



Carers 4 Carers

Finding support through supporting each other

April—May 2022

Spring has sprung but I'm not sure someone has told the thermometer! Hopefully it will be warmer by the Easter weekend. The holiday is an opportunity for people to enjoy the time going away, spending time in the garden or meeting family and friends. I do hope you are able to take some time for renewal although for carers and their loved-ones, this isn't always possible. Perhaps it is time to say 'I need some time for myself, too' and make sure you grab the odd moment for some 'me' time, doing whatever helps you relax. Remember, self-care isn't selfish.

We have noticed that, since re-opening our meetings in September, very sadly a number of carers coming to us have already either reached, or on the brink of, crisis. Sometimes we don't see crisis coming as the days and weeks can follow a relentless routine. Sometimes we don't recognise the need for support while things are ticking along relatively calmly. Sometimes, crisis comes out of the blue. The pandemic has also affected carers' access to support for the last two years. If you are unable to attend our meetings, perhaps because you can't leave your loved one and it's not practical to bring them to the hall, do get in touch and let us know if you would like some telephone support; it can help to talk. If you know of someone – friend, family, neighbour – who is caring, do encourage them to get in touch or, with their permission, let us know their details and we will contact them.

OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS We are now removing the need to book a place for the carers' meeting. However, please continue to let us know that you intend to bring your loved one to attend the Companionship Group. This is so that we can be sure that we can provide appropriate care. It is also no longer necessary to stagger times of arrival so please feel welcome to join us any time after 10.30 a.m.

Carers4Carers meets on the **fourth** Friday of the month, except in December, when it's the second Friday. We meet at Kineton Village Hall, Mill Street, Kineton, CV35 OLB, 10.30 a.m. until 12 noon. We start with time for coffee and chat and then, if a speaker or workshop is scheduled, this will usually begin at about 11 o'clock.

Friday 22nd April (please note the date as there are 5 Fridays in April. We are NOT meeting on April 29th) - as we look towards November when we will be celebrating our 10th Anniversary, Penny Varley, ceramic artist, will set us on the road to creating a group memento. It'll be fun, therapeutic and, for many of you, something different. Don't worry—you don't need to be an artist!

Friday 27th May - we're going to 'chill out with Tai Chi'. Our guest will lead the Companionship Group and Carers in two short separate sessions to introduce you to this beneficial and gentle activity. Anita will be with us to offer carers some lovely TLC.

Friday 24th June— It's some time since we had any music so this month we're putting that right with Chiltern Music.

Carers4Carers is part of the network of Omega Care for Life Meeting Point Support Groups Reg. Charity No. 1120322

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Stratford District Council has become aware of a scam that is happening across the district. This is in connection with the £150 Council Tax rebate.

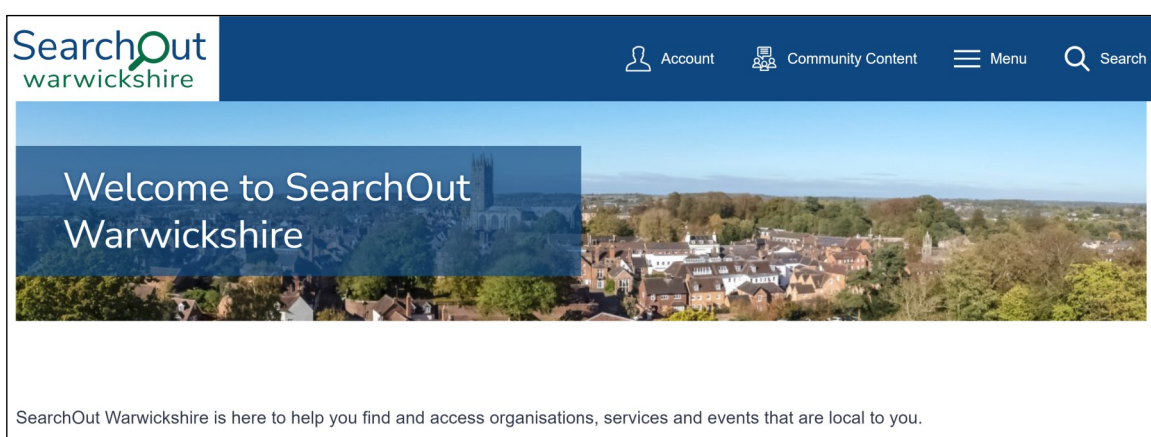


It has been reported that residents have been receiving calls from phone numbers which start with 020. They are from individuals claiming to be from Stratford-on-Avon District Council, asking for bank details so that they can pay the £150 Council Tax rebate into people's accounts.

Please note that the council are **not** ringing residents. Enclosed with your Council Tax Bill was a flyer giving details of the rebate. For those who pay their Council Tax by direct debit, most will receive the payment directly into their bank account. If you do not pay this way, the Council will confirm how they will receive the payment. The flyer reminds residents to be sure that any communication with regard to this comes from the council. There is also a message on all pages of the Council website and social media postings. Their Contact Centre will be able to advise.

CHANGE IN THE WARWICKSHIRE DIRECTORY

I am frequently asked for information regarding care agencies, care and nursing homes and many other agencies. The County Council has had a directory, which is updated each year, known as the Warwickshire Directory, available online and also, on request, hard copies. This Directory has now been replaced by SearchOut Warwickshire and was launched on 29th March. The new version of the Directory has been designed to make it easy for people to find health and social care information as well as other community resources.



Information has been imported across from the original directory and there is an opportunity for users to provide feedback on their use of the

site. Personally, I thought it was certainly easy to find the information you are looking for but I was not happy with the layout of the individual pages. Looking at the Carers4Carers page, previously the information was set out in well-defined paragraphs whereas now it appears mostly as one long paragraph. I shall certainly be feeding back on this. Take a look and don't forget to leave your feedback. You will find a link to SearchOut on our back page.

ARE YOU CLAIMING THE BENEFITS TO WHICH YOU ARE ENTITLED?

Knowing what you are entitled to in terms of benefits and discounts can be a minefield. The best way to find advice is by talking to Citizens Advice. They are aiming to resume face-to-face appointments this month in Leamington and Stratford.

If you have online access, there are a number of benefit calculators available, recommended by the Government. One of these is **EntitledTo**. Complete a simple questionnaire with multiple choice answers and at the end you will be told if you are entitled to any benefits. Useful information on various benefits is provided as you progress through the questionnaire.

There is not room to list all the benefits here so I will mention three briefly.

Attendance Allowance— if you have an illness or disability which affects your daily life and are of State Pensionable age, you may be entitled to this. It is likely that the person you care for already has this but do you, as the carer, qualify too? It's worth checking. This benefit is not means tested.

Carers' Allowance - this is payable if you care for more than 35 hours a week and the person you care for receives Attendance Allowance or other similar benefit. You must not earn more than £132 a week. If you have to pay care costs that allow you to work, these can be deducted from this figure.

Council Tax Discounts— if you live alone, you are entitled to a 25% discount on your Council Tax bill. If the person you care for suffers from a permanent severe mental impairment and is in receipt of a benefit, they are disregarded for the purposes of Council Tax. If there is no other person living with you at the same address, you would therefore receive the single person's discount. To check if you qualify, contact your District Council office.

See our back page for contact details.

CONTINUING SUPPORT

Earlier, I mentioned how easy it is for carers to find they are suddenly in crisis. A spell in hospital for your loved one can sometimes lead to them being transferred to residential care. What follows for the carer can be an emotional upheaval, including feelings of bereavement. This will coincide with the point when social services no longer consider you to be a carer.

From experience, I know it's not possible to 'turn the tap off'. For most carers, this change of circumstances will definitely mean that you are still a carer, but with different responsibilities. You no longer provide personal care, but you are still an emotional support for your loved one. I found visiting at meal times so that I could help with feeding my husband gave us an intimate time together. You no longer juggle the visits of a care team, but you have a pile of administrative tasks to complete. Dealing with changes in council tax because you are now living alone, completing an electoral roll form because your loved one no longer shares your address, not to mention all the financial anxieties that come with residential care or the outcome from a Continuing Healthcare Assessment; the list goes on.

Talking to other carers who have been through this can be an enormous help. I wish I had had that opportunity when it happened to me and I longed for a support group offered within the Nursing Home when I could talk to other family members. I just was not prepared.

So, if your loved one has entered residential care, please don't think you are not entitled to be a member of our group or attend our meetings. In our eyes, you are very much still a carer and we are here to support you through what can be a traumatic time.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND LINKS



- **Carers Trust Heart of England**— www.carerstrusthofe.org.uk;
024 7610 1040 Option 4
- To make a consumer complaint, obtain consumer help and advice or report an issue to Trading Standards, please contact the **Citizens Advice Consumer Service** on 0808 223 1133.
- For consumer or business help and advice, including details of our approved trader scheme, please visit our website: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/tradingstandards>
- Advice on scams and rogue traders: Report fraud directly to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040 or Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0800 223 1133. More advice available at: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/doorstepsellers ; www.actionfraud.police.uk/.
- **Healthwatch Warwickshire**— www.healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk ; 01926 422823 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays) and email info@healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk
- **Silverline**—available 24/7 as well as a befriending service www.thesilverline.org.uk/ . Email: info@thesilverline.org.uk or phone 0800 4 70 80 90
- **Warwickshire County Council**: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ 01926 410 410 . For social media go to their facebook page: www.facebook.com/WarwickshireCountyCouncil or search 'Social Media' on the website for details of dedicated links such as Instagram and Twitter.
- **Searchout Warwickshire**—the replacement for the Warwickshire Directory can be found at <https://searchout.warwickshire.gov.uk/>
- **Benefits advice**—Citizens Advice—**0300 330 1183** **EntitledTo** (Benefits Calculator) can be found at <https://www.entitledto.co.uk/> Stratford District Council 01789 267575 or <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/>

COPING WITH STRESS

We've discussed a lot recently about ways to grab a few minutes for 'time out'. Last month, we talked about the benefits of writing down our thoughts. In Dr Rangan Chatterjee's new book *Happy Mind, Happy Life* he explains how stress is caused by things over which we have no control. If we have more control, we feel calmer. We can't control many things that we don't like, but by writing down our thoughts and journaling for five minutes, we can change our attitude towards them, enable us to see things in a different light and feel calmer.

POSITIVITY CORNER

Never regret a day in your life. Good days give you happiness, bad days give you experience, worst days give you lessons, and the **best** days give you memories.

