

Unite Carers in Mid Devon



Winter Newsletter 2025

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Autumn Newsletter

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A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR

I would like to wish all staff, volunteers, carers, their families and friends a very “Happy New Year”. I hope many of you were able to gather with families to celebrate this special time of year. Have you made, kept or broken resolutions yet? Organised diets and dry January, or will you float gently into 2025 doing what suits you? I hope so.

Our Christmas event at the Cherith Church Hall was a great success, with a splendid buffet, quizzes and a visit from our mayor.

Christmas Cards! Did you send many, or indeed any? I sent some, preferring to donate the postage to a charity, but despite this resolve I did receive quite a few. What to do with them? There are only so many gift labels you can make and accommodate. Recycle them? Well, I read that not all parts of the card are recyclable and sorting that out could be a problem. Anyone have an idea?

2024 was a calmer year generally for Unite Carers and although funding our charity is a constant task, through recognition of our invaluable services funders have supported us generously. These services are only possible to deliver because we have a band of dedicated and committed volunteers.

Lady Amory kindly agreed to take on the role of our second Patron and received a warm welcome at the AGM in September. The Board of Trustees has also been very fortunate in recruiting three more trustees: Simone Thompson, who has expertise in HR and fund raising, Janine Steadman who is well known locally and has wide-ranging experience in the community sector and Fiona Bladon who is an expert in group work and dementia carer support. We will be advertising for a third part-time member of staff this year too and if we were to find a volunteer treasurer that would be the icing on the cake.

So, as you can see, we have had a good year and we are in a calmer place than we were last year, although we are not complacent. It cannot be said too many times that the backbone of Unite Carers is our army of volunteers. Being a volunteer for Unite Carers requires special understanding, commitment, dedication and reliability, you only have to look at the feedback



*Bernice and the Major of Tiverton,
Neal Davey, after addressing the
Christmas Celebration get-together.*

received from the service users to know that you, our volunteers, have those special qualities and more. Thank you volunteers from the Unite trustees and staff.

Staff, well we certainly could not do without them. Thank you Sharon and Tracy for keeping this show on the road. We know how hard you both work. We know how you both frequently go the extra mile. We know that the volunteers hold you both in high regard. We know how much carers appreciate the support you both make possible. Much of our success is down to you. Never think that your work is not recognised and appreciated.

As we all sail forth into 2025, let's make it another good year for UNITE CARERS.

Bernice Philbrick – Chair of Trustees

NEWS FROM AROUND THE GROUPS AT CHRISTMAS

Tiverton Forget Me Not Café

On Tuesday, 17th December at Cherith Hall, we had our special Christmas Forget Me Not Café, with games, festive food, crackers, fun and prizes for everyone to enjoy. We had a lot of laughs playing our yearly game of Pass the Parcel and ended the afternoon with carols. What a lovely way to spend an afternoon. Thank you to all who joined us.



On 19th November the staff and children from Castle Primary School, Tiverton came along to sing at the Forget Me Not Café and what an absolute delight! The children all performed extremely well and I know that staff and their parents and carers were very, very proud of them. We all enjoyed this introduction to Christmas immensely and loved having you join us again this year. Thank you Castle Primary School!

The Forget Me Not Café is a social group for carers of people with dementia and the people they care for, where you can come along for a chat with people who walk in your shoes, over a cup of tea and Denise's famous homemade cakes.

The Tiverton Forget Me Not Café is held on the 3rd Tuesday of each month between 2 pm and 3.30 pm at Cherith Church Hall in Tiverton and is free to attend.

Tiverton Safe Stop Social Group



Lots of laughter at our wonderful Safe Stop Social Group in Tiverton on Wednesday, 11th December when they held their Christmas party. Members of the group could be seen having fun playing games, racing reindeer, and enjoying festive food and music.

The Safe Stop Social Group also hosted a New Year's party on Wednesday, 8th January 2025, with food, games and fun party activities.

The Tiverton Safe Stop Social Group is a safe and social space for the person you care for, and respite for you. Each session lasts for 2 and a half hours and costs £10 per session. If you would like to come along to meet Jenny and the Safe Stop team, you would be made very welcome. To register for 2025 and to book your place please call the Unite Carer's office on 01884 257 511. The Group is held twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at Cherith Hall, Tiverton starting at 10.30am until 1pm and we are very happy to discuss the individual needs of the person you care for.

Also.....

A Christmas Sing-along with the Take Note Choir

On Saturday, 14th December the [Take Note, A Community Choir](#) invited carers registered with Unite and their families to a special Christmas sing-along event for elderly family, friends and neighbours at St. Paul's Church in Tiverton. What a beautiful and uplifting afternoon it was, in a wonderful setting, and we all felt Christmas-y after singing along with the choir to favourite Christmas carols. We were also treated, and I mean treated very, very well, to an abundance of sandwiches, cakes and tea by the lovely members of the choir. What an absolute treat, thank you to Katy and to all of the Take Note Community Choir, you are fabulous.



The Sing and Smile Chorus (a Sing Yourself Well choir)

Sing Yourself Well have a new singing group in Tiverton. Singing with others can help you to destress, reduce anxiety and boost your mental wellbeing. The Sing and Smile Chorus will meet every Tuesday at 7.30pm in St George's Extension. Everyone is welcome - just pop along!

Christmas Celebration with Unite Carers



On 11th December unpaid carers gathered together with staff, volunteers and friends of Unite to celebrate Christmas – and what a lovely time we all had. Festive music, mulled wine (non-alcoholic of course), a Christmas buffet and lots of cake and mince pies were enjoyed by all at Cherith Hall.

The mayor of Tiverton, Neal Davey was able to join us and kindly made an address, along with Bernice Philbrick our Chair of Trustees, who presented poinsettia plants to staff Sharon and Tracy – thank you very much to all involved.

It was so lovely to see everyone and spend time chatting and laughing with you all. Thank you for joining us and thank you also to Morrisons, and M&S in Tiverton who made donations to our buffet.

And from our other groups:

- The Tiverton and Cullompton Ex-carers Lunch Group met at the Bluebell for Christmas lunch.
- The Culm Valley Oasis Group met at the Bakehouse for Christmas coffee and cakes.
- Crediton Carer's Coffee Group met at the Crediton Coffee Company Café for Christmas coffee and treats.
- The Exe Valley Oasis Group, Tiverton Carers Group, the DJ Group and The Let's Unite group for parent carers had Christmas nibbles and refreshments at No. 4.
- The Parent Carers of Adults and Teens (aged 16+) will be organising a lunch to ring in the New Year. Please contact the office for more details.



Culm Valley Oasis

On 21st October, Audrey invited Tracy along to the Culm Valley Oasis group, who meet on the 3rd Monday of each month at the Padbrook Park Hotel. The lovely Culm Valley Oasis group isn't often mentioned in our Newsletter and so we just wanted to share this happy, smiley picture with you of the group. Thanks for inviting me along, it was a real pleasure to meet you all.

Coming Soon – A New Group – Anticipatory Grief and Loss.

Our Volunteers Fiona (Trustee and Groups) supported by Simone (Counsellor) and Viv Menear, are working on bringing a new group to Unite Carers to support people who are anticipating losing a loved-one or who may already be bereaved, to help support, talk, process and understand their loss.

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

Befriending and Telephone Friendship

The audit of our Befriending Service is now complete. We start the new year with 27 befriending volunteers supporting 46 Carers for befriending and following the audit, we are now in the enviable position of being able to offer more befriending support to carers when it's needed. Volunteer befrienders meet with their befriended person around once a month for a chat which usually includes tea or coffee and cake; refreshments that are generously funded by the Devon Community Foundation's CLASP fund.

Form-Filling and IT Support for Carers

Our small volunteer and staff team of 5 helped 78 carers with form-filling support during 2024, assisting with complicated forms such as Attendance Allowance, Blue Badge, Carer's Allowance, the Household Support Fund and occasionally DLA and PiP forms for parent carers. During November we began to offer new support for carers who wish to claim Pension Credit – Please see Carer's Corner below. There is currently a waiting list for our form-filling support but please get in touch if you need help or think you may be eligible for financial support.

We also have IT support available to carers and former carers with our knowledgeable team of IT support volunteers and during 2024, 5 volunteers supported 14 carers. 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, please do get in touch with us. No waiting list for this one, we can help you immediately.

Counselling For Carers

Our student counsellor Lyndsey (Petroc College) reached the end of her placement with us in April 2024 and Simone (Exeter College) in October 2024 with both counsellors proving to be excellent additions to our 1:1 support team, receiving first class feedback from carers. Thank you to both Lyndsey and Simone - please see our Spotlight On feature at the end of this newsletter which this edition comes to us from Simone.

Our student counsellor Catherine remains with Unite for the time being, providing Counselling For Carers to carers registered with us. Although Catherine currently has a waiting list, once further places become available she will be able to offer an 8-week course of counselling sessions (flexible) which 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.

Hoping to join Unite and Catherine at the end of February this year will be Faye and Karen from Petroc College and Graham from Hartwood Counselling.

If you would like to find out more about our 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.

Carers New to Unite

For the last quarter – October to December 2024 - we had 9 new unpaid Carers register with us and 8 new requests for Befriending Support. **We warmly welcome you all to Unite Carers.**

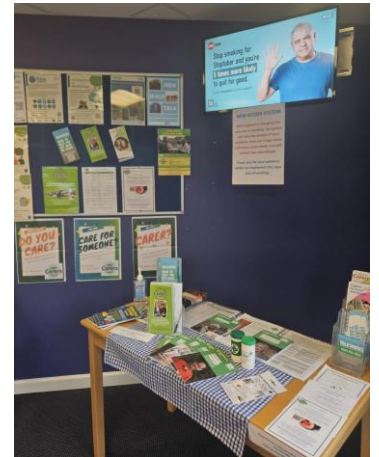
For the year January 2024 to December 2024, we had 90 new carers register with us and 37 new requests for befriending.

CARER'S CORNER

Unite Carers at Clare House and Castle Place



Have you seen our information tables sited in the waiting rooms at Clare House and Castle Place?. This is provided to give information to all unpaid carers, regardless of if they are registered with us or not, so please feel free to take anything that you need from the table and give us a call if you need anything more or have any questions, we are always happy to help. Thank you to Sarah and the team at Clare House and to Castle Place for helping us to provide this valuable source of information to all unpaid carers.



NEW Support group for adult siblings of autistic people - SIBs

Are you an adult who has an autistic brother or sister? You can join online peer support group sessions led by a trained Sibs volunteer and meet others who just 'get' what sibling life is like. All sessions 7pm-8.30pm:

- 13th Feb: Being a sibling vs being a carer
- 9th Apr: Money (mis)management
- 10th Jun: What if your brother/sister doesn't want support?
- 4th Aug: Reciprocity
- 7th Oct: Supporting romantic relationships
- 3rd Dec: Setting boundaries

To find out more and sign up, visit www.sibs.org.uk/autismgroup

Unite Carers Partners with the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

Unite Carers have recently partnered with the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service to provide free home fire safety visits and equipment to carers, former carers and families registered with us.



Our partnership with DSFRS gives carers access to priority referrals into the service. When a referral is made, a Home Safety Technician will conduct a free Home Safety Visit and will be able to assess the degree of risk the person or family is facing, taking the appropriate action to reduce the risks and help prevent a fire or incident. This can include the fitting of free equipment such as a smoke alarm or hard of hearing alarm (for those with hearing loss), supplying fire retardant throws and/or bedding amongst other specialist equipment as well as advising the occupants on safe escape routes and what to do in the event of a fire. All services relating to Home Safety Visits are provided completely free of charge.

If you would like to be referred into the service, please call the office. It's a very simple process and we'd be happy to answer any questions you may have prior to referral.

Devon Memory Café Consortium and the Robopet Scheme

In November our Trustee Fiona and General Manager Sharon attended the Devon Memory Café's Annual General Meeting and Convention. They were joined by members of Dementia Cafes from all over Devon. They had a chance to exchange information and ideas with other memory café leaders and there was a presentation by Emma Elston from the Older People's Mental Health team about the recent research and the Devon System-wide Dementia Strategy.

Hayley Buscombe, Devon Carers Engagement Lead gave a short presentation on the services offered by Devon Carers which included their Robopet Scheme. The scheme enables people with dementia and memory loss the opportunity to enjoy the comfort that pets can bring. For many people, pets can become important companions, but for those living with dementia, it's not always suitable to have animals at home. Robopets can offer an alternative to real pets and can bring many comforting benefits for those with memory conditions and for their carers too.

A recent review of studies on Robopets for dementia patients suggested time spent with them lowered levels of agitation and depression. For those with dementia who have fond memories of owning a pet in their past, spending time with their Robopet can keep them calm and engaged and may enable their carer to have some quality time to themselves. If you are interested in fostering either a Robopet dog or cat please call Devon Carers on 03456 434435.

Pension Credit

It is estimated that up to 880,000 households are missing out on Pension Credit, and it is worth, on average, £3,900 per year, providing additional benefits such as help with Council Tax and Housing Benefit and a free TV licence for those over 75.

As well as the Winter Fuel Payment, Pension Credit also provides extra support for heating costs such as The Warm Home Discount Scheme and Cold Weather Payments.

You can check your eligibility for Pension Credit here: [Pension Credit: Overview - GOV.UK](#) but if you need help, please do get in touch.

Devon Mental Health Alliance – New Drop-in in Tiverton

The Devon Mental Health Alliance have a new drop-in clinic in Tiverton on Tuesdays between 1.30pm – 4.30pm at the CHAT building, hosted by Linda Burd.

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The drop-ins are a place for any adult who is impacted by mental health challenges to go and be welcomed, meet new people, learn about local support and services, and occasionally learn a new skill. Whether you're experiencing a difficulty yourself, are the family member or carer of someone struggling, or would simply like a little support, you are welcome. The drop-ins are a non-clinical space, which means you don't need to be referred or have a diagnosis to attend. These spaces are provided free of charge, sometimes in collaboration with community partners, but are shaped by you.

[Devon Mental Health Alliance | Working together for better mental health](#)

Tiverton Creative Club

Just up the road from Unite Carers at the Oak Room is the Tiverton Creative Club. Are you feeling like you're on a creative precipice? Then jump on in and share your process, your work and your hopes and fears! The third monthly meet up, around a fire, on sofas with coffee/cake/wine is on Monday 13th January 2024 at 7pm. It's a group where you can hopefully inspire each other and plan how to inspire Tiverton and develop a programme for you and for the town.

Support - Just For Men

Research shows that male carers do not access carer's services as much as female carers and may not describe or acknowledge themselves as a carer to others, meaning they may not get the support they need. Many male carers feel that their needs differ to those of female carers; they may find it harder to ask for help and support and balancing work and caring is particularly challenging if they are the main earner.

With this in mind, we recently asked male carers registered with Unite if they would like a carer support group just for men. We received a few responses and the gist from those was that there was not enough interest in a group dedicated for male carers at present. However, there is support for men already happening locally that may be of interest:

Andys Mans Club – Andymanclub are a men's suicide prevention charity, offering free-to-attend peer-to-peer support groups across in Exeter and online. Working to end the stigma surrounding men's mental health and help men through the power of conversation. They meet every Monday at 7pm at Exeter City Football Club and Exeter Wonford Community Hall and have very recently put feelers out about starting a group in Tiverton. To visit the website click here: [Andy's Man Club | #ITSOKAYTOTALK | Andy's Man Club](#) or past <https://andysmanclub.co.uk/> into your browser.

MenWalkTalk – Together for Men's Mental Health, whatever your age, circumstances or experiences. Regular walking groups in Dawlish and Newton Abbot, Zoom and on-line community support. To visit the website click here: [Men's Mental Health Support - MenWalkTalk Charity](#) or paste <https://menwalktalk.co.uk/> into your browser.

Devon Carers – Offer staff who act as local champions for the needs of male carers and help to deliver the plans, which include: Training for staff and volunteers, community-based outreach work and publicity, carers support groups and other activities/events. To visit the website click here: [Male carer - Devon Carers](#) or paste <https://devoncarers.org.uk/am-i-a-carer/about-me/male-carer/> into your browser.

PARENT CARERS

Devon Information and Advice (for parent carers)

DiAS has published information for parent carers about four new topics.

- [Struggling to go to school \(EBSNA\)](#) – a comprehensive look at this topic, including information about what emotionally based school non-attendance is and what causes it, how parents can support their child and how to work with schools.
- [Going to school \(attendance\)](#) – information about why school is important, authorised and unauthorised absence and what to do if attendance starts to become an issue.
- [Going to mediation](#) – a guide to mediation about EHC needs assessment and plan decisions
- [Appealing to the SEND Tribunal](#) – a guide to thinking about, deciding and preparing for a tribunal hearing.

Household Support Fund – Issue 6

Household Support Fund issue 6 (HSF6) is now open. The scheme runs until the **31st of March 2025**. Funds are limited, so when the allocation is used up, we will close for applications. If you would like to know if you are eligible to apply, please contact Tracy at the office on 01884 257511 (Monday- Wednesday).

Help To Keep Your Families Safer and Warmer This Winter

See attached: 'Safer Homes Leaflet v3 2024 OCT.pdf'

Wales and West Utilities (WWU) and NSPCC have partnered up to keep families safer and warmer as winter sets in.

They are offering families a FREE Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarm if you don't already have one, alongside their Safer Homes leaflet which provides tips and links to sources of help with fuel costs.

This offer ends on **30th May 2025**, or **while stocks last**, so please help your families to benefit this winter.”

Autism and Us Programme (Spring Term)

On behalf of DCC's Communication and Interaction Team: [Support from the Communication and Interaction Team - Education and Families \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

devon.cc/autism-and-us

Support for parents/carers resident within the DCC footprint of primary or secondary aged children (5-16) who are either on the neurodiversity assessment waiting list or who have received a diagnosis of autism.

Attending the 'Autism & Us' parent programme gives parents an opportunity to develop an understanding of autism and look at practical solutions to managing and supporting children's presenting needs, whilst also connecting with other parents/carers.

Full programme details and application process below:

Autism & Us programmes:

- 4 weekly 'live online' sessions (approx. 2hrs each) related to the following topic/themes:
- weekly 'live online' sessions (approx. 2hrs each) related to the following topic/themes:

SPRING Term 2025

No.	Topic	Programme 1	Programme 2
1	Autism overview	Tues 21 Jan 10am – 12pm	Thurs 6 Mar 4.30 – 6.30pm
2	Sensory	Tues 28 Jan 10am – 12pm	Thurs 13 Mar 4.30 – 6.30pm
3	Communication	Tues 4 Feb 10am – 12pm	Thurs 20 Mar 4.30 – 6.30pm
4	Understanding and supporting behaviour	Tues 11 Feb 10am – 12pm	Thurs 27 Mar 4.30 – 6.30pm

Apply direct by email to: educationlearnersupport@devon.gov.uk

To secure a place on either of the above programmes, or express your interest for forthcoming programmes. They will confirm your booking request and provide you with a direct link to the event. The programmes will be delivered online 'live' via the Microsoft TEAMS platform.

Additionally, they will also be offering the following themed/topic-based workshops, which lead on from the above programmes for themes/topics that may be a priority area for you against your child's presenting needs:

SPRING Term 2025

Topic	Date/Time
Introduction to DIAS (Devon Information & Advice Service + the Ambassador Volunteer Programme)	Tues 1 Apr 10am – 12pm
Autism – Sensory processing + integration	Tues 25 Mar 9.30am - 12.30pm
Autism and Girls	Weds 12th Mar 9.30am - 12.30pm
Autism – Demand avoidance + PDA	Thurs 13th Feb 10am – 12pm
Autism – Communication (Speaking children – support strategies)	Tues 11 Mar 10am – 12pm
Autism – Managing stress + anxiety	Thurs 20 Mar 10am – 12pm
Autism – Vulnerability + online safety	Thurs 27 Feb 10am – 12pm
Autism – Communication (Non/Limited Speaking children – support strategies)	Thurs 6 Mar 10am – 12pm

Apply direct by email to: educationlearnersupport@devon.gov.uk

To secure a place on any of the above topic-based workshops. They will confirm your booking request and provide you with a direct link to the event. Courses will be delivered online 'live' via the Microsoft TEAMS platform.

JUST FOR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer Annual Support Meeting

Would anyone like to arrange their annual volunteer support meeting (review) with a member of staff at Unite Carers or a Trustee? If so, please do get in touch to arrange a mutually convenient appointment, either in person or by phone. Thank you.

Expenses

Are you a volunteer who doesn't claim expenses? Firstly, please do, we don't want you to be out of pocket and secondly, if you are a taxpayer you could claim expenses and then gift aid them back to Unite which gives us 25% extra. Please talk to Sharon to find out more.

DBS Update Service

A request from Sharon, who would like to encourage anyone with a new DBS to please subscribe to the DBS Update Service. This needs to be done within 30 days of receiving the DBS clearance and is free for volunteers. Please call the office for more information on this or if you have any questions.

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 Tracy will send you a new-style ID badge and lanyard.

Trustees' Week 4-8 November 2024

It was Trustees' Week between 4th-8th November, a time to celebrate the achievements of nearly one million trustees across the UK. As part of Trustees' Week, we posted a short series of interviews with some of our volunteer Trustees and you can read them in full on our website by clicking here: [News | Unite Carers in Mid Devon](#) or by typing <https://www.unitecarers.org.uk/news> into your browser.

Thank you the Unite Board of Trustees for giving your time, commitment and effort to our little charity - Unite Carers in Mid Devon.

Vacancy for a Volunteer Treasurer

Unite Carers in Mid Devon are desperately seeking a Volunteer Treasurer (who may or may not want to be a 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.

Welcome To.....

We would like to extend a warm **Unite Carers welcome** to our **new volunteers:**

Viv, Heather, Maureen, Aliya, Faye, Karen and Graham. Welcome to Unite Carers!

FUNDRAISING – HOW YOU CAN (AND HAVE) HELPED

The Benefact Group's Movement For Good Awards - Carers, volunteers and other friends of Unite can nominate us to win £1,000 from the Benefact Group just by clicking on the link below and choosing **1099188 Unite - Carers in Mid Devon**.

[Movement for Good - Nominate a charity for an award.](#)

Tiverton Soroptimist Beetle Drive

On November 15th the Tiverton Soroptimist held their annual Beetle Drive in aid of local charities including Unite Carers in Mid Devon and Singing To Remember. Our Trustee Janine attended on behalf of the Tiverton Soroptimists and also gave a short talk for Unite Carers, along with Tracy who went along with her mum. It was a very successful evening, very well attended and lots of fun was had by all. Tracy's mum was particularly successful in the raffle winning 4 times (but putting some back). At half time we were treated to the most delicious array of cakes, which I believe, some of which at least, were made by Mrs Fitzmaurice. We would like to thank the Tiverton Soroptimists for their continued and valued support and say a particular thank you to Jenny and the rest of the Soroptimist team for always making us so welcome. Also thank you for everyone who came along in support, including Janine, Pat and Betty and Neal Davey, the mayor of Tiverton.



Co-op Local Community Fund

Unite Carers has been chosen to be part of the next round of the Co-op Local Community Fund. The funding round started on Sunday, 20th October 2024 and will run for 12 months until 19th October 2025. During this time, Co-op Members will be able to choose Unite Carers as their cause and the more members who choose us, the more money we'll receive. You'll need to sign up to the app and register Unite Carers as your chosen charity. Please ask at the Co-op for more information.

Eyes Down For Charity Bingo!

It was eyes down for Charity Bingo on Wednesday, 30th October and Sharon and Tracy went along to join in the fun at the Exe Valley Community Bar and, very importantly, receive a generous donation of £500 from the organisers. There were no Full Houses for Sharon this time but there was a False Call (mentioning no names - it was a school-girl error, but my excuse is I was juggling 2 books) and apologies were quickly and humbly made. We would like to thank the incredible Sylvia White for supporting Unite Carers, Liz Chappell for the amazing cakes and extend our thanks to the entire charity bingo team who helped us with their expertise on the evening. We had a lot of fun and hope to see you again soon. BINGO!

Charity Pots

All of our Groups are free to carers, the people they care for and to former carers (with the exception of the nominal charge we make for the Safe Stop Social Group), however, donations towards refreshments are always welcome in the charity pot at the group venue or in person. Thank you all so much for your continued support.

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

AND IN OTHER NEWS....

Tiverton Mayor's Christmas Drinks

On Saturday, 20th December Bernice and Sharon attended the Mayor's Christmas Drinks at the Town Hall. They met representatives from other local charities and businesses and made some good contacts. Neal Davey our current Mayor will be visiting our offices to hear more about what Unite has to offer to unpaid carers in Mid Devon. Unite has also been invited to attend the Tiverton Town Emergency Planning meeting at 6.30 pm on Wednesday, 29th January at the Town Hall, Tiverton. Please get in touch if you are interested in joining Bernice at this event.

Become a Unite Member

If anyone would like to know more about becoming a member of Unite Carers, we would be happy to chat to you. It's completely free to become a member and doing so gives you voting rights and a sense of belonging to an organisation that you care about and shares your values. Please call the office on 01884 257511 to find out more.

Devon Carers

Are you registered as an unpaid carer with Devon Carers? Or perhaps you think you may be registered but aren't sure and would like us to check on your behalf? Devon Carers offer free support, carer training and benefits such as their Hospital Discharge Service, a Carer's Assessment, a Carer's Passport and Emergency Planning, free hospital parking, access to activities, access to their Carer's Break Fund and more. It's very easy to register with Devon Carers by calling their helpline number: 03456 434435 or you can visit their website here: [Home - Devon Carers](#). If you would like us to refer you then we are also happy to do so, please just get in touch.

Newsletter

Do you receive this newsletter by post but have an email address that we can use instead please? This would save our small charity postage, printing and admin costs. If you do have an email that we can use instead please do get in touch to let us know. Thank you.

Music with Norman and Arthur

Would anyone like our volunteers Norman (on the bagpipes) and Arthur (on the drums) to play voluntarily at a group or activity that you support? If so, please do get in touch.

Possible New Groups – Willand and Crediton

Would anyone be interested in a new Carer's Support Group in Willand? If so, please do get in touch with us regarding this or any other ideas you may have for new groups.

Would anyone be interested in a new Safe Stop Social Group in Crediton? If so, please do let us know as we are trying to ascertain interest. Thank you.

New Facebook Banners and Posters for 2025

We would like to say a big Thank You to Mairi who is a Marketing Executive with Integrity 365, who has very kindly donated her time to design new group posters and Facebook banners for Unite Carers.

Office Opening Hours

The Unite Carers' office is open Monday – Friday 10am-4.00pm but please do call ahead before making a special journey into Tiverton to see us as we may be working off-site or in meetings.

If you need to speak to someone urgently, here are some useful numbers for you:

- **Care Direct - Devon Adult Social Care:** **0345 155 1007**
- **Samaritans 24-hour free helpline:** **116 123**
- **NHS Mental Health crisis** **111 and select option 2**
- **In an emergency or in immediate danger** **999**

Contact Us: Unite Carers in Mid Devon

Tel: 01884 257511

Email: info@unitemd.org.uk

website: www.unitecarers.org.uk

Hand in Hand – A poem for Carers and the people they love



It can be all too easy to be filled with a sense of gloom on these grey, winter days, but it may help to brighten our mood by thinking about love - the love and care we share with others. Here's a poem written by Tom for his wife Rosemary, in celebration of their 50 years of marriage together. Rosemary and Tom joined us at Unite Carers in August when the days were much warmer, sunnier and certainly longer than they are now. Welcome Rosemary and Tom and thank you for sharing your words.

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Hand in Hand

*As we walked hand in hand
Onward to God's promised land
Years have passed – blessed by love
As we followed the peaceful Dove*

*Marriage bonds were never harsh
Certainly there were ups and downs
Valleys came and went – some were
Barren others were green
Then on top of mountains fair
We breathed in God's loving air
As we walked hand in hand
Onward to God's promised land*

*Hearts united on that morn
Back in 1966
T'was Jan 1st as I recall
When down the aisle we journeyed forth
As we walked hand in hand*

*Ah now some 50 years have passed
Babies born and young ones grown
Time seems to have flown
Older, yes – wiser, um
But we have shown we overcome
As we walked hand in hand*

*For us together Jesus had a plan
As we walked hand in hand
Towards the father's promised land*

And finally...

Spotlight On! – In this edition we turn the spotlight on: [Simone Phillips](#)



Our wonderful former student counsellor Simone has very recently graduated from the Lv4 Counselling Degree at Exeter College and is now a fully qualified Counsellor. We are so fortunate that Simone decided to dedicate some of her working practice hours to carers at Unite Carers and are thrilled that Simone has decided to continue to volunteer with us, to help to bring a new anticipatory grief support group to our carers. So, the Spotlight On! this quarter is Simone Phillips. Congratulations on your graduation Simone and thank you for all that you have done and continue to do.

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Hi, I'm Simone, I've lived in the Mid Devon area for over 40 years, having relocated here with my family at the age of 8 - almost Devonian, but not quite! I now call Tiverton home, where I live with my family, our loving whippet, and our playful cat.

With over a decade of experience in health and social care, I have developed a strong commitment to client-centred support, which has inspired me on my path to becoming a counsellor. This journey allowed me to deepen my skills and enabled me to reconnect with the community by volunteering as a trainee counsellor with Unite Carers. Even after becoming fully qualified and starting my private practice, I feel passionately about the work that Unite Carers do, so I have chosen to continue volunteering with them. The most rewarding part for me is the sense of connection - walking alongside people as they navigate life's challenges and witnessing clients flourish and watching their resilience grow.

Over the years, I've come to value self-care, self-compassion, and the need to recharge my inner battery. Creative hobbies like crochet, learning new crafts, sharing laughs and ideas with my crafty 'sisters' on "Sod It Saturdays," and peaceful strolls through the beautiful Devon countryside help me pause, breathe deeply, and fully appreciate the world around me.

Coming soon – I'm thrilled to be part of Unite Carers' new initiative: A community support group focused on anticipatory grief, creating a space where people can find comfort, understanding, and connection during challenging times. I'm honoured to be included and look forward to continuing to work with and collaborating with the amazing team at Unite Carers!



Unite Carers Support Groups Autumn 2025

Who's it for?	Group Name	Location	With	Day in month	Time
All Carers	Bampton Carers' Coffee Group	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 Lunch Group	Locations change monthly – Please call the office	Jackie	4 th Monday	12.30 pm
Cared-for-people	Tiverton Safe Stop Social Group	Cherith Hall, Tiverton	Jenny	2 nd and 4 th Wednesday	10.30 am - 1 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 (for parent carers)	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Jenny	1 st Wednesday	9.00 am - 11.00 am (drop-in)
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 Former 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