

Caring Matters



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From our CEO – Susanna Jones



It has been an exceptionally busy time for us all at Swindon Carers Centre since our last newsletter. The coronavirus pandemic is creating additional, complex pressures for carers, and we have adapted our service delivery to meet the challenges of lockdown and social distancing.

Currently, our team is still working remotely, although we have fully risk assessed our offices and are beginning a phased return whilst adhering to social distancing. As you'll see from our photos, stories, and updates, we have continued to be creative in delivering our services to ensure carers continue to feel supported and where possible can have a break from their caring role(s).

I'd like to draw your attention to some key dates coming up – our Carers Rights Day event this year will be on Friday 20th November – please put it in your calendar, more details to follow. And fundraising continues to be very important to us, if you or your friends can support in any way, we would be very grateful! Details of future fundraising events can be found on page 10.

And to finish I'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you. Thank you to our whole team of staff, volunteers, and trustees, who have been brilliant over the last few months and worked incredibly hard to ensure we continue to support carers to the best of our ability. But the biggest thank you of all must go to all unpaid carers who are a cornerstone of our Swindon community providing vital care in these challenging times.

Swindon Carers Centre Support us on social media!



Twitter: @SwindonCarers



Facebook: www.facebook.com/swindoncarerscentre



Instagram: Search for 'swindoncarers'

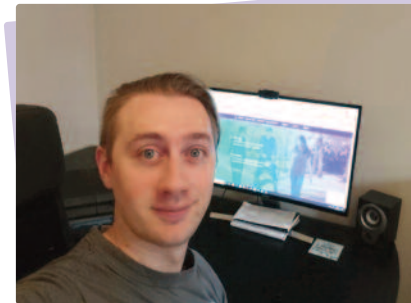
Cover image: Parent carer Abi, with her son Jacob

Meeting the challenge

Despite the challenges of lockdown and social distancing, we've worked hard to make sure we continue to engage with carers in Swindon offering different types of support while our usual groups and activities were suspended. Our Adult Carer Groups and Activities Team held their first socially distanced Carer's Cuppa group in the grounds of Meadowcroft Community Centre recently, and our first face to face Young Carers activity post lockdown was a trip to Roves Farm – typically after all the sunshine we've had – it rained!! We will continue to ensure everything we do is in line with the latest government and health guidance and advice.



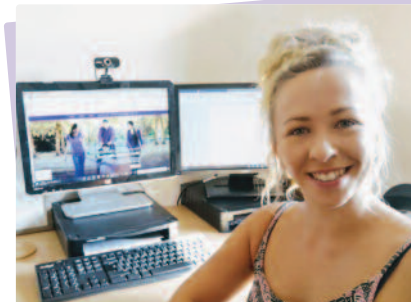
Here are a few photos of the team working from home.



Peter Richmond Young Carer Support Practitioner



Andrea Macdonald Senior Carer Support Practitioner



Bronte Hauge Resources Manager

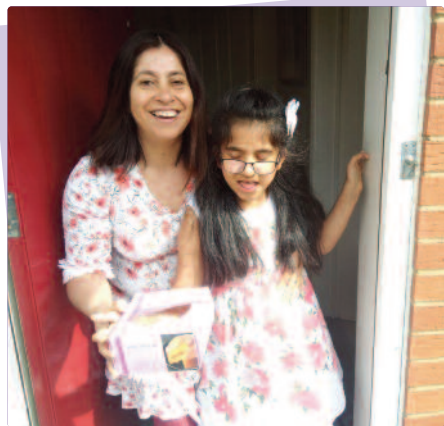


Tina Richards Adult Carer Support Practitioner



Creating smiles during lockdown!

During Covid-19, we've been fortunate to receive emergency funding grants from Zurich Community Trust and for young carers from St James's Place Foundation. This has allowed us to purchase items for carers to help through life during lockdown, including laptops, a printer, a garden bench, and puzzles, as well as food hampers, pamper gifts and plants and flowers. We'd also like to say a big thank you to Waitrose, Asda and Morrisons, who have been kindly donating birthday cakes for us to deliver. Our Benefits Service Co-ordinator Tim has been helping the Adult Carer Groups and Activities Team deliver these. During May, June and July, they delivered 167 birthday cakes – which is an amazing effort!



Wow!! Look what was delivered to my door today, an amazing parcel of goodies and pamper stuff to enjoy. Would you believe it! How lucky are we? It has been a tough time since February as we have been in lockdown shielding our precious boy. To think that you have gone out and bought these goodies for us means so much. It is so nice to be thought of at this unusual time. I am so emotional about it and so touched by your kindness!

What? Wow. That is amazing, thank you so much. It's been so hard for her as her laptop broke down two days before lockdown.

Thank you for your birthday greetings and cake yesterday. A 'sweet' gesture. Bit of icing on the cake! I had a really enjoyable day. Thanks again.

I would like to pass on my thanks for the entire Swindon Carers Centre team. It was my birthday yesterday, and a lovely man named Tim delivered a birthday cake to my home. It was a wonderful surprise, totally unexpected and very welcome.

AGM by Zoom

Our AGM in July was a real opportunity to look back at everything we've achieved over the past year for carers facing many difficult and challenging situations in Swindon. This year's meeting was held via Zoom, due to Covid-19 restrictions, and was recorded, so anyone who couldn't attend can still watch it. This is available on our 'Swindon Carers Centre SCC' YouTube channel.

We can also send a copy of the annual report and AGM presentation to you.

Please email
carers@swindoncarers.org.uk

These are just a few of our key highlights for the year:

Adult Carer Support Services guided carers to **75** different organisations, showing impressive networking and local contacts

1,128 calls were made to access advice, guidance, and signposting through our Carers Support Line

Our Schools Development Manager has worked with **78** schools, supporting **20** young carers to achieve **38** units from the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) this year.

We supported **2** university social care students through successful placements

26 young carers received funding totalling **£3,520.80** through Friends of Young Carers Swindon and our Tony Martin Memorial Fund

Young adult carers received the recognition and support needed to help them on their journey through gender identity, expression, dysphoria and transition

We increased our engagement with military carers, including visits to the Army Information Centres at Tidworth and Lyneham

Over **98%** of carers attended a social evening report they benefited from peer support

100% of carers attending activities and social events said they benefited from a break from their caring role

Our Welfare and Benefits Service secured **£488,815.40** in unclaimed income for carers in Swindon

Over **40** parent carers received funding to support them in their caring with white goods, mini breaks, spa days, gym memberships and driving lessons

Supporting LGBTQ carers in Swindon

Unpaid carers do not always get the support they need and are entitled to. This is especially true for carers who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Our Deputy CEO Fiona Prinzi is an active member of the Swindon Inclusion and Diversity Network, and Tanya Hawker, our Health and Social Care Liaison Officer is signing up to LGBTQ Champions Training. Here you can see Tanya at this year's Swindon & Wiltshire Pride Pop-Up Shop, where she spoke to staff about how to support carers and offer reassurance that Swindon Carers Centre is an inclusive organisation. *We also have a dedicated page for LGBTQ carers on our website: www.swindoncarers.org.uk/lgbtq-carers/*



Support our 50:50 Lottery Club

You can join our lottery club for as little as £5 a month. It's your chance to win a monthly cash prize and help Swindon Carers Centre at the same time. All money raised each month is split 50:50. We keep half to help us provide vital services for carers in Swindon, and half is retained as the prize to be won by club members. The more club members we have, the bigger the prize fund and the more charitable donations we receive. *If you're over 18, you can register by visiting: www.swindoncarers.org.uk/donate.*

Carers Week 2020: Making carers visible

Carers, supporters and staff and volunteers came together to make Carers Week 2020 a week to remember. It was action-packed, with all events held virtually due to the Covid-19 lockdown. The Aspire fundraising team at Swindon Carers Centre organised a different activity every day, starting with Musical Monday and ending with our annual fundraising Walk A Mile In A Carer's Shoes event on the Saturday. We asked fundraisers to Walk A Mile where they could and you took up our challenge walking indoors, in back gardens, school playgrounds, and parks. The event raised more than £2,000, thanks to Pebley Beach Hyundai & Suzuki, Swindon, who matched our fundraising efforts pound for pound up to £1,000. Thank you also to Swindon's community radio station 105.5 for supporting Carers Week and having our CEO as a guest on Howard Taylor's Breakfast Show every morning during the week.

Snapshot of the week



Left: Both Swindon MPs supported Walk A Mile, as they always do. Here's Justin Tomlinson (Swindon North MP) with his daughter Margot walking their mile



Above: Getting ready to take SCC's mascot Muttley for his Walk A Mile...

Below: Here's Muttley with SCC's Ann



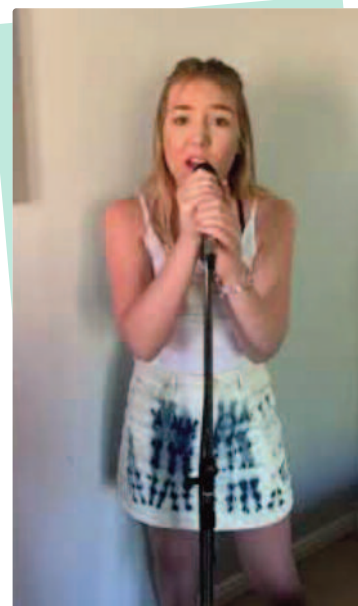
Left: Wanborough Primary School pupils completing their Walk A Mile



Left: This is young carer Chloe, who decided to put a smile on peoples' faces by baking for friends and family during lockdown



Right: We loved seeing your baking photos for Tea Party Thursday. This one was made by Tyler



Above: "Hi, my name is Amaya Grace and I am 13 years of age. I decided to perform Rise Up as I believe this song provides us with hope and determination at this time of uncertainty. I believe the lyrics help us believe we can be stronger together during this pandemic. Even though I am not a Young Carer, I think this song shows that they are not alone. I hope you enjoy the performance."



Above: SCC's Zoe throwing her tea party



Right: Tracey's beautiful cupcakes made to look like flowers

Please save these dates



SWINDON CARERS – BIG QUIZ NIGHT IN!

???

JOIN US TO WIN FANTASTIC PRIZES ON September 17th @ 7.30pm

For details please email:
Judy.Evans@swindoncarers.org.uk
Ann.Giles@swindoncarers.org.uk
zoe.beckett-furnell@swindoncarers.org.uk

Entries cost a minimum donation of £3

Registered Charity No: 1061116
 Registered Company No: 3305621

FR REGULATOR



A NIGHT AT THE RACES

Charity Race Night in aid of Swindon Carers Centre (Over 18s only!)

Friday 20th November 2020 7pm
Broome Manor Golf Club, SN3 1RG



Tickets £7 each. Includes nibbles! Contact Judy or Ann:
judy.evans@swindoncarers.org.uk or 01793 531133
ann.giles@swindoncarers.org.uk or 01793 531133

Charity Number: 1061116
 Company Number: 3305621

FR REGULATOR

Carers Rights Day November 20th

Carers Rights Day is a day for all our carers. Whether you are new to your caring role, or you have been caring for a while, we would love as many of you as possible to get involved.

This national day exists to:

- » Ensure carers are aware of their rights
- » Let carers know where to get help and support
- » Raise awareness of the needs of carers

We think it is important that you know your rights as a carer, so that you can access the support you need. Our event in Swindon will be held virtually this year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, on Friday November 20th.

We're still in the planning stages for this, but we hope it will include many of the elements that have made Carers Rights Day so successful in the past – including information presentations and a Q&A session featuring local decision makers.

In addition, we are looking for carers who can share their stories, experiences and opinions for Carers Rights Day. Please get in touch to help us raise awareness of what it means to be an unpaid carer. Tell us what is important to you, and the type of support you value most.

Email: carers@swindoncarers.org.uk to register for the event or to be interviewed.

Our 'new normal'

As lockdown measures gradually ease, many of us will be getting used to our 'new normal'. Although we will need to follow social distancing measures and adhere to new rules – such as wearing face coverings in certain settings – we are now being encouraged to get out and about where possible. From August 1st, people who are at a high risk from coronavirus are no longer advised to shield. These changes, which can feel strange after months in lockdown, may cause extra anxiety and worry for some.

If you need to talk to someone, please call us on (01793) 531133.

These are our staff tips for looking after your mental health, which we shared on social media for World Wellbeing Week, at the end of June.

As a carer myself, a cuddle with the dog always goes down well... as well as five minutes and a cuppa! **Lorraine**

Coffee! That's what gets me through every day as a carer. A little time out for me and a nice cup of coffee. **Sally**

Relaxing at home or in the garden with some nice chocolate – I can eat chocolate anytime! **Judy**

Walking our lovely mascot Muttley in nearby fields and down by the river at Cricklade. **Ann**

A few minutes away from my caring role, being still and quiet in the garden (and looking at the birds and the flowers) and I also like to 'lose' myself in a good book. **Heather**

Sign up to our Emergency Card Scheme

Our Emergency Card Scheme (ECS) is now available to all registered carers over the age of 18. With our support, you can build a plan detailing what you would like to happen if an emergency prevented you from carrying on with your caring responsibilities. After this, you will be issued with a card, which has a unique number linking to your emergency plan. In an emergency, you can call the number on the card and the call handlers will ensure your plan is put in place. To request an emergency card, contact Angela Walklate, ECS Administrator, by e-mailing angela.walklate@swindoncarers.org.uk or calling 01793 975333.



Supporting the Fairer for Carers Campaign

We have joined Carers UK in government lobbying for an increase in the level of Carers Allowance and have signed a letter to the DWP Secretary of State. You can find it here. www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/campaigns/fairer-for-carers

Proud of our little superstar

Abi and Steve's story

Parent carers Abi and Steve Bell have written about their experience of caring for their son Jacob. This is their story in their own words about their journey so far.

Our son Jacob was born with a large hole in his heart (VSD) which was only discovered on the day of his birth. It was a huge shock that we were not prepared for. Our first trip out with him was to Bristol Children's Hospital six days later, to see a heart specialist.

He confirmed the diagnosis and said that Jacob would need surgery at six months of age, when he would be strong enough to undergo the anaesthetic. However, when they saw Jacob for a check-up at 9-weeks-old, they decided the operation was needed sooner and he was booked in three weeks later.

It was absolutely heart-wrenching handing him over to the surgeons that day, but after eight long hours in surgery, we were given the great news that all had gone well, and the hole was successfully closed. The feeling of relief didn't last long, as he suffered a seizure a few hours later and lost his eyesight for 72 hours. This was a very overwhelming time for us as we felt so helpless and alone, but we were thankful that his sight loss turned out to be short-term and his heart was mended.

As our focus then switched from his heart, we noticed that he was failing to meet his developmental milestones. So, the day before his first birthday his health visitor completed a Schedule of Growing Skills (SOGS) assessment, which confirmed that he had 'Global Development Delay'.

I returned to work from maternity leave four days after the assessment, without the realisation of Jacob's diagnosis and the road that lay ahead of us fully absorbed.

As the appointments with various professionals started flooding in thick and fast, we were becoming increasingly overwhelmed with all the new information we were learning. Having very little family support at the time, we felt like we were 'drowning'.

It was at this time, that we learned of Swindon Carers Centre. I contacted them and a lady came out and registered us with them.

Since then, we have found Swindon Carers to be an enormous support to our family. They send us regular newsletters with events and activities. By attending events organised by them, they have given us the opportunity to meet other carers in a similar position to ourselves, which has allowed us to make life-long friendships.

At six-years-old, Jacob is still unable to talk or walk unaided. He is fed liquids through a PEG feeding tube (due to a weak swallow) and has had other minor surgeries. He has attended hundreds of hospital appointments, with one of those being to enrol on the 100,000 Genomes Project via the John Radcliffe Hospital. He was enrolled in 2017 to see if they were able to find a cause for his delays through analysing his gene data. However, it is a very lengthy process and as a result, we are still awaiting an update from their findings.

Thankfully for us, Swindon Carers have always been at the end of the phone when we have needed them, for help and advice. Nothing seems to be too much trouble for them.

Some days life with a disabled child can be exhausting, but one flash of Jacob's beautiful smile and his highly infectious laugh, is enough to lift our spirits. We could not be prouder of our little superstar and what he has been able to achieve despite his extra needs.

We would just like to take this opportunity to say THANK YOU to each and every one of you at Swindon Carers Centre. We would be lost without your support, especially in the early days of Jacob's journey.



Update on services

An update from Debbie Murphy-Myers, Service Delivery Manager for the Young Carers, Young Adult Carers and Parent Carers Team.

Our Young Carers Team

During lockdown, the Young Carers Team have continued to complete assessments over the telephone, which has been really positive. This has ensured that young carers can still register, access support, and will be able to join groups and activities as these resume.

We have been contacting young carers who usually attend groups to check in with them and see if there is any additional support that we can provide. The team have been creating a fortnightly Young Carers Newsletter focusing on wellbeing.

Face to face activities for young carers started back in late July. These look slightly different and adhere to the government guidelines and social distancing regulations. All groups and activities can only currently run with a maximum capacity of five young carers and one support practitioner.

Our YC Forum has been meeting monthly via Zoom, to ensure they keep in touch and share ideas for future meetings. The team have also had their first Zoom YC quiz night which was really fun! We have started a new young carers Instagram page, so please join and share!
<https://www.instagram.com/swindoncarers>



Andrea, Debbie, Lorraine, Georgia, Hayley and Peter – our YC/PC/YAC team!

The Parent Carer Team

This team has been doing an incredible job at supporting parent carers remotely; completing assessments, providing funding, and offering practical and emotional support to parents during this uncertain and worrying time.

The team are beginning to look at re-booking social events, and hope to start these again from September and when it is safe to do so. These will be needed and welcomed by parents once their children have returned to school.

The team have started monthly Parent Carer Coffee mornings via Zoom, the first one was held on Wednesday 22nd July. Please contact Lorraine or Sharon if you would like an invite to future meetings on (01793) 401094.

Adult Carer Groups and Activities Team



Due to the continuing Covid-19 restrictions, we are working in diverse ways to support adult, older and bereaved carers. This has included:

- » Sending to you, via email or post, our Chatterbox newsletter. It is lovely to hear from you and your ideas help us plan the next edition!
- » Making calls to those who need some additional contact. During April, May and June our team made over 800 contacts, via calls, emails or texts to carers.

- » Delivering items. Thanks to kind

donations from local supermarkets, we have been able to deliver cakes to carers who have had significant birthdays or events. Thank you so much to our colleague Tim, who has been out and about to deliver these!

- » Starting from July, we have been trialling meetings of small socially distanced groups in an outside setting (adhering to government guidelines). It has been lovely to see you in person again.

We are looking at different ways that we can connect with you, and you will see this reflected within the new October to December 'What's On' enclosed. We are constantly reviewing the situation to balance risk and your safety with being able to see you.

Good news! We have a new member of staff joining our team. Her name is Catherine, but she likes to be known as Cat.

Stay safe and well

Heather, Judy, Zoe and Cat

Would you like to receive our next Chatterbox Newsletter? Please email acgroups@swindoncarers.org.uk



Zoe's lockdown gardening effort, also shared in our Chatterbox Newsletter



Carers Pat and Dave sent in these photos of their newly painted, bright and cheery garden sheds for our Chatterbox Newsletter.

Our Adult and Older Care Service

Introducing the faces behind our Carers Support Line

Our Carers Support Line is here to make sure you get the right help, guidance and advice in your caring role. If you have any questions or concerns, you can always call and leave a message. Sometimes we may be able to advise ourselves, and sometimes we will signpost you onto another organisation. We have an extensive network of contacts. Last year for example, we signposted carers calling the Carers Support Line to 75 different organisations. This is a busy service with 1,128 calls made in the past year (April 2019 to March 2020). Our target is to contact you within 48 hours (Monday to Friday) however, often we can resolve issues straight away or within a day. If you are finding your caring role challenging or struggling to leave your dependent to get a break away from home, please call us and we will carry out a quick review. We will then refer you to one of our 1:1 Adult Carer Support Practitioners for a carer's assessment, who will discuss any funding options you may be eligible for. They will also signpost you to other colleagues, such as our benefits advice team or counselling if appropriate.

Our Carers Support Line is open from 9.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Thursday, and 9.30am to 4pm on Friday. If you are an adult carer, you can call us direct on 01793 401090 or you can email us on carerssupport@swindoncarers.org.uk. If you are not an Adult carer, please use our main number (01793) 531133 to speak to the relevant team you wish to contact.

Meet the Carers Support Line team



Amanda Adult Care Support Practitioner

I have worked for Swindon Carers Centre since August 2011 and was initially a full-time member of staff. I now work two days a week, predominantly on the Carers Support Line, which I really enjoy. I love being able to speak to a wide variety of our registered carers each week and have learnt so much over the years. I am truly humbled by every carer I speak to. Outside of my role at SCC, I am kept very busy by my 6-year-old son and my almost 3-year-old daughter.



Tanya Health and Social Care Liaison Officer

I have been at Swindon Carers Centre for over 2 years. In my role as the Health and Social Care Officer (HSCLO) I do a lot of outreach supporting carer leads at local GP surgeries, Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Trust and at The Great Western Hospital. However, two days a week I cover the Carers Support Line. As I wear two hats, I would like to share two of my favourite things about my job.

1. Being able to make a real difference to a carer's situation by providing practical advice and signposting - hearing the relief in their voices on the Carers Support Line.
2. Meeting and working with staff at external agencies and helping them to, firstly recognise, and then know how to support the carers they come into contact with.

When I am not at work, I enjoy getting out on walks with my dogs and have been keeping my mind active by doing short home correspondence courses. I also like pottering in the garden and looking for non-existent frogs in my little wildlife pond.

If you are a registered carer with Swindon Carers Centre, would like to register with us, or would like to speak to one of our team, here are the telephone numbers you'll need.

- » **Adult Carer Support Services: 01793 401090**
- » **Parent Carer Support Services: 01793 401094**
- » **Young Carer Support Services: 01793 401091**
- » **Adult Carer Groups and Activities: 01793 401095**
- » **Young Carer Groups and Activities: 01793 401092**
- » **Benefits Advice: 01793 401093**
- » **All other queries: 01793 401098**
- » **Our main switchboard telephone number: 01793 531133**

Swindon Carers Centre address

Sanford House, Sanford Street, Swindon SN1 1HE

Contact us between 9.30am - 4.30pm Monday to Thursday and 9.30am - 4pm Friday

To share your stories, ideas and news items with our Media & Communications Officer, email anne.saunders@swindoncarers.org.uk

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While every care has been taken in compiling this newsletter, Swindon Carers Centre accepts no responsibility for information given. Mention of goods or services does not represent endorsement.

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Visit our website www.swindoncarers.org.uk

