

# Caring Matters



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## From our CEO – Susanna Jones

It's been another extremely busy winter at Swindon Carers Centre. The rise in Covid-19 cases in Swindon meant we had to move our Carers Rights Day event online from being a face-to-face meeting, which we were disappointed about. However, more than 70 people were still able to attend.

They had an opportunity to question health and social care leaders, and to hear about provision to support the mental health of carers and the person they care for. You can read more on page 10.

Our Groups and Activities teams have also had to adapt provision of events over the last couple of months, but have done a great job in making sure our carers can still get a break from their caring role. You can find out more on page 14 about all the different Christmas activities they have been able to provide.

Employer support for staff who have a caring role has never been so important. We work with organisations to enable them to ensure employees who are working carers can feel valued and supported in their jobs. Congratulations to Swindon SEND Families Voice who are the latest recipients of our Employer Award. All the details on page 5.

And ensuring Carer Voice is prevalent across all we do remains a key strategic aim for us. Ana's story on page 12 is a reminder of the complexity of the roles carers undertake. Thank you Ana for sharing your experiences with us!

As we move into Spring and get ready for Young Carers Action Day in March, then Carers Week later in the year in June, we will continue to work hard to raise awareness of the vitally important roles carers play in our community. I'd also like to thank our team of dedicated staff, volunteers and trustees for their ongoing hard work and passionate commitment too.

## Swindon Carers Centre Support us on social media!



Twitter: @SwindonCarers



Facebook: [www.facebook.com/swindoncarerscentre](https://www.facebook.com/swindoncarerscentre)



Instagram: Search for 'swindoncarers'

*Cover image: Sarah and Alison, from Swindon SEND Families Voice, receiving our Employers Care Award.*



## A warm welcome to:



### Steve Webb

Young Carer Support Practitioner

I am really enjoying my role at Swindon Carers Centre. I have been impressed with the friendliness of staff, peoples' commitment to their roles, and the amount of support offered not only to employees but to young carers. It has been extremely rewarding working with these young people so far. I previously worked in SEND education where I trained as a Thrive practitioner. I was drawn to this role due to my passion for helping others. I feel I can learn a lot from and offer a lot to our young carers – I look forward to my professional journey with SCC!



### Claudia Oliveira

Young Carer Support Practitioner

Hello, I started working with Swindon Carers Centre in November 2021. I have really enjoyed settling in, everyone on the SCC team has been amazing and so welcoming. Nothing is ever too much. They all made me feel so comfortable from the very first day. This charity goes above and beyond to support young/ young adult carers and I'm so proud to be part of an organisation where people have so much passion for what they do. The difference it makes to these carers' lives is incredible. I look forward to developing my knowledge further at Swindon Carers Centre.



### Amy Cadman

Adult Carer Support Practitioner

I started my role at Swindon Carers Centre at the beginning of November 2021 and have been blown away by the overwhelming support and encouragement from all the staff and volunteers. Everyone here is completely dedicated to improving the wellbeing of carers in Swindon. I came to Swindon after living in Cardiff for 4 years, working in healthcare, and saw first-hand the impact proper support can have on individuals and families. I am excited to keep learning and developing my professional skills and will hopefully get the chance to meet more of you to face-to-face in the future!



## Your cards, feedback and photos

Aren't these fantastic? Year 4 students at Covingham Primary School spent time making Christmas cards for our young carers.



Young carers at Wanborough Primary School enjoyed a Christmas party with crackers, games, hats, snacks, presents. Well done to staff at the school for organising a brilliant event!



### Congratulations to our Christmas raffle winners!

We had a busy time delivering raffle prizes to our lucky winners. These included a hotel break, gift vouchers, hampers, pamper kits and edible goodies. Thank you to everyone who supported our raffle, which raised £180. Your kind donations will make a big difference.



Huge congratulations to **Swindon SEND Families Voice**, who have completed our Swindon Employers Care Award. They told us that "we are all carers for someone, so we all recognise the importance of additional support for carers." What a fantastic team, and a well-deserved recipient of this award.



The Swindon Carers Centre team enjoyed reading your cards and messages for Christmas. Thank you for taking the time to send your feedback, best wishes and thanks. It really does make our day!

*We would love to send Christmas greetings to you and all the Swindon Carers Team. You all do such an amazing job with all the activities, help and support that you give. We really appreciate everything you have done, a very big thank you from us both.*

*I am telling everyone about Swindon Carers Centre, I know you can't fix everything but just to know that you are there is priceless.*

*I just wanted to text and say thank you for today. He had a brilliant time and has swapped numbers with some other young carers. Thank you for all you do for him and us.*

# Young Carers Action Day Campaign

## Add your voice to our Young Carers Action Day campaign

**Young Carers Action Day, led by the Carers Trust, takes place on March 16th, 2022. Every day across the UK, thousands of young people help to look after someone in their family or a friend, who is ill, disabled, or who has a mental health problem or addiction.**

Young carers often experience higher levels of loneliness or social isolation as a result of their caring role. If you're a young carer you may not feel comfortable talking about your caring role with friends, and you may not have the time to spend participating in social activities because this takes priority over spending time with your peers.

This year's theme for Young Carers Action Day is **taking action on isolation**. As part of this day, we're asking people to see who is missing out because they are a young or

young adult carer. This could be social opportunities, school lessons or free time to develop a hobby or interest.

*As part of this day, we'll be highlighting why it's important to:*

- » Give young carers a break so that they have time away from their caring role.
- » Support young carers in school, making teachers and pupils aware of what it means to be a young carer and the additional responsibilities this brings.
- » Reach out to young people who might not realise that they are a young carer, so that they can access the right support and advice.

that's made a difference to you as a young carer, let us know.

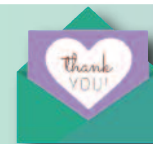
- » **Ask for action to fix a problem.** Do you think there's something that needs to change so that young carers can be better supported? Write your ideas down and share them with us.
- » **What helps you take a break?** Do you enjoy playing football with your friends, or time out playing a computer game? Write about, or draw a picture of something you enjoy doing for yourself.



## We want to hear from as many of our young carers as possible

The more letters and drawings we get, the better! All of your thoughts, experiences and ideas will help us to increase awareness for Young Carers Action Day on March 16th. Please send your letters or your artwork to Anne Saunders, Media and Communications Manager, by Friday March 11th.

**You can email [anne.saunders@swindoncarers.org.uk](mailto:anne.saunders@swindoncarers.org.uk) or post your contribution to Swindon Carers Centre, Sanford House, Sanford Street, Swindon, SN1 1HE.** Please mark all post with the words 'Young Carers Action Day'. We are looking forward to hearing from you!



**We're so pleased to have Sheri Harvey fundraising for our young carers! Sheri works full-time, competes in pageants and is the winner of Miss Atlantic 2020/21. She's also a carer herself. Sheri became a young carer at four-years-old and continues to care for her family today. She's made it her mission to educate others about being a carer and has set up her own website to do so. We'd like to say a big thank you for everything Sheri is doing to raise awareness and support for young carers. Go to: [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Sheri-Harvey8](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Sheri-Harvey8)**

## Do you support someone living with a mental health condition?

We would like to invite you to join our monthly meeting.

**When:** 3rd Thursday evening every month, 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

**Where:** Sanford House, Sanford Street, SN1 1HE.

Please note that entry will be via the back door, opposite the Shopmobility cabin and you can park free of charge in the carpark while you attend the meeting.

### What is the meeting about?

- » An opportunity to meet other carers
- » To gain information, advice and support
- » Let's gather your voices to influence change for yourselves and the person you care for
- » You can help shape the group to meet the needs of other carers. Tell us what would be helpful!

### Who will be at the meeting?

Our Senior Groups & Activities Coordinator Heather, as well as Ivor Bermingham, Service User & Care Involvement Coordinator for Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership. For each meeting we will invite an influential guest. This could be a local MP, Mental Health Lead at Wiltshire Police, Healthwatch, our CEO or our Health and Social Care Liaison Officer.

Please note that we have a different group available if you are caring for someone with dementia.

**If you would like to come along, please contact Heather at Swindon Carers Centre on 07841 503849 or email [heather.goldsmith@swindoncarers.org.uk](mailto:heather.goldsmith@swindoncarers.org.uk)**

## Can you help us with our campaign?

We need your help to spread the word! If you're a young carer or young adult carer, we're inviting you to write a short letter or create a piece of artwork inspired by the theme taking action on isolation. These will be shared on social media, on our website and with local decision makers.

*Here are just a few ideas:*

- » **Share something good.** Do you have a young carer club at school? Perhaps you've made a friend through one of our groups or activities? If there's something



## Our new Senior Leadership Team

We're looking forward to 2022 with a new Senior Leadership Team. Following a structural review in September 2021 we are building our team across the organisation to meet capacity needs and have appointed new members of the SLT to be reflective of the way we have grown (and continue to grow) as an organisation across all service areas, as we respond to a rising number of carer referrals and requests for support. In addition to our CEO, Susanna Jones, and

Finance Director, Suzanne Hunt, we now also have: Head of Service Delivery Adults and Older Carers, Stuart Ilbury, Head of Service Delivery Parent Carers and Young Carers, Debbie Murphy-Myers, Head of Resources, Bronte Hauge, and Head of Business Development, Ruth Larkin. Our Senior Leadership Team is always open to hearing your feedback, suggestions and experiences.

**To contact the team, please email [info@swindoncarers.org.uk](mailto:info@swindoncarers.org.uk).**



### Debbie Murphy-Myers

Head of Service Delivery - Young Carers and Parent Carers

I have worked for Swindon Carers Centre for 8 years, starting as a Support Practitioner in the Young Carer and Parent Carer teams for four years, then I became Service Delivery Manager in January 2018. I have since been promoted to Head of Service Delivery for Young Carers and Parent Carers. As well as overseeing service delivery, I am Safeguarding Lead for Children and Young People, and am a member of the Safeguarding Partnership Board in Swindon. I am also the Inclusion

Lead within SCC and have a real passion for promoting equality and diversity, as well as good mental health, for both carers and staff.

I am extremely proud of the work my team do to support carers in Swindon, how close we work together and how we also support each other. Outside of work I am a mum to my 10-year-old daughter, who is my world and I enjoy nothing better than spending time with her and my husband. I also enjoy kickboxing classes, real-life crime documentaries and venturing out to new places.



### Bronte Hauge

Head of Resources

I have worked for Swindon Carers Centre since May 2016 and have had various roles including Temporary Emergency Card Scheme Administrator, Service Delivery Administrator, Senior Carer Support Administrator, and Resources Manager, to now Head of Resources and part of the Senior Leadership Team. During this time and throughout these roles, I have learnt a great deal about the organisation and carers alike and enjoy working closely with all members of the team.

I'm excited to bring both my methodical and creative thinking to the Senior Leadership Team and look forward to learning even more!



### Ruth Larkin

Head of Business Development

I joined Swindon Carers Centre last year and am now taking on a new role as the Head of Business Development with a focus on income generation. I've worked in the charity sector for 25 years working with large and small organisations and covering a range of causes including international development, environmental issues, and disabilities. I have focused mainly on fundraising but moved into broader roles for smaller charities more recently. Before joining Swindon Carers Centre, I was the Head of Operations for a small charity called Living Paintings – supporting blind and partially sighted people. I'm looking forward to using my experience to help SCC build on their success.



### Stuart Ilbury

Head of Service Delivery Adult Carers/Older Carers

I have been with Swindon Carers Centre since May 2015, when I joined as an Adult Carer Support Practitioner. This is a job I loved, supporting and speaking to many adult carers. In 2018, I was offered the role of Deputy Service Delivery Manager after a restructure in the adult team.

Stepping up to this role allowed me to think about the bigger picture in Swindon for our carers. I met other health and social care professionals, responsible for commissioning services and from the voluntary sector.

Then in January 2019, I was delighted to be offered the post of Service Delivery Manager for the Adult Carer/Older Carer Team.

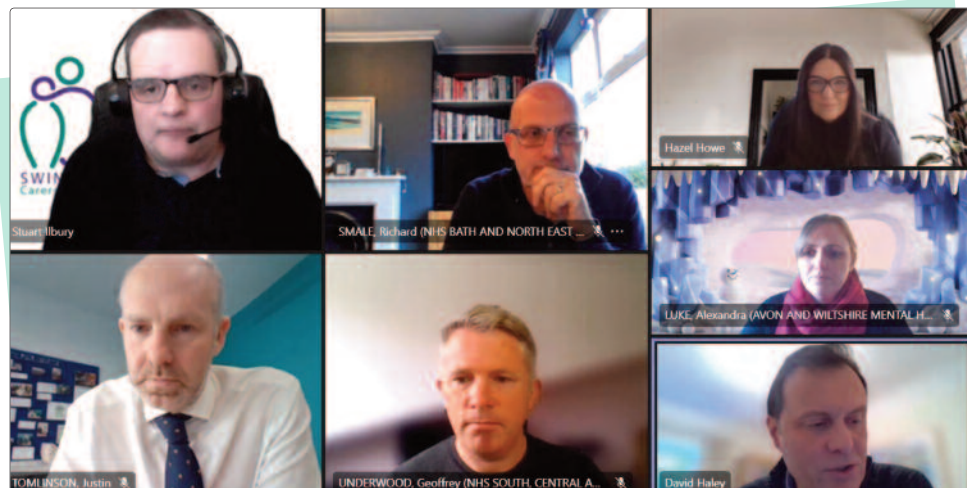
Working at Swindon Carers Centre, I really feel like I am making a difference, highlighting carers' needs at a strategic level. I've also made some key changes to our paperwork, in particular, carers assessments (available to carers under the Care Act) now being called carer conversations.

We have changed the registration process to speed it up, and fully relaunched the emergency card scheme. I'm excited to become Head of Service Delivery for Adult/Older Carers, and to see Tina Richards become our Deputy Service Delivery Manager. With Tina's support, I'll be leading a growing team of ten colleagues (plus myself and a volunteer) and become part of the senior leadership team. This will allow me to continue championing carers rights and needs – not only in Swindon, but further afield too.



## Help celebrate examples of outstanding service.

Do you have a positive story you can share about health and social care? Send in your stories of people doing above and beyond to help Healthwatch Swindon celebrate examples of outstanding service. Go to: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/859PQSQ>



**A successful Carers Rights Day event in November saw more than 70 people join us online to listen in to presentations, as well as a Q&A discussion with a focus on mental health and wellbeing for unpaid carers.**

The two-hour event included speakers from Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership (AWP) Swindon and Gloucestershire MIND, and Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BSWCCG). It also gave carers the chance to

question MPs and health and social care leaders during a busy Q&A session.

Thank you to our presenters, panelists, and most importantly our carers, for joining and helping to make Carers Rights Day 2021 a great event.

If you missed Carers Rights Day, a recording is available on YouTube. Go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ytq9ZzDDgA&t=5724s>

## Our Carers Rights Day presenters: Contact details

**Swindon SEND Families Voice** Available for: Parents and carers with any additional needs whether the child has an official diagnosis or not.

[swindonsendfamiliesvoice.org.uk](http://swindonsendfamiliesvoice.org.uk) Phone: 07486 873405

**Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership** The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a free, confidential and impartial service available to everyone who uses the Trust's mental health services, their families, carers or anyone who needs advice, information, support or guidance with a particular issue.

[www.awp.nhs.uk/advice-support/service-users/carers-families/?tabid=2146](http://www.awp.nhs.uk/advice-support/service-users/carers-families/?tabid=2146)

Call: 01225 362 900 Email: [awp.pals@nhs.net](mailto:awp.pals@nhs.net)

**Swindon and Gloucestershire MIND** Find out how to access a variety of services to improve your mental health and download a self-referral form here:

<https://www.sgmind.org.uk/downloads/> Call: 01793 432031

Our Benefits Volunteer Roy Dowling has put together some of the changes to benefits that may happen in 2022.

- » Some people claiming or trying to claim PIP may be entitled to a back payment. In 2020, the Department for Work and Pensions outlined changes. A review was completed in 2021 and now an administrative exercise is being carried out to find claimants who may be due payment. It is said in some cases it may be as much as £15,000.
- » A legal challenge is being made for a Covid-19 related bonus given to those on Universal Credit also to be paid for those on some legacy benefits. For example, Income Based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Income Support (IS) and Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). If successful those eligible may be owed up to £1,500.
- » Universal Credit will now have an automatic process to ensure consistent payments, even if an employer pays you early because of a bank holiday. It also protects claimants who receive a second monthly payment in one assessment period. This will prevent benefits not being paid or fluctuating one month to the next.
- » The Department for Work and Pensions plans to start transferring people from the old income-based ESA, IS and income based JSA over to Universal Credit again. If your Universal Credit is less, you will keep the same rate under transitional protection measures, but your Universal Credit will not increase each year until it has caught up with your old benefits amount.
- » All benefits will rise by 3.1% This means Carers Allowance will rise from £67.60 to £69.70, and the nett earnings limit from £128 to £132. However, the National Living wage is going up from £8.91 to £9.50. So, if you calculate it, the maximum hours a carer can work and retain their Carers Allowance is 13.89 hours or 13 ¾ hours in practice.
- » From the end of November 2022, benefits and tax credits will no longer be able to be paid into a Post Office account. Those on Tax Credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance will have to make arrangements, such as opening a bank account by April 5th. Other benefits such as the State Pension will need to be sorted by November. The Department for Work and Pensions will contact those involved and there is a payment exception service to help those who do not have a bank account.
- » When the living wage rises, part-time workers may find they will exceed the £10,000 per year auto enrolment for a pension. Their employer's contribution will give them up to £4,800 per year - which of course is free cash on top of what they themselves put in.

**To speak to one of our Welfare and Benefits Advisors call 01793 401093 between 10am and 12pm Tuesday to Thursday during school term-time.**



## Keeping my promise to care

### Ana's story

*My name is Ana, I'm 29 and I'm a carer for my grandmother who has had dementia for 15 years.*

I started caring for my grandmother (Babcia in Polish) on 30th May 2016, the day my grandfather (Dziadzio) passed away. In June 2016, I also gave birth to my daughter with my grandmother as my birthing partner.

Those few months: becoming a carer, a mum and a funeral planner all at once felt huge, all of which I've never done before. In 2020 I also split up with my partner, so my support circle got even smaller. Although I wasn't feeling 100%, I couldn't stop as I still had my grandmother and daughter to look after. This affected my mental and physical health, but since then it has got better.

My grandma is 85 and relies on me for everything. I change her, take her out, organise hospital appointments. But it's also days out, holidays, dancing, singing, and smiling. My daughter gets to grow a beautiful bond with her great grandmother, and I get to help my grandmother lead a fun and fulfilling life. Both my grandparents took the time to look after me from the age of 14 so to me, it is an honour to look after such a kind-hearted woman.

Although this is my life now, her routine is my routine, it's all become second nature. In a way, she is just like another child (but one I didn't give birth to). My daughter is 5 and getting bigger and my grandmother is becoming more reliant on me.

Joining Swindon Carers Centre in 2017 and the 'Our Time' group for young adult carers has been a real blessing. It makes a real



difference to have those few hours to take time out and forget almost everything. The first outing after Covid-19 was bowling. Although I felt like I had forgotten how to socialise, it was lovely day out to spend time with people who are in the same position as me.

Caring for someone can be challenging, but as soon as I see my grandmother smile, or the secret language between my daughter and grandmother, it lifts my heart. There is no better feeling to see the love my grandmother has from my daughter, they dance in the kitchen, they make sandwiches, do crafts and paintings on the table. My daughter shares her chocolates, they read stories together and each night she gives her a kiss before bedtime.

I do think people need to know more about the work unpaid carers do. They need to come to someone's house, be in the background and watch everything they do. Or they need to wear their shoes for a day, to do the non-stop running around needed to make sure the people we care for are happy, safe and cared for.

A promise I will always keep is the one I promised to my grandfather the day we went to put fresh flowers on his mother's grave. That promise was to look after my grandmother for as long as I physically can, and I will keep that promise.

## From our Young Carer and Parent Carers Team



*Our young carers waiting for the pantomime show to start - with a quick mask down for the photo.*



*Fun at the Jolly Roger Adventure play centre.*



*The December term-time group just before Christmas!*

### A message from our Parent Carer Team

#### **Hello to all our parent carers**

We are excited to let you know about changes to the way parent carer and family focus events will work going forward in 2022. From April, we will be taking over the organising and hosting of parent carer events in our role as Parent Carer Support Practitioners. Alongside the Young Carer Team, we will also be hosting the family focus events. We would very much like your input into the type of events you would like to attend, and what times would work best going forwards. To do this, we plan to send out a short survey and would really appreciate any input you can give us with this.

To start this new chapter, we are organising a parent carer event at the Goddard Arms in Old Town. You should have already received an invitation to register your interest. **Email: [parentcarersupport@swindoncarers.org.uk](mailto:parentcarersupport@swindoncarers.org.uk)** to let us know. As usual spaces are limited.

If you don't get a space on this event please don't worry, we are hoping to plan many more events throughout the year.

After the restrictions of the past two years, we are really looking forward to catching up with you and seeing both familiar and new faces. You will still be able to access the adult carer events in your 'What's On' guide and we are sure that you will join us in saying a big thank you to the Adult Carer Groups and Activities Team for organising and hosting the events you have enjoyed previously.



*Lorraine and Isabel.*

## Spring update from the Adult Carer Groups and Activities Team

***We have a few changes to report plus some highlights from last quarter and some news of forthcoming events!***

For those of you who enjoy using the internet and have opted to receive your copy of Caring Matters and your What's On form via email, you will see that you have received a new form for our events planned for April-June 2022. You will be able to click your preferences and submit your form to us online.

Do not worry if you are receiving a postal copy of Caring Matters and prefer a paper copy of our What's On form, this is still included along with your newsletter, and you can complete

the form in the usual way.

**For any queries, please contact us by telephone or email  
[acgroups@swindoncarers.org.uk](mailto:acgroups@swindoncarers.org.uk)**



***Carers have enjoyed a variety of events since our last Caring Matters Newsletter, which have included our quiz nights, Walk and Talk at Lydiard Park, arts and crafts sessions, various Cuppas around Swindon, our Open Minds social event, 'Our Time' evenings and our Dementia and Silver Linings Group. In addition to this, we've been busy with the relaunch of our evening support/action group for carers who support someone with a mental health diagnosis, the coach trip to Bristol, pamper sessions, Christmas wreath making, a festive flower workshop and Christmas meals.***

In January 2022, we had to postpone events due to the increase in Covid cases in Swindon. All being well, we can look forward to seeing

you in person. Staff all complete a lateral flow test prior to an event. We have recently appointed some new volunteers to help us at events so you may see some new faces! Our lovely Roy continues to help host several events, for which we are very grateful.

Forthcoming events for April-June 2022 - we have our usual favorites plus some new suggestions. Please complete and submit your What's On form as soon as you have chance, and we will log your requests. If we can offer you a place, full details will be sent to you approximately two weeks before the event date.

Do not hesitate to contact our team with any queries/suggestions.

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

## Why your emergency card plan details need to be up to date

**Do you worry about what would happen to the person you care for, whether an adult or a child, if you were taken seriously ill or had an accident?**

***The Emergency Card Scheme, run jointly between Swindon Borough Council, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Swindon Carers Centre, can offer you peace of mind. Please read on to hear from Nick Precious, our Emergency Card Scheme Administrator, who would like to remind you of the importance of keeping your details up to date.***

When we move house, it is standard practice to update our address details on our household insurance policy. If we don't, the insurance policy is invalid and a claim on it will be rejected.

Updating your details on your Emergency Card Plan is equally important as the following could happen:

- » Your emergency contacts may be impossible to contact as their telephone numbers are incorrect.
- » Your address may be incorrect meaning that assistance for your dependent is slow to arrive or does not arrive.
- » Your dependent's needs are more complex than stated in your emergency plan resulting in a delay in providing care for your dependent.
- » Your dependent may have developed an allergy, which if not included in your emergency plan could cause your dependent harm.
- » If your child's school details are not correct, Swindon Borough Council can't contact the school to inform them that mother or father has been taken unwell.

Ideally, you should be reviewing your emergency plan every six months, as a minimum, or when any details within the plan, however minor, change. Swindon Carers Centre can then update your plan to reflect the current situation.

*We have started to send out emergency card plans for review by our carers. Many of these plans have not been reviewed for several years and significant changes have had to be made. Please do get in touch if you receive an emergency card review letter.*

**If you would like to find out about the Emergency Card Scheme or if any aspect of your emergency plan needs to be updated, please contact Nick by emailing [Nick.Precious@swindoncarers.org.uk](mailto:Nick.Precious@swindoncarers.org.uk) or on (01793) 975333.**



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](mailto:anne.saunders@swindoncarers.org.uk)

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