

Caring Matters



From our CEO – Susanna Jones



As we head into winter, the pressure on unpaid carers remains constant, high and often very complex. It is vital the voice of carers is heard by those making decisions about our health and social care provision.

We are delighted that our annual Carers Rights Day event will be going ahead this year – albeit remotely. Attendees include senior leaders from the Borough Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS England, and both Swindon MPs. You can find out how to attend, or have a question asked on your behalf if you are unable to join us, on pages 6 and 7.

We continue to adapt our service delivery every time Government guidance is updated. Most of our team is still working remotely – although we are using our office in Sanford House when needed. We are endeavouring to continue to provide safe groups and activity breaks for carers – but there are challenges with this, not least in keeping to small, socially distanced groups whilst trying to ensure as many carers as possible can access them. There is also high demand for our services at the moment, so please bear with us – we are working very hard to ensure you don't have to wait long to be supported in your caring role.

As we move into the colder months, it's vital that as carers, your health and wellbeing is also a priority – so please take some time to protect yourself against flu by receiving the vaccination free of charge – please see page 10 for further details.

With best wishes to you all from myself and the whole team at Swindon Carers Centre. Thank you for all you do.

Swindon Carers Centre Support us on social media!



Twitter: @SwindonCarers



Facebook: www.facebook.com/swindoncarerscentre



Instagram: Search for 'swindoncarers'

Cover image: Taya making cupcakes to test a new oven purchased through our Zurich Community Trust fund.

A warm welcome to:



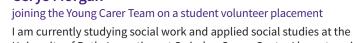


Cat AttewellGroups and Activities Coordinator

Since joining Swindon Carers Centre in July, I've found both my immediate team and the wider SCC team to be really friendly and supportive. I've had various previous roles, including a long career at Nationwide, running a handmade jewellery business and working as an administrator for a local church, St John's in Haydon Wick. I love working with people, and organising events, so this role was a perfect fit! I feel privileged to have

met many carers already, and to have gained an insight into their huge compassion and many challenges. I'm excited about engaging with even more carers from diverse social backgrounds and developing our programme of groups and activities to truly serve them well.

Cerys Morgan



I am currently studying social work and applied social studies at the University of Bath. In my time at Swindon Carers Centre I hope to gain more experience and a better practical understanding of my future role in social work. Also, I hope this placement will help me decide which area of social work I want to work in.

Being on placement during the pandemic has been interesting, it very different to how I imagined my placement would be. So far, my experience has been very positive, I am currently shadowing practitioners and learning a lot about assessments and young carers.

In my free time I enjoy painting, attempting to learn Welsh, and most often finishing a Netflix TV show a lot faster than I should! An interesting fact about me is that I am a vegetarian and I am very slowly trying to transition to veganism.

Jess Wortley joining the Adult Carer Team on a student volunteer placement



I am an undergraduate social work student in my second year at the University of Bath. As a part of my first placement for my course I have joined the adult team at Swindon Carers Centre. I am looking forward to my time here. The knowledge and skills I will gain from this experience will

be invaluable and help me in my future career in social work. Once qualified I would like to work with adults in some way, however I am

unsure which area I would prefer at the moment. Working throughout the pandemic will be difficult, but hopefully this will provide me with a great opportunity to learn different ways of working with staff and service users and allow me to be able to adapt to different situations in the future.

Your letters, feedback and photos

Thank you Sharon for this lovely card and poem, sent just in time for National Poetry Day. Everyone at Swindon Carers Centre really enjoyed reading this.

The Tree

Rooted deep in the earth with a firm trunk and a vast amount of branches.

Home for all manner of wildlife taking their chances.

Constantly changing, its appearance depending on the season.

Home for all manner of wildlife without needing a reason.

One day when I am gone, I would like one planted for me simply because it could live for another century.

And if I could return to this planet as anything of choice, I would return as a bird with a free morning voice.

I would fly to different countries with warmer terrain – however I would always return home, just like humans on a plane.

Then I would find my dear tree and sit secure on its branch, have a good look around, maybe even do a little dance.

"Bye for now", I would chirp. "See you next time dear tree. May future generations adore you just as much as me."



We recently used funding from Zurich Community Trust to buy an oven for a family in need of some support - after their old oven broke. This is Scarlett, who is autistic and also has ARFID (Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder). She has a very limited diet, so being without an oven was difficult. We are so pleased this has made a difference and Scarlett is happy too!

This is Taya making cupcakes in a new oven also purchased for her family thanks to funding from the Zurich Community Trust. We think these cupcakes look very yummy!





Some wonderful feedback for our Adult Carer and Older Carer Team from a carer who now has 12 hours of carers relief per week in place.

"I am so grateful for all that you have done at Swindon Carers. I can't say that I have ever experienced such a good service. You have all been great, and reliable. You have always returned my calls; you have always been able to answer my queries or to find out the information I need. I wish to thank you all!"

At our staff away day in September we presented our Benefits Service Coordinator Tim Saint with a surprise Covid-19 Community Champion Award, an initiative organised by North Swindon MP Justin Tomlinson and South Swindon MP Robert Buckland to recognise local community heroes. The award was given to Tim who delivered care packages and birthday cakes to unpaid carers of all ages during lockdown. We are so lucky to have Tim on our team.

Sign up to receive our Chatterbox Newsletter!

Would you like to receive updates about events and activities for carers, fun quizzes, photos and trivia, as well as free resources to help you in your caring role?

Email carers@swindoncarers.org.uk to sign up for our monthly Chatterbox Newsletter.



Carers Rights Day goes online

Our Carers Rights Day is coming up fast! 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.

The theme for this year's Carers Rights Day is 'Know Your Rights'. We are planning an exciting range of online consultation and engagement sessions to explore this further.

Hospital discharge with Healthwatch Swindon, Great Western Hospital and Swindon Borough Council.

The Learning Disability Partnership Board: A membership forum for adults with a learning disability, their carers and professionals.

NHS support for patients and unpaid carers with Abbey Mulla, Carers Leadership Support Manager for NHS England South West.

The Carers Strategy for Swindon with Swindon Carers Centre CEO Susanna Jones and our Deputy CEO Fiona Prinzi.

Question and Answer Panel: This is a great opportunity to talk to decision makers and experts.

This year's event will be held online, on Microsoft Teams due to Covid-19

We will send you a calendar invite to your email address once you have contacted us to register for the event. To join on the day, click the link on the meeting invite and listen in. You will need to have the sound working on your computer. If you have an internet connection and web browser open, there is no need to download any software.

We will send everyone who registers a quick set of instructions and will be on hand to help with IT queries! For those without a computer, there is an option to come to Sanford House as we will be live streaming the event to a limited number of carers. This is available on a first come first served basis.

If you cannot join us, why not submit your questions to our Question and Answer Panel? Please submit your questions by email or by post ahead of the day itself, so that we can have a great discussion with our panel!

Or you can write us a letter for Carers Rights Day!

Help our decision makers and members of the public understand what it is like to be in your shoes by writing down your thoughts and experiences. This can be anonymous if you would prefer. We will share your letters during the week to raise awareness of what it is like to be an unpaid carer.



Write to: Carers Rights Day, Swindon Carers Centre, Sanford House, Sanford Street, Swindon, SN1 1HE. Or email carers@swindoncarers.org.uk.

JOIN US FOR CARERS RIGHTS DAY 2020



Carers Rights Day aims to:



- · Make carers aware of their rights
- Let carers know where to get help and support
- Raise awareness of the needs of carers

Presenters and panelists to include:

Robert Buckland QC MP and Justin Tomlinson MP
Sue Wald (Director Adult Social Services SBC)
Cllr Brian Ford (Cabinet Member Adult Health and Social Care SBC)
David Freeman (Chief Operating Officer Swindon Locality BSWCCG)
Abbey Mulla (Carer Leadership Support Manager NHS England South West)



Sign up to join this year's virtual event on

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 20TH @ 11 AM

7

Email: carers@swindoncarers.org.uk or call 07435961071

Registered Charity No: 1061116 | Registered Company No: 3305621

Don't stop me now: Singing through Covid-19

We've been really moved by videos of our Singing for Everyone Group joining together on Zoom to

continue making music throughout the pandemic. We're delighted to see that they're able to support each other as a group, and also to see a real burst of musical talent as they grow in confidence. To celebrate their achievements, we caught up with choir leader Sarah Summers.

Our fantastic choir leader Sarah, who grew up with music from an early age, is professionally trained with a degree in music and education.

The Singing for Everyone Choir at Swindon Carers Centre was the first community choir Sarah took over, alongside a choir for home educated children in the town. This was 21 months ago, after former choir leader Abby passed on leadership of the group to Sarah.

Today, members continue to meet every week rain or shine – pandemic or no pandemic – to enjoy making music together and learn how to develop their vocal talents.

Over the past few years, the Singing for Everyone Choir has taken to the stage (or the streets) at many local events, including Wroughton Carnival and Sing Out the Summer. They've also sung at Christmas concerts and visited to sing in local care homes. A real highlight for the choir was a performance at a charity event in Devizes a year ago.

Space is available for new members to join the Singing for Everyone choir, with no previous experience needed. During weekly sessions, you will have the chance to practice your singing aided by breathing and meditation techniques in a class just for carers.

"I want people to know that you don't have to be a singer to learn," Sarah told us. "One of the best things about

leading the choir is seeing people able to do things they didn't think they could. Everything they do, they seem to do with more confidence and grow in strength. Sometimes they don't realise how good they are."

"Singing is great for mental health, but I know a couple of our members have commented on how the breathing exercises have helped their overall health as well. It doesn't matter what kind

of a day you've had, you sing, and the world has been put to rights. Part of that is singing, and part of that is singing in a group. When you sing together it brings you together, it bonds you." We are proud to say that the Singing for

Everyone Choir filmed a special recording for the Carers Trust charity, of which we are a Network Partner. They held a national conference in October, and the choir recording was used to open this conference!

other.



We've still been meeting

group, but we've still

during Covid-19 on Zoom,

Sarah said. We are a smaller

managed to learn a few new

songs. They are just such a

lovely supportive bunch of

people; you can tell they are

all there for each other. Even

though the singing is not the

same on Zoom, people get

so much out of seeing each

arthritis in both knees. Eight years ago, Lisa had an operation, which caused problems with her knees. At this time, Bryn took on a bigger role supporting her with shopping and household tasks.

day, Bryn helps with the washing, hoovering, or shopping. He is also there to support with simple

During lockdown Bryn's grandad, and his nan who is disabled, came to stay with the family. As Bryn explained "my nan was at home, so I was helping

her with things as well, but my grandad could help with both my mum and my nan."

To keep busy over the summer, Bryn worked on a number of projects with his grandfather. Tasks included fixing a leaking shed roof and building a trailer so that he could tow his dog Kiki – who also has arthritis – along while going for a walk.

He said: "I've always enjoyed building things from a young age. Having to stay in with your family can be a positive thing as you build a stronger bond."

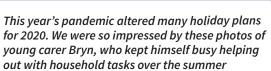
Bryn's mum Lisa told us that she is incredibly proud of him. She said: "I don't think he realises how much he does. I come home and the dishwasher has been emptied, or he will go to the cupboard, see what is missing and pop out to the shops.

"He cares a lot. I'm so proud of him, more than I could say – I really am."



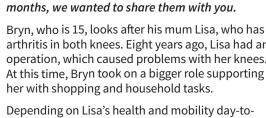






Bryn's young carer story

Caring during the pandemic:



things, like fetching her crutches if she needs them.

Take care of yourself this winter

As it gets darker and colder, it's especially important to think about staying warm and well. We know that cold weather can affect some more than others, including people over 65 or anyone with a long-term health condition. This winter, the Covid-19 pandemic will also have a huge impact on households across the country.

Get your flu vaccination

Unpaid carers of all ages are entitled to a free flu jab. Delivery of the vaccination is being staggered over the coming months, as Covid-19 is causing an increase in demand. Speak to your GP or local pharmacy to check for appointment times. Public Health is advising people to keep checking back as more appointments will become available over the coming weeks.

Get advice if you feel unwell

Covid-19 has changed the way we access some health services and appointments. However, it's important to get medical help if you think you need it and go to hospital if you're advised to. If it is suggested that you should attend a face-to-face appointment, you should be confident that this will be a safe, Covid-secure environment.

The government advice to self-isolate remains if:

- >> You have any symptoms of Covid-19
- >> You have tested positive for Covid-19
- » If you live with someone who symptoms or has tested positive
- » If you are told to self-isolate by the NHS Covid-19 app

Swindon Borough Council is providing financial support to qualifying residents on low incomes who cannot work because they have been told to self-isolate.

For more information visit www.swindon.gov.uk/testandtracesupport



Keep your home warm

If you're not very mobile, are 65 or over, or have a health condition such as heart or lung disease, the NHS recommends heating your home to at least 18C. It also suggests getting your heating system checked regularly by a qualified professional.

Warm & Safe Wiltshire

Warm & Safe Wiltshire is a Swindon Borough Council backed service offering advice and support on keeping safe and warm at home. It can help with the following:

- » Help and advice relating to insulation, heating and draught proofing
- » Available grants and schemes for energy saving measures
- » Understanding heating systems and controls
- » Warm Home Discount Scheme applications
- » Comparing gas and electricity tariffs and switching suppliers
- » Switching from prepayment to credit meters
- » Managing fuel debt and understanding fuel bills
- » Priority Services Register referrals
- » Managing issues with damp and condensation
- >> Benefit entitlement

The Warm & Safe Wiltshire advisors can check your eligibility for the £140 Warm Home Discount rebate on your electricity bill, and can help you apply for it. They can also check for any other sources of financial support including the local Surviving Winter grants. If you need home insulation improvements they can advise on all the schemes available including the new Green Homes Grants. And if you have heating problems, they will know what the options are for you.

Warm & Safe Wiltshire has also teamed up with Wales & West Utilities to offer Swindon residents free locking cooker valves. These are simple safety devices which can be fitted to existing gas cooker pipework for people who can no longer operate their cooker safely, enabling the gas supply to the cooker to be locked when not in use. The cooker can only be used under supervision, and can be locked with a key when the key holder leaves the property. This can give family members and carers peace of mind that the occupier will not come to any harm when they are alone. These valves only isolate the cooker, so gas central heating will continue working as normal.

If you are interested in finding out more about any aspect of the Warm & Safe Wiltshire service, please use these contact details:

Warm & Safe Wiltshire

https://www.warmandsafewiltshire.org.uk/ Freephone **0800 038 5722**





Fabulous fundraising efforts

Stratton Parish Council

After choosing Swindon Carers Centre as their charity of the year, Stratton Parish Council have raised an amazing £1,503.25 to support young carers in Swindon.

Councillors and parish council officers have worked hard to organise a great range of events, including a raffle, Christmas fair, and a collection at their Christmas carol concert in 2019.

Councillor Robert Jandy, Chairman of Stratton Parish Council, took early retirement last year, and instead of receiving a gift, he asked for a donation to support our young carers.

"Sometimes people don't realise what it's like to be a carer, especially a young carer", Cllr Robert told us. "Many of the caring tasks young carers do, they do it for the love of their parents – and sometimes they don't even realise that this is what they're doing".

This year' Stratton Parish Council are continuing their support, starting with a virtual Christmas market.

Cllr Robert said: "Really it's a license to be creative, to think about how we can fundraise in different ways. We have an amazing team of people at Stratton Parish Council, in terms of officers and councillors. Everyone is really pitching in and helping where they can. What has been brought out during Covid-19 is that community spirit, that's been really heart-warming."

Broome Manor Golf Club

In September, we received the fantastic news that Broome Manor Golf Club had held their Senior Captain's Day and raised over £3,000 for young carers!

After months of being unable to meet, or to fundraise for charity, members of the golf club rallied round to organise donations, as well as a raffle and silent auction.

Captain Clive Belcher decided to fundraise for young carers in Swindon after speaking to one of our amazing volunteers Gary Vilter.

He said: "To be honest it wasn't something I was aware of until then, but once I'd spoken to him I knew I wanted to add my support."

"People aren't always aware of what young carers do, so it's making them more aware and hopefully helping young carers in Swindon a bit with some money for activities and breaks. I've had a lot of people coming back and saying what a great day it was."

From our Service Delivery Manager Debbie Murphy-Myers:

"The commitment and passion shown by both Stratton Parish Council and Broome Manor Golf Club has really been truly amazing. The Young Carer Team cannot thank them enough for their fundraising efforts, particularly as the past seven months has been a difficult time for everyone. The money fundraised will help hugely to support young carers, aged 5 – 18 years, and provide vital respite and time away from their caring responsibilities through a programme of both face-to-face and virtual activities."

Young Carer/Young Adult Carer Team update

The team has been extremely busy during the past few months as schools and venues have reopened. We have started to complete young carer assessments in schools again, which has been great to be able to see young carers face-to-face.

We had 209 young carers attend activities in August, which given the current Covid-19 restraints, was a fantastic number! We are really looking forward to our October half-term activities, which includes bowling, trampolining, pumpkin carving at Roves Farm, rock climbing and more.

Unfortunately, our young carer term-time groups have not been able to restart this term as our usual venues are not available for use by the team yet. Instead, the team are busy planning monthly activities for those who usually attend group. Information on group activities booked in October has been sent to parents/carers. These will include a Halloween themed arts and crafts session at Christchurch, and a visit to a local pizza restaurant. If you are a parent, please keep an eye out for updates for upcoming events and group activities.

YAC Chat, our new groups sessions for young adult carers aged 15 to 17 started in July, and so far they have enjoyed a virtual movie night and meal out. *Contact Georgia Robbins on 01793 975332 if you would like to join.*

Parent Carer Team update

The Parent Carer team have been very busy these past few months, registering parent carers, providing emotional support and advice, and organising several social events.

Following the success of our first comedy night in September, our parent carers have another comedy evening coming up in November at the MECA. Parent carers have also enjoyed afternoon teas at Stanton House and Blunsdon House during October, which has been a real treat for those who were able to attend. The PC team are hoping to raise more funds to enable these much-needed breaks to continue.

We have also started a fortnightly PC coffee morning via Zoom, which is open to all newly registered parent carers. *Please contact us for further details on 01793 401094.*

The PC Team are experiencing a high volume of referrals and requests for support, particularly since Covid-19, so please bear with us!



Thank you so much. I had no idea what was available out there, no one tells you. I have got more information in the last hour than I have been given to me in the last 5 years of trying to get help and support.

PC feedback following assessment

Thank you so much, you're the first people they have seen outside of our house since lockdown started, and really needed this break. Parent of YC following an activity



Hello from the Groups and Activities Team!

In these unprecedented times, we are still striving to offer a range of events to you, working

strictly within government guidelines. Please see the 'What's On' form for January to March 2021 enclosed within this newsletter.

Over the summer months, we met with carers in outdoor spaces. However, with the weather changing, we are pleased to have found some indoor venues where we can meet safely and socially distance.

At one of our recent events, we had a visit from a poet, Liz McDermott, who read some of her published poems. Then our carers had a go! Here is one of their poems:

There is an old man called Tom And he goes on and on! His socks, they are red He wears them to bed And in the morning, oh, do they pong!

Reen also told us about reciting the following poem to her teacher, back in the 1940s. She got into a lot of trouble and was sent to the 'naughty corner!'

My teacher is a funny one With a face like a pickled onion A nose like a squashed tomato And legs like two sticks!



Swindon Carers Centre is constantly reviewing services, to try and meet the needs of our carers, and we welcome any new ideas or feedback. We are looking to include more events for parent carers and young adult carers in the future.

We have been very grateful to receive funding from Wiltshire Community Fund, aiming to reduce loneliness and isolation for bereaved carers. We are also supported by the Zurich Community Trust fund, and our major supermarkets who offer cakes and refreshments for carer birthdays and events.

Stay safe and well,

Heather, Judy, Cat and Zoe.

Thank you to those who joined us for our Swindon Carers Big Quiz Night In! This was such a fun evening led by our Deputy CEO Fiona Prinzi and Schools Development Manager Ann Giles, who are also members of our Aspire Fundraising Team.

Coming soon: Our Christmas raffle!

Look out for details of our Christmas Raffle

on social media. This will also be advertised at our carer events. We hope you will join us in some festive fundraising with plenty of great prizes to be won.

New date for our Charity Race Night

Our Race Night at Broome Manor Golf Club was originally booked for Friday November 20th, 2020. This has now been postponed to March 19th, 2021, due to Covid-19.

Our Adult and Older Carer Service

The Adult and Older Carer Team has seen an increase in referrals again, coinciding with the end of national lockdown measures first imposed in March. Please bear with us during these extremely busy times. Our priority is to support you in your caring roles as quickly as we can. From July to September, 92 per cent of carers receiving a care assessment review reported they were more aware of the support available to them, and able to access services they might not have otherwise. We're also happy to hear that 85 per cent of carers who had a review said that they could better balance their caring role to protect their own health and wellbeing. If you would appreciate some advice and support, please call the team on (01793) 401090.

Our Emergency Card Scheme is available to all registered carers over of the age of 18. Creating an emergency plan helps you to think ahead, detailing what you'd like to happen if you're unable to continue your caring role due to an accident or emergency. When you complete your plan, you'll receive a card with a telephone number and unique reference number. In an emergency anyone with the card can call the phone line quoting this number. The call handlers will then ensure your emergency plan is put in place.

Meet the team



Angela Emergency Card Scheme Administrator

I have now worked for SCC for years. I started on a temporary 6-month contract registering our new carers. I was then offered another 6-month contract as our registration list was so large. After this, I took over the Emergency Card administration permanently.

I love doing the job I do, and it ties in with my previous roles as a paid care worker in a home and out in the community. My experience here helps me to

complete peoples' Emergency Card plans and ask those awkward questions that make all the difference in an emergency situation!

Out of work I have started making my own clothes again, I love scrapbooking and making my own cards. I enjoy going away in my caravan and hope next year will be better so we can visit more places on my weekends off! Lastly, I have 4 grandchildren and love spending time with them all.

To request an emergency card, contact Angela by e-mailing angela.walklate@swindoncarers.org.uk or calling 01793 975333.



Chris Service Delivery Administrator

I found my role at Swindon Carers Centre through a recruitment agency in September 2017, and now I'm a permanent staff member. I'm the first contact for the referrals for new carers, ensuring all details are correct to be added to our registration list for the Adult and Parent Carer Teams.

I also take calls for the Adult Carers Team. If I'm able to help I do, and if not I pass people onto our Carers Support Line. I really enjoy seeing how much we

help our carers from the moment they are registered and throughout their caring journey.

I am a nanny to five grandchildren, who keep me busy. They are aged 12, 10, 8, 4, and 2! I share an allotment with two of my sisters Eileen and Margi which I love, it is our little paradise.



Newsletter Winter 2020

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

Registered charity number: 1061116 Registered company number: 3305621

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









