, Caroline thoroughly entertained us with her music and brought along instruments for everyone to have a go at playing.

By popular demand, Don Wild returns to the FMNC on 20th August with his seated exercise and dance sessions, more photos to follow in the next edition of the newsletter.

The Tiverton Forget Me Not Café is held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at the Cherith Hall, Tiverton (located between Tesco and The Tiverton Hotel, opposite what used to be MST). It's a warm and inviting hall with plenty of free parking.

Cullompton Carer's Coffee Group

There's was a change of venue for the Cullompton Carer's Coffee Group in June. The group's new venue is the John Tallack Youth and Community Centre based behind the Culm Valley Leisure Centre in Cullompton. The friendly and welcoming group for all carers and former carers is led by Jean and is on the 2nd Wednesday of each month starting at 10.30am. Jean reports that everyone loves the new venue and they are really happy to be there.

Crediton Carer's Coffee Group

At our last get-together in June, the Crediton Carer's Coffee Group made a group decision to move to an alternative venue for the summer, so that we could all sit outside (hopefully in the sunshine) and enjoy a coffee and chat together. We decided to meet at the Crediton Coffee Company Café, taking advantage of the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the Square. It was a gloriously sunny day and the Square was heaving with lots of other like-minded people, taking the opportunity to get outside and feel the sun on our faces. The only slight hic-cup to our best laid plans was that after a few minutes it was a bit too hot for everyone. Who would have thought! We searched around for a nice shady place to sit but we had been beaten to it and all the shady tables were full. Some of the more "enthusiastic" members of the group discussed the possibility of moving one of the pub's tables under a handily available tree "would they mind?" "Surely not - it's not bolted down" and we even got to the point of attempting to lift the table to said tree, only to find that we probably would have needed a crane to shift it. Ideas and suggestions exhausted (as well as the two enthusiastic table movers and one person who said "just let me know when we've found somewhere Duck"), we made our way back into the café where luckily, they found the perfect table for all 8 of us. A funny and happy meeting of the Crediton Carer's Coffee group with 3 new carers joining us in June. Welcome to Unite Carers!

In July we plan to meet again at the Crediton Carer's Coffee Company Café on the Square and even if it is raining, we have reserved the perfect table again, just in case.

We are a small and friendly carer's support group who meet on the 3rd Thursday of every month, starting at 11am but, as a drop-in group, you are most welcome to join us when you can and to come and go as you please. Our Crediton group is for all carers whatever the medical condition of the person you care for. We are a group of people who all share similar experiences of caring for someone, past and present.

Suggestions for Groups – Old and New

Are you happy with your groups? Do you have any suggestions about what form you would you're your support group to take or are happy with how things are now? Are there any specialist groups that you would like us to look into? A Coffee and Craft Group perhaps, or Carer's Coffee and Crochet? Any ideas will be greatly appreciated.

NEWS FROM OUR BEFRIENDING TEAM AND OTHER 1:1 SUPPORT SERVICES

Befriending and Telephone Friendship

Our Befriending Support service has recently received a massive boost with a donation from the Devon Community Foundation's CLASP fund, which now allows befrienders to treat carers to their chosen refreshments (coffee/tea and cake) whenever they meet up, in a café for instance. This has helped to break down the financial barriers that may exist for some carers when meeting with their befriender. Thank you DCF!

Unite's Befriending Support isn't only available for carers new to Unite. If you are an adult caring for an adult, feeling lonely or isolated and would like someone to talk to, **we have volunteer befrienders available for you to meet immediately.** Perhaps you would like to go for a coffee and a chat, or a walk or visit a place of interest. Visits can also take place in your own home if it is difficult for you to get away. Please call the office to find out more.

At the time of writing (July 2024), 47 carers are receiving Befriending and Telephone Friendship support.

Volunteer Befriending

Would you like to help someone who may be feeling lonely and isolated in their caring role? Perhaps you have your own experiences of caring for a family member or a friend? If so, please do get in touch with us to talk about becoming a volunteer befriender. We would particularly like to talk to you if you have lived experience of being, or still are, a parent carer or a young adult carer.

Form-Filling and IT Support for Carers

We've had another busy quarter with our form-filling service as we continue to give free support to carers by helping them to complete long and complicated forms or make applications to eligible funds. During April, May and June, our small but amazing team of form-filling volunteers and 1 staff member helped 19 carers. We can help you with forms such as Attendance Allowance, Blue Badge, Carer's Allowance and the Household Support Fund. We are unfortunately unable to provide Benefits advice, but we can point you in the direction of someone who can.

We also have IT support available to carers and former carers with our knowledgeable team of IT support volunteers. Please get in touch if you would like help to understand your device, or set-up anything from emails, social media, shopping deliveries on your phones, tablets, laptops or PCs.

Counselling For Carers

Our student counsellors Catherine and Simone are now in place providing free Counselling For Carers to unpaid carers registered with Unite, in collaboration with Exeter College and Petroc Barnstaple. Catherine is available to offer an 8-week course of sessions (flexible), while Simone is available to offer 6-week courses (flexible). Both Catherine and Simone can offer a 30min introductory chat before you decide whether you wish to begin counselling. As always, sessions can take place in person at our rooms on No.4 Bridge Street, Tiverton, or virtually by video call or over the telephone. Our CFC service is highly confidential and any notes pertaining to your counselling sessions are held with the counsellor.

If you would like to find out more about our free Counselling For Carers service, please do get in touch on 01884 257 511 for an informal chat. Counselling For Carers is a talking therapy offered to you at no charge, however any donations made to Unite Carers will be very gratefully received.

For the period April to June 2024, we have had 29 new unpaid Carers register with us and 10 new requests for 1:1 Befriending Support. **We warmly welcome you all to Unite Carers.**

NEWS FROM OUR DEVON CARER'S AMBASSADOR FIONA BLADON

[Carers UK](#) 2024 **State of Caring Survey 2024** is now online. Make sure your views are heard by completing the survey, which closes on 11 August 2024.

Click here to fill out the Carers UK survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GYWZJCZ>

The Carers UK website has a Digital Resource platform where you can find e-learning, guides and tools to help you manage your caring responsibilities, alongside work and family responsibilities. It is funded by Devon County Council and includes lots of different resources including financial planning and well-being to technology and more.

To access the digital resources, set up a FREE account by clicking the link below and enter code **DGTL8827** when requested: <https://carersdigital.org/login/index.php>

CARER'S CORNER

Dementia Awareness Week

It was Dementia Awareness Week between 13th – 19th May and on Thursday, 9th May, we held an Open Day at Unite Carers. The afternoon started at 12 noon, right after our Exe Valley Oasis Support Group for dementia carers in Tiverton. The staff team of Sharon and Tracy were very well supported by trustees and volunteers (as always) who not only helped on the day with dementia advice, support and conversation, but also baked the most delicious cakes for everyone to enjoy.



It was lovely to see so many of you come along and I think we just about managed to squeeze everyone into No.4. Our unexpected star of the show was a young man who came in to play to us on his guitar and we all enjoyed the interlude very much. We were also joined by Ginny from the Filo Project. Thank you to everyone, you really did make the afternoon special.

In further recognition of Dementia Awareness Week, with help from the Alzheimer's Society, we shared information on taking action together to improve dementia diagnosis rates. If you would like to see this again, please get in touch.

Carers Week – Putting Carers on the Map - 10th – 16th June

On 13th June, Unite Carers in Mid Devon held another open afternoon in recognition of Carer's Week 2024, which this year, fell between 10-16th June.

Lots of you came along to say hello, stay for a cuppa and a nice slice or two of homemade cake. Much laughter and chatter, with information and advice available for those who needed it.

Thanks to everyone for coming along, it was so lovely to see you all.



Bampton Wellbeing Event



Here's a lovely picture of our wonderful volunteer Margaret, who went along to the Bampton Wellbeing event on Saturday, 8th June.

Margaret reports: "A successful morning promoting a lovely charity like Unite Carers Mid Devon. There were a lot of enquiries about Unite and what we can do to support carers. Many people took information leaflets and were interested in the Bampton Coffee Group. I also met lots of carers of people with a dementia. You can also see our new Unite Carers banner in this picture.

Carer's Library at Unite Carers

Don't forget our Carer's Library at the Unite Carers offices at No.2 Bridge Street, and very shortly there will be dementia-friendly jigsaw puzzles available to borrow too. Come along and see for yourself what's available to borrow for free, or if you would like us to bring some books, booklets and puzzles to you at the Groups, please do let us know. We also have a whole array of new booklets from Independent Age which are a fantastic source of information on subjects such as Carer's Allowance, Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance, Paying For Care Home Fees, Getting Help at Home to name just a few of the 20+ titles we currently have available to you.

New Information Sheets for Carers

We've been working on a couple of new in-house information sheets, based on questions you have been asking us as Carers. We now have available information on: **Referrals to the Bladder & Bowel Clinic** (for assessment for incontinence pad prescriptions), **Claiming Carer's Allowance at State Pension Age** and a **List of Personal Assistants in Mid Devon**. Please do get in touch if you would like us to send any of these to you. You can email info@unitecarers.org.uk or call the office on 01884 257 511.

Directory of Events in Tiverton

Are you aware of a directory of events for Tiverton (and other surrounding towns and villages) that is issued by Sue and Ivan Godfrey? Unite Carers has recently subscribed to this useful and informative directory and thought you may like to take a look too. If you would like to receive the directory, please email sueivan123@outlook.com to be added to their e-mailing list.

PARENT CARERS

HAP Activities for Summer 2024

With the summer holidays fast approaching, HAP have announced that bookings are now open for the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.

Funded by the Government's Department for Education, the scheme offers funded activities and healthy, nutritional hot meals during school holidays to children of low-income families.

This summer HAP teamed up with over 100 different activity providers across Devon to offer more than 30,000 places to children aged five to 16 years old, who receive benefit-related free school meals. Young people can take part in a wide range of fun and educational activities for children of all ages to spark their creativity, encourage exploration, and help them develop new skills and make friends.

Places are limited, so don't miss out! We encourage parents and carers of children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals to book their child's place as soon as possible.

To see the interactive map of activities, click here: [HAF providers map - Summer 2024 - Education and Families \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

There's still time to book a place on the new series of the 'Let's Talk' webinars in July, which this time is specifically for parents and carers of neurodiverse young people and those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The free, open access online programme covers topics including mental health and emotional wellbeing, anger and challenging behaviour, healthy relationships and online safety. The sessions provide a space for parents and carers to discuss the challenges facing young people today and understand the tools and techniques that they can use to support them.

To book a place, click here: [News 'Let's Talk' series - Education and Families \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

JUST FOR VOLUNTEERS

Expenses

Are you a volunteer that doesn't claim expenses? If you are a taxpayer you could claim expenses and then gift aid them back to Unite which gives us 25%. Please contact Sharon to find out more.

Volunteer ID Badges

Do any of our Volunteers need a Unite Carer's ID badge? ID badges are particularly important if you are meeting carers for befriending. 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.

Vacancy for a Volunteer Treasurer to join the Board of Trustees

Unite Carers in Mid Devon are desperately seeking a Volunteer Treasurer (Trustee) to work with the Board on a voluntary basis. Working in our small charity supporting unpaid carers, you will find this extremely rewarding and be able to make a major impact to a worthwhile cause by working with a dedicated team.

Please visit our website: www.unitecarers.org.uk to gain a full understanding of what we do and the services which we provide.

Volunteer Training Available

The following free training is available to Unite volunteers, on-line, through Pete's Dragons.

- 4 Mental Health: Emotional Resilience
- 4 Mental Health: Community Suicide Awareness

Please click here to book your place: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/petes-dragons-40816820623> or call the office if you would like to know more.

Volunteer Week - 3rd June-9th June

Did you know that it was the 40th anniversary of Volunteer Week between 3rd-9th June this year?

We would like to take this opportunity to publicly pay recognition and express our thanks to all our volunteers, past and present, who form an integral part of our Unite Carers in Mid Devon team. We know that our volunteers are committed to supporting unpaid carers, former carers, parent carers and their families in Mid Devon, and many offer their experience and understanding of being, or having been, an unpaid carer themselves.

Our volunteers selflessly contribute their time and skills through a variety of different volunteer roles with us, including supporting at the groups, befriending, form-filling and IT support, counsellors and trustees. Each volunteer uses their strengths and skills to enhance the services and support that we give to unpaid carers.

We recognise the incredible difference that volunteers have made to Unite Carers in Mid Devon for over 21 years. We look forward to our volunteers continuing to be involved as a vital part of our team in the future, as we continue to develop our services for unpaid carers.

To all our fantastic volunteers, past and present, we say a massive Thank You!"

FUNDRAISING – HOW YOU HAVE HELPED



On Bank Holiday Monday, 6th May Sharon and Tracy had a wonderful afternoon at The Lost Kitchen Duck Race and family fun day, kindly held in aid of Unite Carers in Mid Devon and Marie Curie.

perfect.

Sharon's duck came in third place and she also managed to wangle her wellie further than me and many others. Well done Sharon!

At the end of the day Unite were handed a generous donation of £500 to help support unpaid carers in Mid Devon.

Thank you to EVERYONE at The Lost Kitchen for your on-going support, kindness and generosity towards us and to all unpaid carers in Mid Devon, and to everyone who came along to enjoy the afternoon with us. It was good to see you.



Tesco Stronger Starts – Crediton and Tiverton



As you may know, Unite Carers were in Tesco stores in Crediton between April and June, taking part in the customer voting for the Tesco Stronger Starts grant scheme and on Thursday, 16th May we went along to the store to tell customers all about how we can help to support unpaid carers in Crediton.

We met with Ben, the Community Champion for Crediton Tescos and bought with us lots of information and guides that we thought may be of interest of carers.

It was a pleasure to meet so many of you and to have the opportunity to chat to you about how caring affects you. The award will be used to fund our Crediton Carers' Coffee Group, for friendship, guidance, advice and support for all unpaid carers and former carers who may be feeling lonely and isolated.

We were also invited along to a promotional event at the Tiverton Tesco store by our IT Support volunteer Keith and, again, we had great opportunity to chat to many unpaid carers and offer advice. Many thanks to Keith, Mo, Bernice, Glen and Tina for helping to (wo)man the stand.

Thank you Tiverton and District Soroptimists



On Wednesday, 22nd May, our Chair of Trustees Bernice and Trustee Stephanie went along to meet members of the Tiverton and District Soroptimists, to receive a donation of £400 to help support unpaid carers in Mid Devon.

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Thank you Tiverton & District Soroptimists for electing Unite Carers in Mid Devon as your chosen charity and for your continued generosity helping us to support unpaid carers in Mid Devon.

David's Mobility Scooters

We would like to introduce you to David. David has 2 mobility scooters for sale and he has kindly said that he would like to donate part of the sale proceeds to Unite Carers when they sell. As you can see, we have a blue scooter and a red scooter on offer here, both in excellent condition, paintwork sparkling in the sunshine and everything working as it should. David is asking £800 for the red one and £400 for the blue one on. If you would like to see more pictures of the scooters or arrange to see them in person with a view to buy, please call the office on 01884 257 511. Based in Tiverton.



If anyone has any fundraising ideas, please do let us know – thank you.

AND IN OTHER NEWS....



Quality Assurance Mark Awarded to Unite Carers

We are pleased and proud to announce that, in June, Unite Carers successfully gained the Quality Assurance Mark from Involve.

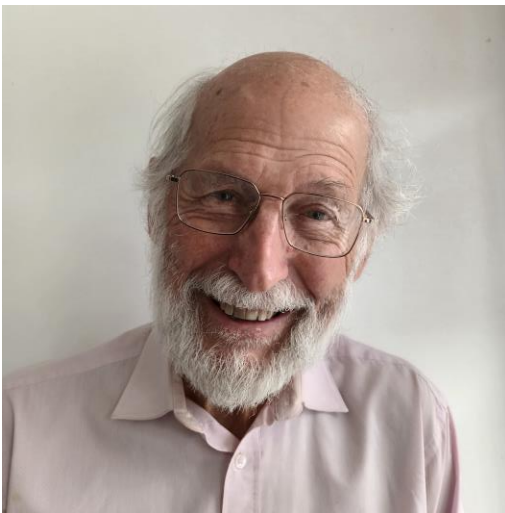
Our previous quality mark expired in October 2021 and over the past few months, we have been working with Involve collating evidence on what we do and how we do it and making changes to our systems and procedures where necessary, in order to win back our quality assurance mark for another 3 years.

The quality assurance mark is a sign of good practices of high quality and we hope that it will help to give reassurance to current and prospective carers, volunteers and those referring to us, that we routinely offer high quality services to unpaid carers.

Fran Esau from Involve will be visiting the office at No.2 Bridge Street on 24th July to make the presentation of the award to Unite Carers. More pictures to follow in the next edition of the newsletter no doubt.

And finally...

Spotlight On! – In this edition we turn the spotlight on: **Liam Edwards**



I was 32, I was in the shade, sleeping off the effects of over-indulging in a liquid lunch! It was D-Day'.

My sister, brother and I grew up with eight cows, hens, turkeys and ducks and two sows on our twenty-one-acre farm on the Lizard point in Cornwall. We left the farm when I was fourteen by which time (as the oldest son) I had milked cows by hand and been midwife to cows and sows.

My father died when I was fourteen after two years of illness, so I learnt about caring from an early age.

My lovely wife, Marianne, had Alzheimer's and cancer and we were very grateful for the valuable kindness and care that Unite Carers gave us both. By way of a thank you I now am pleased to be a volunteer for Unite Carers.

I have three boxes of old and very old household items. I take them to groups for people to talk about, identify and reminisce. I enjoy showing off that I know all the answers! (I need a few more items to complete a fourth box, so if you have any items, please drop them off at the office). I also enjoy befriending carers and listening to their problems and concerns. A trouble shared is a trouble halved.

Living on one's own is not much fun: I now have to do the cooking, shopping, washing, flower gardening etc which I took for granted when my wife did them. But I do have fun with music and oil painting at home. I bred tortoises but I now have just four. I'm happy to bring them to a group for half an hour on a sunny day; they stay in bed if it's not sunny! I play table tennis - badly. I do a Triathlon three times a week: I run down the garden path, cycle for two minutes across Kennedy Way and swim six lengths!

Oh! I was 32 DAYS old and the liquid lunch was straight from my mother's breast.



Unite Carers Support Groups 2024

Who's it for?	Group Name	Location	With	Day in month	Time
All Carers	Bampton Carers' Coffee Group	The Bridge House, Bampton	Denise	1 st Thursday	10.30 am - 11.30 am
All Carers	Crediton Carers' Coffee Group	Crediton Coffee Co, The Square, Crediton	Tracy	3 rd Thursday	11.00 am - 12.30pm
All Carers	Cullompton Carers' Coffee Group	John Tallack, Cullompton	Jean	2 nd Wednesday	10.30 am - 12 noon
All Carers	Tiverton Carers' Coffee Group	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Denise & Fiona	4 th Tuesday	2 pm
All Carers and Former Carers	Uffculme Support Group	Locations change monthly – Please call the office	Jackie	4 th Monday	12.30 pm
Cared-for-people	Tiverton Safe Stop Group	Cherith Hall, Tiverton	Jenny	2 nd and 4 th Wednesday	10.00 am - 12.30 pm
Carers of adults and teens 16+ with additional needs	Carers of Adults and Teens with Additional Needs	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Jenny	3 rd Wednesday	10.30 am - 12 noon
Carers of school-aged children with additional needs	Let's Unite at Number 4	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Jenny	1 st Wednesday	9.30 am - 11.30 am
Dementia Carers	Culm Valley Oasis	Padbrook Park, Cullompton	Audrey & Veronica	3 rd Monday	2.30 pm - 4 pm
Dementia Carers	Exe Valley Oasis	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Denise & Fiona	2 nd Thursday	10.30 am
Dementia Carers and Cared-for-people	A Different Journey Support Group	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Fiona	1 st Tuesday	10.30am – 12 noon
Dementia Carers and Cared-for-people	Tiverton Forget Me Not Cafe	Cherith Hall, Tiverton	Denise & Fiona	3 rd Tuesday	2 pm - 3.30 pm
Former Carers	Tiverton and Cull Ex-Carers Lunch Group	Locations change monthly – Please call the office	Veronica	1 st Tuesday	12 noon

PLEASE CALL THE UNITE CARERS OFFICE TO REGISTER - 01884 257511