

Unite Carers in Mid Devon



Autumn Newsletter 2023

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Newsletter

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A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR

The clocks are going back, it's that time of year again. It only seems a few days ago when we last looked forward to cosy evenings around the fire now here we are once more.

For some carers this might be a time of year when bad weather means social contact enjoyed throughout the summer is limited by weather conditions. Maybe there is something else that would suit you throughout the winter months? Don't hesitate to ring the office for suggestions.

Forecasters have been saying that we are in for a big freeze, but I wonder how much they actually know. The main thing is that we all keep warm, don't struggle. If you are having problems keeping warm give us a ring, we can help you to find information on ways to get you through the cold weather. Or come along to No.4 Bridge Street on Wednesday, 18th October where Tracy has arranged a talk by Citizens Advice to help with energy savings. Details are in this newsletter.

But Autumn is still with us, and we have had some lovely sunny days, with a few more to come I hear.

Those of you who came to the AGM, our "20 years celebration" at the Hartnoll Hotel in Tiverton, will have enjoyed an opportunity to catch up with other volunteers, to meet John McLean, Chairman of the Carers Trust (Angela Rippon's representative at this meeting) and to send a jolly cheering message to Angela who is competing in "Strictly Come Dancing". Angela's recorded video message played at the AGM gave a lovely touch to the whole proceedings. We are fortunate to have her as our Patron.

Photos and video are already on our Facebook page and new website. Tracy and Jack, our IT Trustee also set up a rolling photo album showing pictures from Unite Carer's activities past



Bernice and Sharon receiving a cheque from the Devonshire Freemasons for £12,966 over 3 years.

and present. I caught the odd glimpse of myself a few times as the photos spun round. Oh, and there were scones jam and cream to complete the occasion.

This might be a good time to bring your attention to the fact that Sharon our General Manager fancies herself as a bit of a dancer and I hear that she is good, well, she did have dancing lessons in her teens up to the level 3 GOLD BAR no less. Then boys got in the way. So Sharon does have an affinity with our Patron and they are in regular “WhatsApp contact” every week. I’m not holding my breath but watch this space I say.

Sharon and I were very pleased to accept an invitation for the Lord Lieutenant’s breakfast meeting held at Cold Harbour Mill in Uffculme. About 80 charities across Devon were invited to discuss and find solutions for improving charitable works across the county. Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh was present, she actually sat at my table and displayed an amazing knowledge and understanding of the problems and restrictions we have to deal with.

To our volunteers. Going back to the AGM, did you see in the annual report a page headed **Unite Carers Making a Difference**? If you haven’t seen it, I urge you to look at your copy of the report and read this touching email from a carer receiving support from our volunteers.

That’s you! Maybe you didn’t volunteer for this particular carer but you mean the same to whoever you are supporting at the time. If you have read the email, you will know how much your help means to the person you are supporting. We can never thank you enough, we can never tell you too many times that you are the backbone of our charity. Now hear it from one who really knows from personal experience.

This newsletter will bring you up to date with Unite’s work, information on groups and other available services. We are continually looking for ways to support the changing needs of our carers and to this end we have started a new group “A Different Journey”. This group looks at the needs of the newly diagnosed dementia sufferer and their carer. A very difficult time in the early stages.

If you can’t find what you want, ring the office our dedicated staff will, I am sure, provide answers.

Bernice Philbrick – Chair of Trustees

NEWS FROM OUR SUPPORT GROUPS

NEW GROUP – A Different Journey

As Bernice mentions above, this new group is for people, both carers and the people they care for, who may just be starting out on their dementia journey. Carers have told us that the person they care for can find their diagnosis and the changes it will bring to life, difficult to accept. There are often lots of questions that both may need to ask, that aren’t always thought of when in the GP surgery or hospital, and sharing experiences, seeking advice and friendship from others who are in similar positions can be extremely comforting as well as informative. Both carer and cared-for have different needs at different stages of their dementia journey and it is hoped that this group will bring people together so

that their own personal experiences are shared with others who understand, helping them to feel less lonely and isolated, encouraging acceptance. The group is facilitated by Fiona and runs on the 1st Tuesday of each month starting at 10.30am at No.4 Bridge Street, Tiverton. As with most of our support groups, it is free to attend. Coffee, tea and biscuits or cakes always provided.

Crediton Carers' Coffee Group

The relatively new group is held on the 3rd Thursday of each month, starting at 11am at the lovely @100 Café on Crediton High Street and is happily going from strength to strength. Carers are very welcome to drop by for support, advice, access to services and a chance to chat with other carers over a cup of coffee or tea, on us. The group is facilitated by Tracy, open to all unpaid carers, of all ages and there's plenty of parking available and great coffee.

Tiverton Forget Me Not Café



Carers and the people they care for had lots to sing about as they were entertained by Alan and John at our August Forget Me Not Cafe. Our volunteer Neil also joined in with the entertainment, being a talented musician himself and I'm reliably informed that Sharon also had a bit of a dance. If you and your loved one with dementia would like to join us at the Forget Me Not Café, it is held at Cherith Church, Tiverton on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, starting at 2pm. Free to attend, come along to meet everyone and enjoy some of Denise's delicious home-made cakes (see Spotlight On! below).

Tiverton and Witheridge Safe Stop Sitting Groups

Joining Jenny and her Safe Stop team at Tiverton Safe Stop in July were Norman and Arthur on the electronic pipes and drums, while, in August, the group turned their hands and creative minds to painting without brushes and pottery painting in September. These activities are perfect for maintaining fine motor skills, dexterity and creative thinking, all in a safe, warm and friendly environment with Jenny and her team of Safe Stop volunteers.



The Witheridge Safe Stop group in August was missed by everyone when it was unfortunately cancelled due to road closures, but was it was back to normal service for September when the group enjoyed a full and engaging session with activities such as painting, crafts, a beetle drive, quizzes and reminiscing, carpet boules and bingo! I have been privileged to visit the Witheridge group when it first started a few months ago and the group is fantastic; full of wonderful characters, laughter and activity.

Let's Unite Outdoors



I went along to our penultimate Let's Unite Outdoors group in September at the Wilcombe School Forest School site in Tiverton. The weather wasn't kind to us on this occasion unfortunately, but we didn't let that dampen our spirits too much whilst we took shelter in our scarf-decorated teepee, hunted for bugs and mini beasts, painted with watercolours and plaited friendship bracelets, to share if we wanted to. The free Let's

Unite Outdoors group is for parent carers of school aged children with any type of additional need or disability, and their families. A place to come to chat and play with others who understand, without judgement. The last session of the year is next month on Saturday, 21st October, so please call the office if you would like to book a place for your family.



Bampton Carers' Coffee Group – With a Difference



The Bampton Coffee Morning – With a Difference was held at the Bampton Community Hall on 30th September. Organised by our wonderful volunteer Margaret, the difference was that, as well as enjoying the usual refreshments of tea, coffee and biscuits, representatives from the local Police, the Fire Service, the Exmoor Rotary Club and Unite Carers were on hand to answer any questions carers and other residents may have about their local area. There was a prize draw too. Thank you to everyone who came along, particularly Denise, and a very BIG THANK YOU to Margaret who worked so hard to pull the event together.

Cullompton Carers' Coffee Group

The talented duo of Norman and Arthur on the pipes and drums also appeared at the Cullompton Carers' Coffee Group on 9th August but their time was cut short by a couple of unforeseen hic-cups such as the lift being out of order and poor Norman and Arthur having to lug all their equipment up the stairs and then a power cable not working. They plan to return on another occasion, but they are being kept very busy entertaining all the Unite troops at present. Thank you Norman and Arthur, we are so sorry about the lift!

All of our Carers' Support Groups are free to attend, with the exception of the Tiverton and Witheridge Safe Stop groups.

NEWS FROM OUR BEFRIENDING TEAM AND 1:1 SUPPORT SERVICES

Unite's free Befriending Service matches carers with a like-minded volunteer befriender who they can meet for a cup of tea and a chat in a local café perhaps, plan an activity or outing together, or visit carers in their homes if they are unable to get away.

Prior to the befriending match, the Carers' Services Manager has a conversation with the carer, more formally known as "The Carer's Assessment", to find out what the carer's needs and wants are from the befriending relationship, the type of person they would like as their befriender, how often they would like to meet and where, interests and hobbies etc. If meetings are expected to take place in the carer's home, a home visit is carried out prior to the first get-together. A review is then conducted after 3 months to make sure that both parties are happy, although contact is encouraged at any point should a problem arise.

Unite also offer a free Telephone Friendship service so that carers can enjoy chatting with someone over the phone, from the comfort of their own home.

Our dedicated volunteer Befriending, Telephone Friendship, IT Support and Form-filling Teams continue to expand this quarter to meet the rising 1:1 support needs of our carers, and we currently have 39 volunteers providing 1:1 support. Unfortunately, we have had to put a hold on taking on any new Befriending and Telephone Friendship requests for **Parent Carers** at the present time because we don't have enough volunteers available to fill the need. In the meantime, we encourage parent carers seeking support and advice to attend one of our parent carers support groups where you can meet and chat with others who share your experiences in a completely non-judgmental environment.

If anyone has lived experience or knowledge of caring for a child, teen or adult with additional needs, and would be able to give support, advice and friendship to others in a similar position, please get in touch, age and gender are irrelevant. Please contact us at the office on 01884 257511 for an informal chat or email info@unitemd.org.uk Thank you.

Befriending Support isn't only available for new Carers to Unite. If you are feeling lonely and would like someone to talk to, please do get in touch with us; we're here to make life just a little bit easier for you. If you are an adult caring for an adult, we have volunteer benders waiting to help you.

For the period July to September 2023, we have had 11 new unpaid Carers register with us and 12 requests for 1:1 Befriending support. We warmly welcome each and every one of you to Unite Carers.

CARER'S CORNER

Energy Advice from Citizens Advice

Citizens Advice are coming to Unite Carers at No.4 Bridge Street, Tiverton at 2pm on Wednesday, 18th October to meet with carers to give energy and money saving advice.

The sessions are free, will last around an hour and will give you the opportunity to learn some energy saving tips, find out about grants that might be available to help with energy costs, discover whether you might be eligible for schemes like the Warm Home Discount or Priority Services Register, and generally improve your energy situation and knowledge. Attendees can also request further advice on a 1 to 1 basis either immediately after (if space and time allows) or by appointment if you have questions they can't answer during the session.

There are still some places available so if you would like to come along, please just call the office.

Counselling For Carers



There will be a short break in our Counselling For Carers service from December 2023 onwards, with the free service to carers becoming available again next year from April (or possibly sooner).

In the meantime, Qwell is a free, anonymous, online mental health and wellbeing support service available to all Adults that has been launched in Devon.

The service provides a safe, confidential way for adults to access emotional wellbeing and early intervention support including options for professional support, self-directed support and community/peer support.

Users can access online text-based counselling, advice and emotional support anywhere, using a computer, smartphone or other internet enabled device. It provides a safe, secure means of accessing help via the internet from a professional, accredited team of counsellors and wellbeing practitioners.

The service is free and requires no formal referral. Just visit Qwell online to register an account on the website and gain instant access to the Qwell platform. The online counselling team are available from 12 noon to 10pm Monday to Friday and 6pm to 10pm at weekends, 365 days a year, providing a much needed out-of-hours service for emotional support in an accessible and convenient way.

Please visit www.qwell.io to sign up and find out more.

Remember that we can help you get online with Qwell with support from one of our team of IT Support volunteers. Please call the office on 01884 257511 to find out more.

A poster for 'The Living Room' community café. It features an orange header with the text 'Lonely? Looking for company? TUESDAYS 10AM - 12PM'. Below this is a photo of a person pouring coffee into a cup. The text 'The Living Room' is written in a white speech bubble. At the bottom, it says 'Drop-in Community Cafe St. George's Extension, Becks Square, Tiverton Free Refreshments' and includes a small logo for 'The Living Room'.

The Living Room

Are you lonely and looking for company? The Living Room is a drop-in community café in Tiverton with free refreshments open from 10am-12pm every Tuesday at St George's Extension (in Beck's Square Car Park, behind Boots). Everyone welcome!

The Carer's Break Fund from Devon Carers

The Carers Break Fund is available again to adult carers of people 18 yrs+ who haven't already received one in the last two years.

You can apply to Devon Carers for the fund to help contribute towards a night away, a hobby, or an exercise class. However, you choose to take time for yourself.

Contact Devon Carers direct to apply or for more info visit here:

<https://devoncarers.org.uk/.../looking.../carers-break-fund/>

PARENT CARERS

National Autistic Society

Jenny, our Let's Unite at No.4 and Support Group for Carers of Adults and Teen with Additional Needs groups facilitator has sent the link below to us. It's the monthly update from the National Autistic Society and gives really good information and advice on topics such as "what can I do if my child won't go to school?" and helping your autistic child to cope with Halloween. Definitely worth a look.

The articles can be found by visiting the National Autistic Society's website: www.autism.org.uk

The Max Card

The Max Card is free to families with children aged 0-25 who have SEND and it allows eligible children and young people free or discounted admission to more than 800 attractions nationwide, over 60 of which are in Devon and Cornwall.

How do I get a Max Card?

You can self-register as part of the Disability Network and they will send you a Max Card. You have to be 25 or under to be eligible. Max cards are valid for 2 years from the date of issue.

There are lots of locations in Devon that accept the Max Card and give you a discount. From Butlins to Bearfeet, Bowling to Big Sheep – there's bound to be something near you. The Max Card is a national scheme so there are also venues in other counties that accept the card and give you a discount such as Merlin Entertainment and you can also enjoy discount dining at thousands of restaurants with a free digital Dine club membership.

For more information visit the Max Card website here: <https://mymaxcard.co.uk>

JUST FOR VOLUNTEERS

Level 1 Safeguarding Adults Training

Volunteers at Unite Carers can now have access to free E-Learning from for the following:

Level 1 E-Learning Awareness of Mental Capacity Act

Level 1 E-Learning Awareness of Safeguarding Adults

The training takes place online, via MS Teams and is provided by Devon County Council.

If you would like to participate please call us at the office of email info@unitemd.org.uk.

Dementia Awareness Training

The Dementia Awareness Training is still available to those who wish to expand their knowledge.

You do not need to register for the course. To access the training please visit the link below:

<https://memorycafehub.org.uk/dementia-awareness/>

and then click on the separate videos at the bottom of the page to watch them.

If you would like to take part in either of these online training opportunities, but you do not have access to a PC, laptop or smart phone, please do get in touch with us at Unite. We will be able to help guide you or provide the use of a laptop in a quiet space in our offices.

Volunteer ID Badges

Are any of our face-to-face Befriending Volunteers without an ID badge? If so, please do get in touch with us, preferably by email with a head and shoulders picture of yourself, and I will send you a new-style ID badge with a lovely new lanyard. If any of our Group Volunteers would also like a new ID badge and lanyard, please do feel free to get in touch – all welcome to apply!

FUNDRAISING – HOW YOU CAN HELP

Tesco Bags of Help

Tiverton - Our Tesco's Bags of Help in the Tiverton stores ended on 30th June and we were awarded £1,000 for our Let's Unite Outdoors group. Thanks to everyone who voted.

Cullompton - We have also been successful in making it to the community voting in-store in Cullompton and this will help support our Cullompton Carer's Coffee Group and Culm Valley Oasis Group. Please think of us if you shop in Tesco Cullompton and help us by putting your little blue voting token in the box for us. In store from October 2023 until January 2024.

Crediton – An application to help support our Crediton Carers' Coffee Group has now gone into Tesco and we await further news on this.

The Benefact Group's Movement For Good Awards

Unfortunately, due to not receiving enough votes, we have not been successful in winning £1,000 from the Movement for Good Phase 2 awards, but you can see a list of all the great charities who have by visiting the link below:

<https://benefactgroup.com/movement-for-good/movement-for-good-2023-all-winners-phase-02/>

Eyes Down for Bingo anyone?

Tiverton Charity Bingo is on every Wednesday at Westexe Sports and Social Club in Tiverton. Staff from Unite are attending on 25th October and we will receive a donation from the proceeds. Please do come along and join us to help support Unite. Doors open at 6pm, eyes down at 7.30pm. Thank you to Kathy McMillan for putting our name forward.

Tiverton Soroptimists – Beetle Drive

On 6th October, Sharon and Bernice went along to the Tiverton and District Soroptimists Beetle Drive at St James Church Hall in Tiverton and had a lovely time. Thank you so much to the wonderful Soroptimists for continuing to support Unite Carers.

Co-op Local Community Fund

Just a reminder that Unite Carers is part of the @Co-op Local Community Fund. This means that you can go into your local Co-op Store and sign up for a membership card to support Unite Carers. Each time you shop, a little of your spend is matched by Co-op to be donated directly to Unite Carers. You can sign up in store (nearest is Willand but there are others in Dulverton, Exeter and Wellington) or to find out more about the project and to choose Unite Carers as your cause, please visit here:

<https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes>

If anyone has any fundraising ideas, please do let us know – thank you.

AND IN OTHER NEWS....

HRH Duchess of Edinburgh celebrates Devon's Charities

On Wednesday, 20th September, the dynamic duo of Sharon and Bernice joined volunteers from various charities across Devon to receive a Royal commendation from HRH Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh, at a special breakfast event held at Coldharbour Mill in Uffculme.

The event was hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Devon, David Fursdon, the King's representative in the county. The event aimed to bring together some of the 4,000 Devon charities to



discuss their challenges and how the Lieutenancy Office can help them.

The Duchess of Edinburgh, a patron of several charities, thanked the volunteers for their invaluable contribution to society and urged them to network with each other and local authorities and businesses to find solutions to some of the problems they face.

Witheridge Parish Hall Open Evening

Tracy was invited along to the Witheridge Parish Hall Open Evening on 4th October, along with many of the other groups and organisations who use the Witheridge Parish Hall Community space.

As well as Unite Carers in Mid Devon which holds its Witheridge Safe Stop group at the venue, people from the Gardening Club, the Witheridge Women's group (delicious cupcakes), Youth Club, Tennis Club, the Taekwondo Club and even the Astrology Group came along, to name but a few. I learnt so much! I'd like to say thank you to the Witheridge Parish Hall for inviting Unite Carers to come along, and especially for the cheeky glass of bubbly that I was treated to.

Chess Partner needed

Looking for a chess buddy or two for a gentleman who lives in Tiverton. If this could be you, please get in touch with the office so that we can tell you more. Thank you!

Unite's 20th AGM

Thank you to everyone who came to our **20th AGM** at the Hartnoll Hotel on 21st September. Unite Carers in Mid Devon would like to thank you all for your time and support. The Annual Report and Accounts are available to read on our [Facebook](#) page or Website www.unitecarers.org.uk.

Here's a lovely photo of those that came along, including the Chair of the Carers Trust John McLean OBE, and a virtual appearance from Angela Rippon, our Patron.



And finally...

Spotlight On – In this edition we turn the spotlight on **Denise Butt**



My name is Denise Butt, I'm married with a daughter, son and two grandsons.

In the autumn of 2015 Bampton Surgery started a cognitive group for people with dementia, which I was invited to attend along with my mum. At one of the sessions another carer suggested that I try the Unite Carer's Exe Valley Oasis group. I went along, a bit apprehensive; my mum had been diagnosed not long before and I wasn't sure what to expect, but everyone was friendly, and I immediately felt at ease and was given some helpful advice. Not long after I did a Memory Matters course run by the

Alzheimer's Society where I met Jackie who facilitated Unite Carer's Forget Me Not Café. Although it wasn't suitable for mum, I went along on a couple of afternoons.

Already registered as a carer with Unite Carers, I then became a volunteer, helping at the FMN Café and, one morning a month, helping out in the office. I now facilitate a few groups myself, helped by some wonderful volunteers and have re-ignited my passion for baking; making all the cakes for the Forget Me Not Café.

In the course of volunteering, I meet many amazing people. Carers come from many walks of life, all with the role of carer in common and sometimes, feeling like I did back in 2015, they too share their experiences and help each other. To put a smile on someone's face, get a thank you or see the stress lift from someone's face is priceless.

In my spare time, I like to garden, walk, read and do various crafts, donating some of the finished products to the Hospital League of Friends. My other passion is family history, where I learnt very early on to check everything myself, I have accepted 'hints' from other family trees for it to be completely wrong and it can then take ages to correct. Unfortunately, I haven't found any royalty connection, but a very distant cousin was transported to Australia in 1841.

Contact us:



Unite Carers in Mid Devon

2 Bridge Street, Tiverton, EX16 5LY

Tel: 01884 257 511

Email: info@unitemd.org.uk

Unite Carers Support Groups Autumn 2023

Who's it for?	Group Name	Location	With	Day in month	Time
All Carers	Bampton Carers' Coffee Group	Spelt, Bampton	Denise	1 st Tuesday	10.30 am - 11.30 am
All Carers	Crediton Carers' Coffee Group	@100 Café, High St, Crediton	Tracy	3 rd Thursday	11.00 am - 12.30pm
All Carers	Cullompton Carers' Coffee Group	The Hayridge, Cullompton	Jean	2 nd Wednesday	10.30 am - 12 noon
All Carers	Tiverton Carers' Coffee Group	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Denise & Fiona	4 th Tuesday	2 pm
All Carers and Former Carers	Uffculme Support Group	Locations change monthly – Please call the office	Jackie	4 th Monday	12.30 pm
Cared-for-people	Tiverton Safe Stop Group	Cherith Church, Tiverton	Jenny	2 nd and 4 th Wednesday	10.00 am - 12.30 pm
Cared-for-people	Witheridge Safe Stop Group	Witheridge Parish Hall, Witheridge	Jenny	3 rd Tuesday	10.30 am - 12.30 pm
Carers of adults and teens with additional needs	Carers of Adults and Teens with Additional Needs	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Jenny	3 rd Wednesday	10.30 am - 12 noon
Carers of school-aged children with additional needs	Let's Unite Outdoors	Wilcombe School, Tiverton	Katie	Seasonal April-October	Please call the Office
Carers of school-aged children with additional needs	Let's Unite at Number 4	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Jenny	1 st Wednesday	9.30 am - 11.30 am
Dementia Carers	Culm Valley Oasis	Padbrook Park Hotel, Cullompton	Audrey & Veronica	3 rd Monday	2.30 pm - 4 pm
Dementia Carers	Exe Valley Oasis	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Denise & Fiona	2 nd Thursday	10.30 am
Dementia Carers and Cared-for-people	A Different Journey Support Group	Unite Carers, 4 Bridge St, Tiverton	Fiona	1 st Tuesday	10.30am – 12 noon
Dementia Carers and Cared-for-people	Tiverton Forget Me Not Cafe	Cherith Church, Tiverton	Denise & Fiona	3 rd Tuesday	2 pm - 3.30 pm
Former Carers	Tiverton and Cull Ex-Carers Lunch Group	Locations change monthly – Please call the office	Veronica	1 st Tuesday	12 noon