

Unite Carers in Mid Devon



Winter Newsletter 2024

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Newsletter

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A WORD FROM OUR CHAIR

How was Christmas for you?

We all have our own ideas on what makes Christmas. For some it's "thank goodness that's over", others relish the whole Christmas family get together scene, there are those who prefer to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. Whatever your way be it happy families or Bah Humbug! How was Christmas for you? I hope it was a happy one.

Then there is New Year to deal with, good intentions, resolutions, how long will they last? Not long in my case, usually a couple of days then I forget or find a perfectly good reason to ditch an unreasonable expectation which I have resolved to carry out for a whole year. Whatever your resolutions or intentions I wish you a good and happy year for 2024.

Now here we are, 2024 is with us and we are getting back to normal. The office opened on 2nd January, Sharon and Tracy (well recovered from their new year celebrations I hear) have been manning a very busy office catching up on emails and dealing with many enquiries. Our groups and all other services are back in full swing.

At a trustees meeting towards the end of 2023 an idea was put forward to keep a "Unite Scrap Book" containing news and photos of achievements by our volunteers, staff and carers - Angela Rippon's message to our AGM for instance. Do you know of any achievements that you or others would be happy to share in this scrap book? If you think this is a good idea, or if you have anything for the scrapbook, please do let us know.

The Trustees had their first meeting on 8th January and on their behalf, I would like to thank all our volunteers for being just that. I know it's been said many times before but without you, there would be no Unite, without you there would be many unpaid carers struggling to cope. You make that difference, the difference that gives carers the strength to go on. Thank you, each and every one of you.



Trustees Pat and Jenny meeting with members of the Co-Op (Member Pioneer Willand and Tiverton) after a donation of £2,012.67 was made to Unite Carers.

Bernice Philbrick – Chair of Trustees

NEWS FROM OUR SUPPORT GROUPS

All of our Carers Coffee and Lunch groups are back up and running for January and you can see a full list of groups at the end of this newsletter. We encourage all unpaid carers and former carers living in Mid Devon to come along and join us for support and friendship, we will be very happy to meet you.

Let's Unite at No.4 - Our Parent Carers' group for carers of children and young people with additional needs, has a new time of 9am-11am. This is so that parents can drop children at school and come straight to group for a much-deserved coffee. Hope to see you there.

Tiverton Forget Me Not Café

The Tiverton FMNC has had another busy three months. In October Caroline Rigby came along to meet the group and bought a variety of musical instruments with her for everyone to try. Lots of singing, movement and seated exercise and Denise's homemade cakes to enjoy alongside a welcome cup of tea.



On 21st November the wonderful children of the Castle Primary School Choir, their teachers and support staff visited the FMNC to sing for us. The children all sang so beautifully and we particularly enjoyed the 12 Days of Christmas rendition and "trying" to keep up with the actions. So well-remembered by the children and an absolute treat for us. A special note to say how well-mannered and polite all the children were, a real credit to

Castle Primary School and to their parents/grandparents/carers. Thank you so much for visiting.

It was time for the FMNC Christmas Party in December. Lots of fun and games, carol singing, Christmas crackers and pass the parcel, a festive tea and cakes and our very own Elf (not on the Shelf Liam, who entertained everyone on the clarinet.



Tiverton and Witheridge Safe Stop Sitting Groups



The Safe Stop Groups in Tiverton and Witheridge also entered into the festivities with their own Christmas parties, and everyone dressing up for the part to sing carols, play Christmas games and quizzes, enjoy festive treats and cakes, presents from Santa (or I strongly suspect one of his apprentices) and topped off in Tiverton with a visit from rescued greyhounds Dottie and Rodders and their mum Mo the Christmas reindeer.

There were lots of changes to the groups in December with everyone celebrating Christmas together and some having Christmas lunches too.

The Parent Carers Group of Adults and Teens went to the Heathcoat Community Centre for their Christmas lunch, the Tiverton and Cullompton Ex-carers lunch group were at The Bluebell restaurant in Willand, the Culm Valley Oasis group enjoyed Christmas coffee and cake at the Bakehouse and we said thank you to and goodbye to our counsellor Jessie over lunch with Sharon and Tracy at the White Ball.



NEWS FROM OUR BEFRIENDING TEAM AND 1:1 SUPPORT SERVICES

We have a brilliant and dedicated Befriending Team at Unite Carers, who support carers and former carers on a 1:1 basis to give support and friendship when it's needed most. 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.

Befriending isn't the only 1:1 service we provide to carers here at Unite. We also help with Form-filling, IT support and Counselling For Carers. For the period October to December 2023, we had 41 volunteers giving 1:1 support to 82 carers and former carers and I honestly think the team deserves a massive pat on the back for that. Thank you everyone, sincerely.

But, we are still looking for more volunteers to help support parent carers and so unfortunately, we are unable to take on any new Befriending and Telephone Friendship requests for **Parent Carers** at the moment. 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 carers new 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 October to December 2023, we have had 16 new unpaid Carers register with us and 11 requests for 1:1 Befriending support. We warmly welcome each and every one of you to Unite Carers.

NEWS FROM OUR DEVON CARER'S AMBASSADOR FIONA BLADON

Don't Let "Blue Monday" Get You Down - Webinar

The third Monday in January (15th January) is famously labelled as Blue Monday, supposedly the "saddest day of the year." But guess what? We're flipping the script once again!

Get ready for this year's Hope Monday event - an expert-led wellbeing webinar brought to you by Hope For The Community CIC. Here to help you learn strategies to improve your health and feel empowered to combat the winter blues.

On January 15th, 2024, from 10 AM to 3 PM, join us for a day filled with hope. Our celebration features a range of engaging sessions designed to uplift your spirits. From soothing guided mindfulness to practical winter wellbeing tips from a GP, unlocking your creativity, and even an energising music session – it's a day of positivity and inspiration.

Inspired by the proven strategies from our evidence-based Hope Programme self-management courses, Hope Monday is designed to uplift your spirits on the so-called gloomiest day of the year.

And yes, just like our previous Hope Monday event, this event is absolutely free! Spaces are limited, and we want you to be a part of it so make sure to secure your spot soon!

To find out more about the sessions and to book your space, please visit the link here:

www.h4c.org.uk/hopemonday

Programme of events:

10.00am - 10.15am	Warm Welcome introduction from Dr Anna Lynall
10.15am - 11.15am	Boosting Your Immune System for Winter with Dr Tim Robinson
11:15am - 11:30am	COMFORT BREAK
11:30am - 12pm	Music for the soul with DJ Mike
12pm - 12.30pm	Hope For Everyone with H4C's CEO Gabriela Matouskova
12.30pm - 12.45pm	COMFORT BREAK
12.45pm - 2pm	Creating a Gratitude Zine with Mellissa Monsoon
2pm - 2.15pm	COMFORT BREAK
2.15pm - 2.45pm	Mindfulness with Dr Liz Sparkes
2.45pm	Round up, Hope for 2024

The event begins at 10am and people are welcome to arrive and leave at any time or select the activities they most want to see. Sessions will be recorded and will be made available to view online afterwards.

Medical and Mobility Equipment amnesty

If you are no longer using NHS medical or mobility equipment, please help others by returning all unwanted or unused equipment. There is a community amnesty for free return of equipment between 22 January and 5 February. You can return equipment to your local hospital or a DCC recycling centre. Larger or multiple items can be collected. Please call Millbrook on 0330124 4491 or email devoncontactus@millbrookhealthcare.coc.uk for more information or to arrange collection.

CARER'S CORNER

Counselling For Carers

December was the time to say a sad goodbye to Jessie who has been our Counsellor for carers since February 2023. Jessie has been just wonderful to work with and we wish her the very best for her future. If anyone would like to begin counselling with Jessie on a private basis, she is able to offer reduced rates for carers registered with Unite. Please get in touch to find out more.

We had anticipated a short break in our free Counselling For Carers service from January 2024 onwards, however we have been very lucky to secure a new counsellor Lyndsey for a few months. If anyone would like to find out more about Counselling For Carers, please do get in touch for an informal chat. We are able to offer a 30min introductory chat with Lyndsey before you decide whether or not you wish to begin on the 8-week course of sessions.

Walkers and Twalkers – Free Walking Group

Everyone is welcome to come along to the Walkers and Twalkers walking group for accompanied walks in and around Tiverton and Cullompton on Wednesdays and Fridays. We keep full quarterly schedules of the walks in the office so if you'd like one or if you'd like to know more, just give us a call at the office. Alternatively, you can email: chris.mumford21@gmail.com for more information.

The Dementia Library

Did you know that we have a library at our office at No.2 Bridge Street, with titles available to borrow free to carers registered with Unite Carers in Mid Devon? We're adding titles all the time, so even if you've borrowed books before, there may be something new of interest to you. Please call 01884 257 511 to arrange to come along to browse or if you would like a list of what's on offer and we may be able to bring books along to groups too if that's easier for you.

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/>

Dementia Awareness Training

Dementia Awareness Training is available free 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.

PARENT CARERS

Household Support Fund 4

Early Help changed the rules for applications to the HSF4. Due to how busy the fund has been, as of 27th November 2023 they are now only able to accept first time applications for families who have made no previous successful application requests across all our previous Household Support Fund rounds. As a parent carer, this means that if you have made any applications to the HSF, regardless of whichever issue it may be 1-4, then you will not be eligible to make a further claim.

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.

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

Useful Links for Parent Carers:

(please Ctrl Click the blue link to access)

The [Devon Safeguarding Children Partnership website](#) provides information and advice about support for all children and young people in Devon, including those with SEND.

The [Devon's SEND Local Offer website](#) includes information about services within the Devon Local Offer.

The [Signpost Plus service from Children and Family Health Devon \(NHS\)](#) contains a range of news, courses and offers.

The impartial [Devon Information Advice and Support website](#) can also provide help and support.

JUST FOR VOLUNTEERS

Expenses

Are you a volunteer that doesn't claim expenses? If you are a taxpayer you could claim expenses and then gift aid them back to Unite which gives us 25%. Please contact Sharon to find out more.

Can we also remind Volunteers to please put in your expenses before year end (31st March), in order to keep accounts accurate and to help with budgeting.

Still Available - Level 1 Safeguarding Adults Training

Volunteers at Unite Carers 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 or email info@unitemd.org.uk.

Volunteer ID Badges

Would any of our Volunteers like a Unite Carer's 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.

Volunteers – A New Year Celebration



Volunteers were invited to a New Year Pizza night at The Lost Kitchen in Chettiscombe, Tiverton at the weekend, to say thank you to them for everything they have done to support unpaid carers over the last 12 months. I think it's true to say that everyone had a great night and there was much chatter and laughter to be heard ringing out across the room and on top of that, the food was really delicious too. It was so lovely to see everyone enjoying themselves, particularly in recognition of everything our volunteers do for others.

The evening was donated to Unite Carers by George at the Lost Kitchen and we really cannot express enough how generous and kind George and his amazing staff team have been to us at Unite.

If anyone would like to join our volunteer team, please call the office on 01884 257 511 for an informal chat. We have several roles that may be of interest to you, whatever your interests or experience.

Trustees

It was Trustees' Week between 6th – 10th November. As you probably know, our Board of Trustees are all volunteers too. In November we said a sad goodbye to Jenny Baker who has been on the Board of



Trustees since October 2020. Thank you Jenny for everything that you have done to help unpaid Carers and Unite Carers as a charity.

We would in turn like to welcome Stephanie Hart to the Board of Trustees, who joined us in August and is already proving invaluable.

Vacancy for a Volunteer Treasurer to join the Board of Trustees

Unite Carers in Mid Devon are currently seeking a Volunteer Treasurer (Trustee) to work with the Board on a voluntary basis. Working in our small charity supporting unpaid carers you will find this extremely rewarding and be able to make a major impact to a worthwhile cause by working with a dedicated team.

Please visit our website: www.unitecarers.org.uk to gain a full understanding of what we do and the services which we provide.

New Office Volunteer

We had a new office volunteer this week – Hello Poppy !



DBS pending.

FUNDRAISING – HOW YOU CAN HELP

Tesco Bags of Help

Have you seen us in Cullompton Tescos? We are still in store until the end of January 2024 so 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. This will help support our Cullompton Carer's Coffee Group and Culm Valley Oasis Group.

Crediton – An application to help support our Crediton Carers' Coffee Group has now gone into Tesco and we have been told that we are through to shortlisting – fingers crossed!

The Benefact Group's Movement For Good Awards

If you have access to a phone or pc, please can you help our small charity to win an award of £1,000 from the Benefact Group by clicking on the link below (or by copying the address into your web browser). I've just nominated Unite and it takes less than 2 minutes.

https://movementforgood.com/?utm_source=Email-giving&utm_campaign=Coming-up&cmp=1&utm_medium=HTMLEmail

- Please select 1099188 Unite – Carers in Mid Devon (after searching for Unite Carers)
- It won't affect the voting but I think the most appropriate category to select is probably Health.

Thank you so much for your time.

Eyes Down for Bingo!

On the evening of Wednesday, 8th November, Sharon and Tracy went along to Tiverton Charity Bingo, invited by Silvia White, in aid of Unite Carers in Mid Devon. We would like to say a big thank you to Silvia and everyone at the Bingo for your very generous donation of £500 to help to support unpaid carers in Tiverton. We really enjoyed the evening, especially Sharon who won £15 in vouchers for a full house – Bingo!

Message on Fundraising from Sharon:

Unite Carers rely totally on grants and donations.

All of our support groups are free but we will shortly be distributing donation pots to groups to encourage donations for refreshments.

Do you like to donate regularly to a charity? Please contact the office if you would like to set up a regular direct debit donation.

Do you know of any potential funders – either private funders or charities providing grants?

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

AND IN OTHER NEWS....

Our Patron – Angela Rippon

For ten weeks Angela Rippon, our Patron at Unite Carers in Mid Devon, dazzled Strictly Come Dancing viewers with her grace and agility, making a jubilant return to the Blackpool Tower Ballroom, where she presented the original Come Dancing show over 40 years ago. But sadly Blackpool heralded the end of the Strictly journey for Angela and her professional partner Kai Widdrington.



We would like say a massive WELL DONE to Angela for finding time out of your busy schedule to help support our little charity, and for your boundless energy, enthusiasm and kindness. You have made us all very proud at Unite Carers.

WEBSITE AND A FACEBOOK PAGE

A little birdie told me that some people didn't know that we have a Website and a Facebook page!

The website can be seen here: www.unitecarers.org.uk

And our Facebook is here: www.facebook.com/unitecarers

There's still a couple of little errors on the website but our IT guru Jack is on the case. Thanks Jack!



Does anyone need a walker?

We have this one available for a suggested donation to Unite Carers of £40?

This one has a bag on the bottom too!

Please just stop by the office if you would like to take a look at it.

A Poem by Martin Wells – If I Get Dementia

For those of you that may have missed this on our website or Facebook page, here is a poem written by our friend Martin Wells – If I Get Dementia. Martin lives locally and writes from the perspective of someone living with dementia. I think you'll all agree that his words are emotive, beautifully poignant and certainly powerful. Thank you Martin for agreeing to share your words with us. I hope to share more of Martin's work in future Newsletters.

If I Get Dementia

If I get dementia, please love me all the same,
And make it an adventure, a brand-new era game.
If ever I forget you, please tell me who you are,
And see if I can conjure up a memory from afar.
If I can't make coffee or if I lose my specs,
If I can't cook omelettes or if I don't want sex,
If I'm not the person that you knew when I was fit,
Then love me for the person I'm becoming bit by bit.
Surely there is something here that's still okay to share,
Even if I've lost my marbles, memory and hair,
Surely after fifty years I can't forget your face,
Or are you just another member of the human race?
Anyway, whatever happens, I want you to know,
Deep down in my memory, I really love you so,
And if I should seem to live inside a different brain,
Won't you come and join me, and we'll both be one again.

Martin Wells, November 2023.

And finally...

Spotlight On! – In this edition we turn the spotlight on: **Margaret Phillips**



Hello, my name is Margaret Phillips and I have been married to my husband for 50 years in April and I have 2 sons and 1 granddaughter. I live in a very rural area on the edge of Exmoor, north of Bampton and I volunteer for Unite Carers as a Befriender, a Form-filling volunteer, an Office Volunteer and, on occasion, I have also facilitated groups and fund-raisers.

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I am a retired Occupational Therapist, working for many years both in the NHS and Adult Social Care, so have experience of both. I've always worked in the rural community of Exmoor and latterly in Bridgewater and Williton. As an OT my main role was to enable people to stay in their own homes with the help of equipment, from walking sticks to hospital beds and hoists, working alongside physios, nurses, pharmacists and GPs, and when working

in Adult Social Care, I applied for grants to adapt people's homes to meet their longer-term needs.

I have been with Unite Carers for many years as a family carer for my parents and, when things got difficult, I always knew there was someone at the end of the phone to support me with a friendly voice. I feel that I have been a carer for all of my life; it's in my nature. When I was a child growing up, I helped care for my sister who had Down Syndrome. We were sisters and good friends, up to the day she died.

I volunteered for Unite Carers because I thought I had good skills that I could offer to help people in their caring role. I particularly like to support people in rural areas as I feel they sometimes miss out on social contact by living in isolation and by their caring role.

My best hobby is cycling and I have a very old E-bike. When I go out for a spin, I always meet someone and stop for a chat. Last year a lady told me where I could find some plums and I made some jam – Making jam and marmalade is my second-best hobby! (*Editor's note: the orange and satsuma marmalade is the best I've tasted!*).

The best thing about being a volunteer is the feedback I get; it makes me feel proud that I am helping someone. Whether this is as part of the team, in the office or at the coffee meeting in Bampton.

Join 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 Winter 2024

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 16+ 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	To be confirmed		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

PLEASE CALL THE UNITE CARERS OFFICE TO REGISTER - 01884 257511