



## From our CEO – Susanna Jones



As I write, the country is going through economic and political upheaval. The cost-of-living crisis is leaving few families untouched and we are seeing more need for financial support for carers in Swindon.

Our Carers Rights Day event will be focusing on this – and you can find out more on pages 8 and 9 about the speakers and support available. We are also delighted that Sarah-Jane Peffers, who is Associate Director of Patient Safety and Quality, and the Carers Lead for NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board (BSW ICB), will be joining us to give a brief update on the BSW Carer Partnership Group and she will update on some really good work to raise awareness of the needs of unpaid carers across the new Integrated Care System. I very much hope to see you there on the day. Please submit any questions to ask the panel on the day with the heading Carers Rights Day to communications@swindoncarers.org.uk and let us know if you like it to be asked anonymously or with your name.

It's vital we focus on mental health support for carers in these uncertain times – there's further information on pages 4 and 5 about how we are developing our services to meet increased need on this.

Our ongoing packed programme of activities for carers continues and there are some wonderful photos throughout this edition from recent events our young carers, parent carers and adult and older carers have attended – they look like a lot of fun!

Finally – there's a sad farewell (but hopefully not goodbye!) on page 14 to a key member of our leadership team and wonderful colleague Suzanne Hunt. We are very much hoping to see her (after a well-deserved break!) come back to us as a volunteer, but wanted to pay tribute to the incredible work she's done for SCC over the past 12 years. We will miss her!

With very best wishes, Susanna

**Cover image:** L-r Rich Gyde, Deputy Head of RUHX, Emma Walker and Nicola Wood, Grant & Impact Officers at SCC, and Jan Witt, Legacy & Tribute Manager at RUHX. Story on page 4.

### A warm welcome to:





**Amy Bedford**Adult Carer Support Practitioner

I joined Swindon Carers Centre in August this year and it has been amazing to see how much effort goes into supporting unpaid carers in Swindon.

As part of the Adult Carer Team, my role is to support carers within their role as a carer; this may be through our Carers Support Line which carers

can ring or through a Carer Conversation.

I previously worked in early childhood education so working at SCC is a big change for me, but one that I'm relishing to develop my knowledge within this sector. Everyone at SCC has been extremely welcoming and supportive to me and I'm looking forward to meeting more carers and assisting them in any way I can.

### Emma Walker and Nicola Wood Grant and Impact Officers

Emma and Nicola joined Swindon Carers Centre in the summer and work together on applying for grants to fund the work we do and reporting to funders (e.g. grant making trusts and businesses) on the impact their support makes to carers.



Emma - I'm really enjoying being part of such a hardworking, friendly and welcoming team.

I've worked for other charities and I love

the sense of doing something worthwhile to benefit others. I'm thrilled to use my experience to help SCC secure the funding needed to support the work carried out by our fantastic service delivery teams.

I live near Malmesbury with my family – and dog and cat!



Nicola – The team at SCC have been so welcoming and I'm really excited about being part of the charity as I'm passionate about supporting unpaid carers. My role is really rewarding – building relationships with trusts and businesses and informing them of

the valuable and much-needed work the team does.

I previously co-founded another local charity, Swindon City of Sanctuary, working with refugees and had the privilege of being the Charity Manager for almost six years. I have three primary school aged children and I'm also trained to facilitate Women Circles, a space for women to listen and share stories, and run these both online and in person in Swindon.

### Leigh Dulake Adult Carer Events Coordinator

I joined Swindon Carers Centre in September this year and work alongside Heather and Zoe in the Adult Carer Events Team. We offer lots of different activities to help carers to take a little time out from their caring roles, which is so important.

Returning to work after a career break to have a family was not an easy decision for me. However, I decided SCC was the place for me as my family has received help and support over the past few years. Everyone at SCC is really friendly and it's given me the chance to give something back. Now I'm enjoying helping other carers too!

## Focus on mental health support

## Do you need support for your mental health?

**Stuart Ilbury** Head of Service Delivery for Adult and Older Carers, gives an update on initiatives to support your mental health.

We are acutely aware of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic had on unpaid carers, particularly their mental health, and the impact is still being felt.

We have carers calling our Carers Support Line experiencing anxiety, stress, depression and loneliness.

Some are near crisis point and feel like they can't go on. They also feel guilty for thinking this.

Therefore, we are really pleased to have been granted funding to employ a specialist mental health practitioner to help our carers.

We received £40,000 from RUHX (the official charity of the Royal United Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust) and NHS Charities Together, to employ an adult support practitioner for two years.

We appointed Rebecca (Becky) Thompson and she started with SCC last month

(October). She will be leading on our Carers Support Line to help carers with concerns or issues they have and identifying their mental health needs and what support may be needed, including mental health coping strategies.

Becky has experience of supporting people from her voluntary work at Swindon Samaritans on their helpline, where she answered calls from people who were going through tough times and stressful situations.

We are not a counselling or crisis service, but we do work closely with other organisations in Swindon who provide this and we signpost our carers to these where appropriate.

Becky will be forging even closer links with local statutory and voluntary sector mental health organisations.

If you are feeling anxious or have concerns about your mental health or you want general advice or information to support

your caring role, then please call our Carers Support Line on 01793 531133. The service is open 9.30am-4.30pm Monday to Thursday and 9.30am-4pm on Friday.

We are here to listen and support you as an individual in your own right as well as a carer.



Pictured are members of our Adult Carer and Older Carers Team.

# Does the person you care for have mental health challenges?

If the person you care for has mental health challenges, there is a free course being held to learn new ways to support both your own and their mental health and wellbeing.

We are delivering the mental health training at Sanford House, Swindon, in partnership with the charity St Mungo's Building Bridges to Wellbeing team.

The training consists of four sessions:

- >> Understanding mental health challenges
- Support people with mental health needs to make changes
- >> Conflict and crisis
- >> Learning, reflecting and support

The training is free for to carers living or supporting someone in Swindon, Wiltshire or Bath and North East Somerset.

The next course is on Tuesday 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st January 2023, from 10am-1:30pm, at Sanford House, Sanford Street, Swindon, SN1 1HE.

To find out more information and to book, please visit the website https://www.bridges2wellbeing.co.uk/carerstraining or email ralph.lillywhite@mungos.org



The mental health charity Mind has lots of information and advice on looking after your mental health and managing your wellbeing.

It has self-care ideas that carers have said they find helpful. For more information, visit their website https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else/carers-friends-family-coping-support/looking-after-yourself/

## **News in brief**

#### **Christmas cards**



Christmas is not far away and if you haven't bought your Christmas cards yet, we have a selection for sale!

Pictured to the left, these cards have been designed by carers registered with us and we are selling a pack of 12 cards (four of each design) for £3.

Our Adult Carer Events Team will be taking them to the events they hold and we'll be selling them at our Carers Rights Day event on 25th November (see the next page for details).

You can also buy them from reception at Sanford House, Sanford Street, Swindon (opening hours 9.30am-4.30pm Monday to Friday).

All the proceeds go to Swindon Carers Centre.

### **Dementia information event**

We were involved in an information sharing event at the Wyvern Theatre for people caring for someone with dementia.

Organised by the Swindon Dementia Action Alliance, a number of organisations were there to offer advice and talk about the services and support they offer. The event was sponsored by Bellway Homes.

We are a member of the alliance along with other organisations, including Swindon Borough Council and The Alzhiemer's Society. The alliance's aim is to make Swindon a dementia friendly town by improving the support and services available to people living with dementia and their carers.

There is a helpful WOW (What's On When) guide which is available for carers of an older person/someone living with dementia. This guide collates information from the various organisations and their activities in and around Swindon that you might like to try. If you would like a copy, please contact our Events Manager Heather Goldsmith by email heather.goldsmith@swindoncarers.org.uk

## **Congratulations Tim!**

Our colleague Tim Saint, Welfare and Benefits Coordinator, celebrated 15 years working at Swindon Carers Centre in October.

The team surprised him with a card and gifts, including comedy books and chocolates!

Tim is an integral part of SCC and epitomises the friendly, supportive and individualised service we offer.

As well as giving advice, he has supported unpaid carers to claim thousands of pounds worth of benefits.

Tim is a carer himself and enjoys meeting fellow carers.



He said: "It has been an absolute pleasure to work with amazing colleagues, with the two main aims of empowering carers and creating a community for them in Swindon. It has never felt like work, but just a part of an extended role as a carer."

"Thank you to everyone for 15 wonderful vears."

## **Tackling Loneliness**



Stuart, our Head of Service Delivery for Adult and Older Carers, attended a Loneliness Following Covid event organised by South Swindon MP Sir Robert Buckland and the Swindon Seniors Forum.

The event, at Buckhurst Community Centre, brought together local residents, businesses, charities and key local organisations to discuss what they have changed since Covid-19 and their plans to tackle loneliness.

You can follow Swindon Carers Centre, be kept updated and join in the conversation on our social media channels!



Twitter: @SwindonCarers



Facebook: www.facebook.com/swindoncarerscentre



Instagram: Search for 'swindoncarers'



LinkedIn: Search for Swindon Carers Centre

## **Carers Rights Day**



### **Join us at Carers Rights Day**

We're looking forward to welcoming our carers for a face-to-face event to mark Carers Rights Day on Friday 25th November 2022.

Each year Carers Rights Day helps to:

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

Caring for someone can have a significant effect on your finances. This year, we will be focusing on the cost-of-living crisis and the impact on unpaid carers.

Our event will be held at The Platform, Faringdon Road, Swindon, SN1 5BJ. The nearest parking, less than five minutes away, is at Bristol Street Car Park (SN1 5EQ).

#### Timings for the event are:

10am

Doors open for registration, tea and coffee

**10.20am** Presentations begin

**11.30am** Q&A session, to include Swindon MPs

**12.15pm** Our market place opens, with stall holders available to offer individual advice

**1.30pm** Market place closes and event finishes

We realise that you may not be able to make the whole day. Please feel free to drop in and come for part of the day if you're not able to make the entire event. Everyone is welcome, whether you are new to your caring role or you have been caring for a while.

If you would like to attend with the person you care for, Heather, our Events Manager, has arranged for two paid caregivers from Home Instead to support us at the event. They will run activities for a small number of dependents so that our carers can sit and listen in on the day. If you are interested in this, please email heather.goldsmith@swindon carers.org.uk or call 07841 503849. Places are

limited for this, so we are asking our carers to book on a first come, first served basis. Carers attending will also be able to have a free health check.

#### Our speakers will include:

- Sarah-Jane Peffers, Associate Director of Patient Safety and Quality (and Carers Lead) NHS Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- David Miles, Public Health Practitioner Affordable Warmth, Swindon Borough Council
- >> The team at Swindon Citizens Advice
- Swindon Communities Working together, Public Health, Swindon Borough Council

#### The Q&A panel will include:

- >>> Sir Robert Buckland KC, MP for South Swindon
- >>> Justin Tomlinson, MP for North Swindon
- » Alison Barker, Corporate Director, Adults, Health and Housing, Swindon Borough Council
- Sclaire Newport, Chief Executive, Citizens Advice Swindon
- >>> Tim Saint, Benefits Service Coordinator, Swindon Carers Centre

#### At our marketplace you'll be able to meet:

- >>> Swindon Citizens Advice
- Swindon Carers Centre Welfare and Benefits Team
- >>> Warm and Safe Wiltshire >>> Thames Water
- >> Phoenix Enterprises >> Neuro Wellbeing Centre
- >> Healthwatch Wiltshire
- Mark Tidey, Food Partnerships Officer at Swindon Borough Council
- >> Swindon Borough Council Family Hubs
- >>> Dressability

We will also be sharing information about the new Carers Forum at Swindon Carers Centre, and Discount for Carers – a UK-wide scheme offering exclusive discounts for carers. We won't be providing lunch, but we will have tea, coffee and light refreshments available.

If you would like to suggest a question for the panel on the day, you can do it in advance as well as on the day. Please submit any questions with the heading Carers Rights Day by emailing communications@swindoncarers.org.uk and let us know if you would like this to be asked anonymously or with your name.

#### **How to register**

You don't have to register to come along. However, it would help us if you're able to do this, as we can plan for the number of people we think we'll have on the day. Please use our Eventbrite link to let us know you can attend: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/swindon-carers-centre-carers-rights-day-2022-tickets-388051531577 or scan the QR code right.

If you'd like any more information, you can contact the Communications Team by emailing communications@ swindoncarers.org.uk or calling Anne

Saunders on **07435 961071**. We look forward to seeing you there!

## **Cost of living advice**

## Do you need help with living costs?

Caring for someone can have a significant effect on your finances. If you're struggling to pay your water and energy bills due to the rising cost-of-living, please read on for information and advice.

#### **Water bills**

Households earning below £16,480 can apply for a 50% discount on their water bill through Thames Water's WaterHelp scheme. Find out more here https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/account-and-billing/financial-support

If you are struggling to pay your water bill and would like to talk through your options, such as flexible payment plans or payment breaks, please call their Extra Care Services Team on 0800 009 3652. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm.

### **Heating your home**

#### Reduction in electricity costs

All electricity customers will receive a £400 reduction in their costs. This automatic discount will be applied in six installments between October 2022 and March 2023 to help households though the winter.

#### **Energy bill grants**

You might be able to get help from the British Gas Energy Trust – you don't need to be a British Gas customer. There are certain conditions for this to help those facing fuel poverty, such as having an electric and/or gas debt between £250 to £1,500. You should also check with your own supplier for any grants available.

Find out more: https://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/grants-available/

#### **Priority services register**

This is a free support service to help those in vulnerable situations. Register with your supplier for advanced notice of planned power cuts, priority support in an emergency, accessible information, help with prepayment meter access and regular meter reading services. Find out more:

https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/informationconsumers/energy-advice-households/gettingextra-help-priority-services-register

#### Where to find further advice

**Swindon Borough Counci**l has created a list of 18 different measures which could benefit you if you're being affected by the rising cost-of-living.

Go to: https://www.swindon.gov.uk/costofliving Get free and impartial energy saving advice from Warm and Safe Wiltshire (0800 0385722) to help manage energy costs and keep your home warm. This includes free home visits to eligible residents to help lower your bills.

Speak to a AFFA (Advice and Financial First Aider) at **Swindon Citizens Advice**. They are able to help with reducing your outgoings through unclaimed benefits or grants, accessing debt advice and emergency fuel or food youchers. Call **0808 2787813**.

**Swindon Carers Centre** Welfare and Benefits Team is available Monday to Thursday 10am to 12noon during school term-time and Tuesday to Thursday 10am to 12noon during the school holidays. Please call **01793 401093**.

## **News from other organisations**

### **Get your jabs!**

A reminder that unpaid carers are eligible for the COVID-19 autumn booster jab and a free flu vaccine.

The NHS is encouraging you to get both vaccines as they each provide an added layer of protection against the two illnesses, both of which are expected to become more prevalent as the temperature drops and people spend

more time indoors.

If you have not been contacted by your GP surgery for the Covid booster, you can book online through the National Booking System here https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirusvaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/ or call 119.

To make an appointment to have the flu vaccine, please contact your GP surgery or pharmacy.

#### **Discounts for carers**

If you are looking at ways to save money, Discounts For Carers offers discounts on a range of products and services, from fashion, energy, days out, holidays, mobile phones and more.

It's free to join and is for all carers, both paid and

unpaid, and all care sector staff.

Once you are a member, you can use any of the thousands of deals that are on its website.

Go to the website

**https://discountsforcarers.com/** for more information and to sign up.

## Online wellbeing club for young people



An 11-week online club is available through Barnardo's Project Me.

It's for young people aged between 7 and 12 and is based on the five steps to mental wellbeing. It

uses fun and interactive activities to teach young people about how to look after themselves.

Places are available in March 2023.
See the image above for the contact details.

## **An update from our Young Carers Team**

Our Young carers enjoyed time out from their caring responsibilities during the summer holidays.

Some of them had a magical time exploring behind the scenes at the Harry Potter studios where they saw the set designs and props used in the Harry Potter films, including the Dursley's house and Hogwarts Express. Some even made their own magical book of monsters!

Other activities included trips to Drayton Manor, Cotswold Wildlife Park and 4 Kingdoms

Adventure Park. Young carers also visited Warwick Castle, where they saw live jousting, sword fighting performances and some even braved the stocks!









## Welcome Jacqui



We have welcomed Jacqui Du Toit, student social worker on a placement with our team. Jacqui is studying Social Work and Applied Social Studies at the University of Bath.

Jacqui said: "I'm really enjoying working with SCC as they are dedicated to improving the lives of all carers. All of the experience I gain will be essential to my social work practice and learning. It will also allow me to put all my knowledge into practice, learning and applying different policies and, most importantly, engaging and improving the lives of young carers.

"I've been shadowing the Young Carers Practitioners, making phone calls to parents and schools, and even started arranging and undertaking my own assessments with young carers. I'll also be joining in with the young carer activities."

## **News from our Parent Carers Team**

Parent carers joined us for a stroll around Stanton Park in Swindon followed by a delicious cream tea at Stanton House Hotel.

The park is a lovely place to feel immersed in nature and the event was a great opportunity for carers old and new to Swindon Carers Centre to relax, chat and share their knowledge and experiences and most importantly have a laugh!

Here is some of the feedback we received from our parent carers;

Brilliant session. Enjoyed the walk and the scones were amazing - the perfect afternoon.

Had a lovely morning/afternoon, seen lots of new faces. Lovely fresh scones really enjoyed myself, thank you.

I have had a lovely time, would love to do a similar thing like this again.

Thank you for having me, I really had fun and enjoyed every minute. Thank you.

Thank you for the opportunity to come along today. It was lovely and I enjoyed adult conversation as all present understand what we are going through.

Very enjoyable walk and cream tea, thank you for organising it.







## An update from the Adult Carers Events Team

We are delighted that Leigh has joined our Events Team as a part-time Events Coordinator, and you will be meeting her at events soon!

For events, we are trialing a new What's On form which covers the entire year from January to December 2023. You will receive this separately via email or through the post. Please submit your requests and if we can offer you a place, you will receive an invitation with full details approximately two weeks before the event date.

Chatterbox will be sent to you separately and is still being produced quarterly.

During the summer our carers have enjoyed a variety of activities, including many outside in the lovely weather.

A new activity we held was lawn bowls at Westlecot Bowls Club. Held over six weeks, it was for male and female carers and it was an idea by SCC's Nick who enjoys bowls in his spare time.



Here are some comments we received from our carers;

Thank you for the bowls sessions - they have been very good and a welcoming distraction. It's been great fun to exercise and socialise with everyone. The club members have been fun and very patient with us.

I am able to switch off and it is so sociable.

I'm going to enquire about membership information as I absolutely loved it!

On a beautifully sunny day carers visited TWIGS Community Gardens (below) for a tour of the lovely gardens and an afternoon tea in the Olive Tree Café.



One of our popular arts and crafts activities

was a needle felting workshop run by Hedgehog and Hoot and our carers made wonderful creations (Right).





Please do not hesitate to contact us with any queries about events. We hope to see

you soon!

Best wishes,

Heather. Zoe and Leigh.

Contact numbers: Zoe

Heather 07841 503849 07796 479274 07540 703250 Leigh

## Thank you to Suzanne

Suzanne Hunt, our Finance and Resources Director, is retiring from Swindon Carers Centre later this month (November) after 12 years. Suzanne has played an important part in the development of our charity.

Suzanne reflects on her time at SCC while our Chief Executive Officer, Susanna Jones, talks about the contribution Suzanne has made.



Above: Suzanne Hunt (fifth from the left on the front row) with members of the SCC team at the recent away day.

## A wonderful charity to be part of

I've loved my time at Swindon Carers Centre. What makes it special are the people who work there. I'm in awe of their work. Carers can go through harrowing times and the SCC staff are there to listen and to support them. The team are resolute and passionate about doing the best for every carer they meet.

Although not part of my day-to-day role, I liked meeting carers at events organised by SCC. Hearing their stories gave me a much clearer understanding of the issues and challenges they faced. It was really satisfying to know that the support they got from SCC and the other carers they met made a difference.

When my Dad had health issues my brother and I helped care for him. It was a big responsibility and gave me a real insight into what being a carer entails and the impact it has on you.

My association with SCC began in early 2010 when I joined as a volunteer. My children had started school and I was looking to get back into employment. I hoped that by doing a voluntary role I would gain skills and experience to enable me to apply for jobs.

My background was in finance and admin, so my volunteering involved all things admin related, such as opening the post, stuffing envelopes,

clearing the stationery cupboard and answering the telephone.

It was really enjoyable and when a temporary position of finance assistant was advertised I applied and was delighted to be appointed. The position became permanent and in December 2014 I became Finance Manager and part of the management team. In 2019 I was appointed Finance and Resources Director and became a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

I've made many friendships at SCC and it's been wonderful to see colleagues develop and grow, especially Bronte, who I line manage. She joined as temporary administrator for the Emergency Card Scheme and is now Head of Resources. I've really enjoyed leading the Finance and Resources Team and working with other members of the Senior Leadership Team and trustees.

In retirement I'm planning to spend time catching up with friends, decorating my house, upcycling furniture, keeping fit, and my husband and I want to walk more of the South West Coast Path.

I'm proud to say that I have worked for SCC and I've made friends for life. I hope to continue my links with SCC and would like to return – as I started – as a volunteer and do my bit to help this wonderful charity.



An award-winning team! Suzanne (second left) at the Wiltshire Life Awards.



Suzanne with flowers to mark her 10 years' service at SCC.

### A valued colleague and advocate for carers

Suzanne has been such an integral part of the growth and success of Swindon Carers Centre over the past decade and more and it's difficult to put concisely into words just what an impact she's had – but I will do my best!

Her expertise has meant we have had excellent financial controls and scrutiny enabling us to evidence robust quality assurance and value for money, through our annual external Audit and through the Quality Marks we hold, including Trusted Charity and Excellence for Carers.

She's been a key part of the Leadership Team for many years – offering a valued perspective and check and challenge to decision making. She's worked closely with our Trustee Board on financial governance and also been a fun and supportive colleague to many of us who will miss her greatly, but hope to keep her involved as a volunteer.

I'd personally like to say a huge and heartfelt thank you to Suzanne (she has been an enormous support to me as CEO and I've learnt so much from her) and thank her too on behalf of our whole team of staff, trustees and volunteers.

She has made a huge difference during her time with SCC and has held the needs of carers at the heart of every financial decision made. We will continue to hold her work up as a quality benchmark going forward.



Susanna Jones and Suzanne Hunt.



Newsletter Winter 2022

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 please contact the Communications Team by emailing communications@swindoncarers.org.uk

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Design & Artwork by Keith Blackmore. Tel: 01793 876555. Email: keith.b4@ntlworld.com

## Visit our website www.swindoncarers.org.uk











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