

Caring Matters

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From our CEO – Susanna Jones



It's been another busy few months at Swindon Carers Centre, including a very successful Carers Week (more information on page 6), welcoming new talent and expertise to our team (page 2) and our Annual General Meeting (page 9) which reflected on some of the achievements and challenges of the 2020-2021 financial year.

Our new Annual Report has been published and I'd like to thank our Media and Communications Officer, Anne Saunders, for all the hard work she has put into it. She has also recently evaluated the 302 responses to our recent Communications Survey. Thank you to all carers who took the time to complete it. It was really interesting to see the results and we are using the feedback to further develop the ways we share information with carers.

It's always vitally important to ensure carer feedback and expertise helps shape our services and informs commissioning decisions. There are several opportunities coming up for carers to be involved in this. Our annual Carers Rights Day event takes place in late November (details on page 10) and that always includes a Question-and-Answer session with health and social care leaders. We are also in the process of reviewing and updating the Carers Strategy for Swindon with Swindon Borough Council and some carer consultation is on the way for that. Swindon's Falls and Bone Health Collaborative is looking for patient/carer engagement as well - see page 11 for ways to be involved.

As I write, we are in the middle of a very hot spell, and it's been so nice to see some of the photos of recent carer events and face-to-face activities. All Government lockdown restrictions have recently been lifted, but we at SCC continue to be very mindful of rising Covid-19 levels at the moment, and in order to keep our events as safe as possible for carers, staff and volunteers, will be keeping some of the safety measures introduced over the past 18 months. I know you will understand how important this is and thank you for your continued support with it.

Swindon Carers Centre Support us on social media!



Twitter: @SwindonCarers



Facebook: www.facebook.com/swindoncarerscentre



Instagram: Search for 'swindoncarers'

Cover image: Lynda and Carol on a visit to gardens at The Old Rectory, organised for our carers with the help of the Carers Trust

A warm welcome to:



Isabel Tate

Parent Carer Support Practitioner

Hello, I joined Swindon Carers Centre at the beginning of June. I have really enjoyed my settling in period. There is always a lot to learn when starting a new job, but the support and welcome I have received from my colleagues has been amazing and I already feel like a part of the team. I have been so impressed by the carers that I have engaged with both face-to-face and over the phone. They are all providing such care, love, and support to their children, often in challenging circumstances. I feel passionately that carers should get the recognition and support they deserve. I have come from the Early Years Sector where I worked as a SENCO - special educational needs coordinator for nine years. I was drawn to this role because it enables me to make use of all my qualifications and previous work experience in one role. I hope that I will be able to play some small part in improving the wellbeing of parent carers in the Swindon area and I look forward to meeting many more of you in the near future.



Alice Godfrey

Adult Carer Support Practitioner

I am excited to have started working at Swindon Carers Centre. Already, I am observing the positive impact that this charity has on unpaid carers in Swindon. The charity has truly wonderful values, goals and a clear person-centred mission, which is particularly evident when practitioners work collaboratively with carers and other professionals. It is quite incredible to see what individualistic services/support groups are facilitated and managed by Swindon Carers Centre. I really have been blown away by all the charity has to offer. All of the team at Swindon Carers Centre have been so kind, warm and welcoming. I am excited to develop new skills, enhance my knowledge and learn from other staff and carers. I am very much looking forward to this new professional journey!



50:50 Lottery Club

Our fantastic 50:50 Lottery Club members raised £2,632 for Swindon Carers Centre between April 2020 to March 2021. We would like to say a big thank you to all members for their loyalty and continued support. The 50:50 Lottery Club raises money to enable us to support carers. It is called the 50:50 club as half of all proceeds raised each month are allocated to Swindon Carers Centre. The other half is retained as the prize fund to be won by club members.

If you would like to join, please phone 01793 531133 or email carers@swindoncarers.org.uk. You can also visit www.swindoncarers.org.uk/5050-lottery-club/.

Trips out: Our favourite moments and photos



Who arrgghh the members of this swashbuckling pirate crew? If you take a good look, you will recognise members of our Singing for Everyone Choir underneath the pirate disguises. What a brilliant picture!



Email or print: What would you prefer?

Please take a look at our latest What's On programme at the back of this newsletter. This exciting list of events and activities is created by our Adult Carer Groups and Activities Team. We hope there is plenty to inspire you to choose an activity (or several!) and send your form back. We are now giving our carers the option to receive BOTH our Caring Matters Newsletter and the What's On programme by email. This will be as one email, with links to click and view both documents. If you would like this, please let us know. **You can either tick the box on the back page of this latest What's On programme (and return it in the post) or email acgroups@swindoncarers.org.uk.**



Congratulations to UTC Swindon for achieving our Young Carer Champion Award! Ann Giles, our Schools Development Manager, met Hollie Danby (Assistant Principal and YC Lead) and the Principal Jon Oliver to hand over the award and say a huge well done for all the work they're doing to support young carers.

What could be better than a trip to the seaside with friends? Heather and Cat, from our Adult Carer Groups and Activities Team, and our volunteer Roy enjoyed taking our carers on a coach trip to Weston-Super-Mare. Thank you to Wiltshire Community Foundation for funding a coach for our PATH Group to attend, with a grant to support bereaved carers, reducing isolation and loneliness and nurturing new friendships.

These brilliant photos were taken at our recent family focus event, held at Hope Nature Centre, Trowbridge.



Carers Week 2021

We are delighted to announce a fundraising total of £1,666.25 for Carers Week. A huge thank you to all our supporters who donated and completed our Walk A Mile event. We are especially grateful to Pebley Beach Hyundai & Suzuki Swindon who more than doubled our fundraising tally, offering to give the entire £1,000 promised.



SCC's Ann Giles with Pebley Beach Managing Director Dominic Threlfall



Pupils at Haydon Wick Primary School completing their Walk A Mile



Our Singing for Everyone Choir met for an informal sing outside.

This was a key week for us to raise awareness of unpaid carers, helping to ensure that carers are recognised, valued and supported. We would also like to say a big thank you to all our carers who shared their experiences with us, and to BBC Wiltshire Radio who gave us dedicated air time for a different carer interview each day during Carers Week.



Members of our Carers Cuppa celebrate with cake over Zoom.

Paul's story for Carers Week 2021

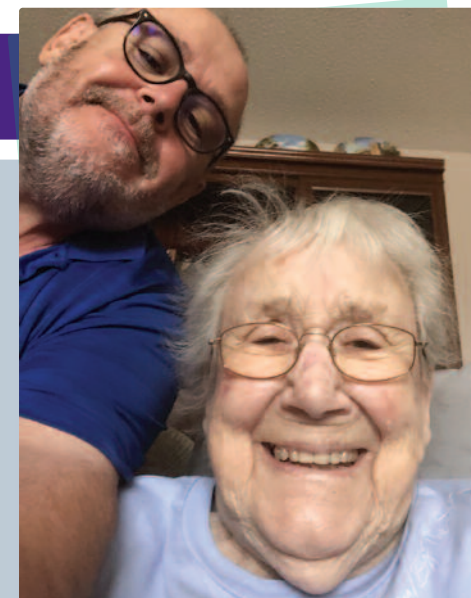
Paul's story

I am a full-time caregiver for my mum, she has dementia and corticobasal syndrome.

Swindon Carers Centre is invaluable. When I became my mother's carer, I had no idea of what, when, and whom to turn to! The information and direction given has been extremely helpful, from patient care to advice on available funding for both the caregiver and patient, to social contacts.

The social gatherings and Zoom meetings throughout the pandemic have been a saving grace for me personally. Something as simple as meeting up and just chatting gives me, the caregiver, something to look forward to and a much-needed rest.

The ability to meet others and realize you are not alone... to hear and seek advice from other carers is something I probably would



not have done without help from Swindon Carers Centre. Simple things such as a quiz night can become the highlight of the week.

I have nothing but great admiration for all the help and ongoing support from all of you. Thank you so much!

Celebrating a special journey through school for Hannah

Hannah's story

Attending your school prom is a big moment for most teenagers, but for Kingsdown School pupil Hannah and her family, this moment was particularly special.

Hannah, 16, has Down's syndrome and other medical needs. For mum Maria, her dad Hipolito and her brothers Hans and Hew, who dote on her, this milestone – representing successful completion of her secondary education – is the result of Hannah's determination to achieve, and a reflection of the outstanding support she has been given along the way.

To celebrate Hannah's prom on Friday July 9th, family and friends, who have supported Hannah on her journey so far, were there to wave her on her way to her prom night from the family home.

Swindon Carers Centre supports Maria and Hipolito as parent carers for Hannah, and we were delighted to play a part in this special evening by organising her transport to the prom at Kingsdown School.



Steve, our volunteer, was there (along with Lorraine, Parent Carer Support Practitioner at Swindon Carers Centre) to pick Hannah up and grant her wish of arriving at her prom night on the back of a motorbike.

Our AGM: Reflecting back on our key achievements.

In a year where Covid-19 has created unprecedented challenges (as well as the opportunity to try new ways of delivering services and activities) we are proud of everything that we have achieved as a charity. Our AGM, held via Zoom on July 20th, was a chance to summarise and celebrate this.

We have recorded the meeting, so anyone who could not attend can still watch it. This is available on our YouTube channel. Please enter 'Swindon Carers Centre SCC' in the search bar.

If you would like the link sent to you, please email carers@swindoncarers.org.uk.

Here are just a few of our key highlights:

2,154 carers in total were supported by teams across Swindon Carers Centre

We received record number of calls to our Carers Support Line. A total of **1,249** carers got in touch this year **3,533** times

Our Welfare and Benefits Service secured **£280,424** in benefits and allowances for carers in Swindon this year

We guided carers to **151** organisations, websites and self-help groups demonstrating a wealth of local contacts and networking expertise

218 new Emergency Card Schemes were completed for carers, as well as a further review of **27** plans completed previously

We received **158** parent carer referrals for assessment, a **42%** increase on the previous year

595 young carers attended groups and activities, giving them a break from their caring role

Young carers achieved **32** AQA units with the exam board AQA as part of our AQA Champion Award for schools and young carers

Our Adult Carer Groups and Activities Team worked creatively to revamp and continued planned programmes, offering a mixture of face-to-face and online options depending on changing Covid-19 guidelines. **100%** of carers taking part said they had benefitted from a short break from their caring role

Our annual report is now available to view at: www.swindoncarers.org.uk/annual-report-2020-2021/

This year, we have trialled a new digital format so that you can flick through information, view picture galleries and play videos. Please let us know what you think!

Carers Rights Day: Please save the date



This year, we will be holding Carers Rights Day on Friday November 26th

Whether you are a new carer or have been caring for someone for a while, it is important that you understand your rights and are able to access the support that is available to you as soon as you need it.

This national day exists to:

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

Swindon Carers Centre will be marking this day with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. We know that over the past year, many of our carers have felt the effects of isolation, poor mental health and increased financial hardship.

Carers Rights Day presents an opportunity to highlight this and facilitate a discussion

between carers and health and social care professionals attending. Last year's event was also attended by both Swindon MPs. Depending on Covid-19 guidelines, we hope this will be able to take place face-to-face.

Please get in touch with us if:

- » You are interested in attending and would like further details nearer the time.
- » You would like to share your feedback and ideas to inform planning for this event.
- » You would like to share your experience on the topic of mental health as a carer, for a carer story to be published as part of Carers Rights Day.

You can either email

carers@swindoncarers.org.uk or phone our Media & Communications Officer Anne Saunders on 07435 961071.

Launching Singing for the Brain

Singing is such a joyful activity, a wonderful way to express emotion and feel a connection with others. This is especially true when a person is living with dementia. While some parts of the brain which store certain types of memory may be affected, often people are still able to respond to music and even sing words to songs which, ordinarily, they couldn't recall. Being able to participate in singing can be uplifting for the person living with dementia and those caring for them, giving them something fun to do together.

With these benefits in mind, Judy Evans and Cat Attewell at Swindon Carers Centre have become trained through the Alzheimer's Society to deliver Singing for the Brain sessions. We are also working in partnership with Home Instead's Rachel Jannaway Nadia El-Hamchaoui, who will be involved in delivering some join sessions.

The 1st partnership session is due to launch on September 14th, 10.30 to 11.30pm at Meadowcroft Community Centre, and the 1st Swindon Carers Centre session will be a fortnight later on September 28th. There will then be a Singing for the Brain session every fortnight.

We are very mindful of the guidance for indoor singing activities, but we are hopeful that with full adherence to the safety measures such as good ventilation, and subject to no further changes to the government rules, we will be able to go ahead. **You must book before attending a session. Please contact Cat at Catherine.attewell@swindoncarers.org.uk**

Carers Strategy – Have your say!

We are in the third year of the Carers Strategy for Swindon and in the process of reviewing and refreshing it. This work will involve some carer consultation over the coming months. If you would like to be involved, please contact carers@swindoncarers.org.uk



Carers Strategy for Swindon summary 2020 - 2021

Please note the full 3 year strategy -

*www.swindoncarers.org.uk/get-involved/carers-strategy-for-swindon/
also includes outcomes for 2018-19, 2019-2020*



Vision: Creating a community where carers are recognised, valued and supported

Carers Strategy will benchmark against 5 outcomes for carers:

- Carers have improved physical health, mental health and wellbeing
- Carers influence services
- Carers can make choices about their caring role and access appropriate inclusive support and services for themselves and the people they care for
- Carers' needs, and the value of carers, are better understood across health, social care, education and employment in Swindon
- Carers can access advice and support to ensure their financial situation is the best it can be, meaning they are less worried about money

We will achieve this by:

- The number of carers registered is increasing year on year as more carers are identified
- Ensuring hard to reach carers (e.g. older, male carers and carers from protected groups) influence service development
- Carers have been enabled to access technological solutions should they wish to
- The number of employed carers accessing carer support services has increased
- All carers who need specialist advice and case management relating to benefits, debt and money management have been able to access this



Falls Prevention – can you help?

Bath Swindon Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group, in collaboration with Public Health, Swindon Borough Council and other healthcare providers in Swindon have refocused the aims of the Falls and Bone Health Collaborative group. The aims of this group are to promote people becoming more active thus increasing mobility, becoming more independent and have an improved quality of life for older people in Swindon. We are open to anyone who would like to join the group, to support the aims of the group and may have new and innovative ideas to make improvements. This group meets on a quarterly basis and currently we meet virtually, however there is potential to meet face-to-face once the restrictions permit. **Please contact jacqueline.kell@nhs.net for more information.**

Results from our communications survey

We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who replied to our communications survey, sent out with the spring issue of our Caring Matters Newsletter at beginning of 2021. An amazing 302 people sent their replies back in the post, which has been hugely helpful for us.

Who answered the survey?

- » 75% of people said they were adult carers, 13% were parent carers and we also heard from a smaller proportion of young carers and bereaved carers registered with us.
- » We received a high rate of replies (77%) from carers over the age of 50.
- » Most survey respondents (56%) have been registered with Swindon Carers Centre between one to five years.

What did we learn?

- » Access to technology and the ability to go online continues to be an important consideration when planning communications and events.
- » 89% of people have the internet, and 86% of people can access a tablet or computer. However, not everyone feels positive about using this technology. 34% of people said they were 'not very' confident when it comes to accessing information online.
- » Our Caring Matters Newsletter continues to be a good way for carers to keep up to date with us. Many of you are also enjoying our Chatterbox Newsletter.
- » 31% of survey respondents said they find our communication channels 'very useful' and 61% said they were 'useful'.
- » There is still a high preference for receiving information by print, with email showing as the second preferred method of communication.

Thank you for your feedback

We asked our survey respondents how they would rate communications from Swindon Carers Centre overall and were delighted to hear that 95% of you thought this was either 'excellent' or 'good'. All of your comments and feedback have been shared with the Swindon Carers Centre team and trustee board and will help guide us as we make decisions on how best to communicate with our registered carers going forwards. The time taken to fill out this survey is hugely appreciated.

Your feedback:

Difficult times, but lovely to receive the Caring Matters Newsletter and read about the good things that have been happening.

You always help me resolve problems whenever I call. Very friendly voices on the phone make all the difference, thank you.

I feel well supported with advice and support from knowledgeable, caring people.

Caring can be lonely. The groups make you feel that you are not alone. During Covid-19 the groups have moved online, so that connection is still there.

I know through the online site and the Caring Matters Newsletter that I can access support almost immediately.

From our Young Carer and Parent Carers Team

Summer holiday activities

Our Young Carers Team has an exciting programme of activities planned during the school break. These include a trip to Chessington World of Adventures, AquaVenture at Cotswold Country Park and Beach, Cotswold Wildlife Park, 4 Kingdoms Adventure Park and Go Ape. Young carers will also have the opportunity to visit West Midlands Safari Park, take part in a Harry Potter studio tour, a movie afternoon and enjoy a day out at Weston-Super-Mare.

Carer referrals

Both the Young Carer and Parent Carer Teams are receiving a high volume of requests for support and are working hard to make initial contact with carers as soon as possible.

New forum logo

It is official! Swindon Young Carers Forum would like to share their new logo with you. Look out for our forum members at young carer activities, groups for Swindon Carers Centre and at community events.



A fun day out on the forest Segway trail at Go Ape



The Young Carer and Parent Carer Team catch up for an away day



Our young carers enjoy Chloe's Mobile Farm

Update from the Groups and Activities team

It has been wonderful to be able to resume face-to-face events with our carers, adhering to Covid-19 safety measures of course.

We will continue to offer some sessions virtually via Zoom too, as this is a preferred way of joining in for some of our carers. At a recent journaling session, we did both at the same time!

Within this Caring Matters newsletter is our 'What's On' form for Oct-Dec 2021. As we are writing this article in July, it seems strange to be talking about Christmas in this 30 plus degree heat with the fan on! When you get chance, please complete and return the form to us with your preferences.

Some of our recent events have included an evening quiz at The Manor Pub and a ladies pamper morning. Trevor Howard also performed at our Open Minds Group and got people up and dancing!

Our arts and crafts group have been producing some lovely items, creating bags, felting, mosaic coasters.

We re-launched our dementia group in July. Carers were able to meet and chat, gaining support and information in one room. The person they support living with dementia engaged in activities with trained caregivers.



Our Cat has been doing some great work to engage more 18 to 30-year-old carers, inviting people to meet together for friendship and support.

Cat started during lockdown with Zoom

meetings, but since restrictions have lifted, we have held a Nando's meal event and got to know one another well.

In July we held a picnic at Lydiard Park and Asda kindly donated the food items. Thank you Asda!



Instead of the YACs (Young Adult Carers) the group will now be called the Our Time Group, with the main purpose being to have a chance to socialise with others of their age group who understand the joys and challenges of caring responsibilities.

The Our Time Group meets monthly and plan to meet at the West Swindon Complex next.

If you are a carer between 18 to 30 years of age, please contact Cat Attewell on 07912 594238 who will be happy to invite you to the group.

Two members of the group recently agreed to feature in a film which masters students at the University of Bath have produced to highlight the caring responsibilities of carers in this age group.

Our Chatterbox Newsletter is continuing to be a success. If you do not yet receive a copy and would like to, please get in touch. We love to hear from you with content for the next newsletter.

If you have any questions about groups and activities, please do not hesitate to contact us - our details are on the enclosed 'What's On' form.

*Stay safe and well,
Heather, Cat, Zoe and Judy*

From our Adult and Older Carer Team

A fond farewell to...

Angela Walklate, our Emergency Card Scheme Administrator who retired recently, and Mark Burton, Adult Carer Support Practitioner. Here they are receiving their cards and leaving presents, a small token of appreciation for all their hard work and dedication.



Welcome to...

Carla Hillier and Alice Godfrey, our new full-time Adult Carer Support Practitioners. With Angela retiring, we have also recruited internally for the post of Emergency Card Scheme Administrator. We are delighted to welcome Nick Precious to the staff team - who has already made an impact to our work at Swindon Carers Centre in his previous position as Welfare and Benefits Volunteer.

New registration document

We have continued to tweak our processes and paperwork. The new registration documentation named 'Initial carer conversation' or 'ICC' appears to be working well. It has helped us reduce our registration waiting times, making sure carers are able to access our services much quicker.

Receiving a Carer's Assessment

Remember, all adult and older carers are entitled to one of these under the Care Act. Instead of being called a 'Carer's Assessment', we have worked in conjunction with the Swindon Borough Council Social Service Team and our commissioners to update this document, so it is more carer-led. The assessment will look at the strengths you have as a carer, what can be done to support you with this, and any outcomes you feel would make a difference to your caring role. This document is now called a Carers Conversation (Care Act).

Out and about

Our Health and Social Care Liaison Officer (HSCLO) Tanya has now started to do more face-to-face outreach and has recently started to attend the carers' cafe at the GWH again. As a team we have also been doing a lot of joint working with Adult Social Services teams and the Adult Safeguarding Team, the Admiral nurses at GWH and the Alzheimer's society in Swindon too.

Please as always bear with us when you need our support. We will get to you as soon as possible whether that is via the Emergency Card Scheme, Carers Support Line (CSL), or if you are on our 1:1 list. As always if you need us for anything to do with your caring role, please call our Carers Support Line and do so as early as possible.

Finally, if we support you in any way, please try and find the time to look at our feedback forms. If easier, you can do this over the phone. Feedback enables us to inform ourselves, the carers, as well as partner organisations, trustees, and our commissioners of the work we are doing. It also enables us to follow up with further ways to help you.

Thank you, Stuart and the Adult Carer Support Team

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**
- » **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

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Visit our website www.swindoncarers.org.uk

