



Carers 4 Carers

Finding support through supporting each other

April 2024

What with one thing and another, March seemed an incredibly busy month. I hope you had a chance to wind down a little over the Easter break. Easter is traditionally a time when for those with gardens, it's a time to start thinking about tidying up after the winter and preparing for new life.

Carers often tell us that they find time spent in the garden is relaxing and refreshing. What can be better than pottering around, scratching out some weeds or planting some salad seeds in a pot by the back door or on a balcony? If the birds are singing and the sun is shining as well, then you'll feel as though you've won the lottery. TV gardeners remind us that we don't need a large garden to benefit or even to grow some salad plants. A little space for a couple of pots is all that's needed. Just think, step outside your door and gather some fresh salad leaves that can be on your plate in minutes. It not only tastes delicious but there's a sense of achievement as well.



OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS

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 the main part of our meeting will start at about 11 o'clock. It is not necessary to book in advance for either the Carers' Group or the Companionship Group. However, if you'd like to know more or would like to introduce yourself before joining us for a meeting, you are welcome to get in touch by phone or email.

Friday 26th April— Our Carers' meetings aren't all about caring. We also try to give you an opportunity to escape for a little while and put it on the back burner. This morning is one of those times. Come and enjoy an hour in the company of David Howe, retired Warwickshire schools' inspector. Go for an amusing walk with him down the Memory Lane of your school days with his talk 'Willingly to School?' Whether

they were happy times or not, there'll be plenty here to help you smile.

Friday 24th May— this month we have no speaker. There'll be time to chat more with your fellow carers, enjoy a mini-massage with our lovely therapist, Anita, and generally relax. You are welcome to bring a creative project such as knitting or artwork if you would like to. We'll finish with a little music.



Carers4Carers is part of the network of Omega Support Groups Reg. Charity No. 1120322

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WE'RE GOING DIGITAL

Do these words send shivers down your spine?

It seems that everything is 'going digital', 'going paperless', or even 'going smart'. We know that things change and modernise and organisations are quick to point out the benefits. They often fail to highlight the implications for those who find it difficult to keep up. Take the outcry over the proposal to close booking offices at railway stations. 'Everyone has smart phones these days' is the response when people complain. Actually, not everyone does and not everyone has wi-fi at home. Not everyone is able to use these devices and in some outlying rural areas, wi-fi isn't even available.

Some time ago changes to the UK's home phone network were announced. The current analogue system is 40 years old so it needs upgrading. The new service is called Digital Voice and will be rolled out by all providers across the UK by the end of 2025. The West Midlands is due to be switched over during Spring 2024.



Digital Voice means that landline calls will be made over the broadband network. Instead of plugging your phone into the old phone plug, you will plug it into your broadband router. Most phone handsets will work with the new system but I have heard of several people having to change their phones handsets.

You may have received a letter from BT in January this year but the information in it is scanty. It tells you that you can't use your phone if there is a power cut and/or that your broadband is down. It tells you that your mobile will still work as long as it's charged and you have a signal. It doesn't tell you what to do if you don't have a broadband router.

It tells you that telecare services won't work with Digital Voice and that you need to contact BT if you use this. I have the Lifeline monitoring system and have had a letter from Warwick District Council advising me to ask BT to put a marker on my account in readiness for the switch. They also advise you to ask for a free battery backup unit.

This short article can't cover everything. AbilityNet, which supports older and disabled people with technology, have much more information on their website, which was updated last month. If you are unable to access it, ask a family member or friend to show you. The address is abilitynet.org.uk/ and type 'Digital Voice' into the search bar on the site. If you are attending our meetings, we will have an ipad available that you can use.

According to the article, customers who fall into the following categories will not be forcibly switched until suitable solutions have been found to the issues that have been found:

- use a healthcare pendant,
- are over 70,
- only use landlines
- have no mobile signal
- have disclosed additional needs

If any of these apply to you, I suggest you contact BT sooner rather than later. The number they have given in their letter is 0330 1234 150.

IT'S TIME TO SAY 'THANK YOU'

As a small charity, our costs aren't enormous. There are, of course, our running costs, such as paying for the hire of the hall, printing, publicity and travel costs. However, to make our meetings varied and beneficial, we often need to pay for speakers to come along, for materials for activities and then there's all that tea and coffee. Of course, we also like to add little treats every now and then.

We depend on the time given by volunteers, donations from carers and members of the public and grants in order to keep everything going.

While from time to time we hold fundraising events, as a small group we either need to limit what we do to something manageable or rely on others to help out. When our friends in Tysoe offered to do just this, it was a wonderful boost. We are delighted to report that the Quiz Night, held last month in

Tysoe, was extremely successful. Not only was it a great evening, but it raised almost £370 and also raised awareness of our group and the support we offer to local rural carers. A huge big 'thank you' to our friends in Tysoe who worked so hard on our behalf.

Lisa, our Assistant Co-ordinator and Treasurer, also does an amazing job in compiling bids in order to apply for grants. Grants come from a variety of sources. Ours mostly come from different councils and a number of philanthropic organisations such as the Birmingham Hospital Saturday Fund.

Most recently, Lisa has been successful in securing a grant of £300 from Kineton Parish Council and £200 from Stour Valley Lions which will go towards the cost of running our meetings over the next few months. Thank you, Lisa, for all the work you put into making these bids and to Kineton PC and the Stour Valley Lions for recognising the value of our work enough to want to help us.

NEW RIGHTS FOR CARERS

The start of the new financial year on April 6th also marked the occasion of the Carer's Leave Act 2023 coming into force. This act has been hard won and is a major step forward in improving the rights of working carers. It has taken years of campaigning by Carers UK.

So what is the new right? Any employees who are unpaid carers now have the right to five days' unpaid leave from work in a year, in support of their caring responsibilities. Carers need to be providing long-term care and this is now defined in law. Any carer taking Carer's Leave will have the same employment protection as that given for family related leave, such as maternity or paternity leave and parental bereavement. This includes protection from dismissal because they have taken Carer's Leave.

Carers UK welcome this legislation but recognise that it is the beginning and will immediately begin to build on this success. Whether or not this is something that benefits you as a carer, we must also take note that at last, government is beginning to show signs of listening.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND LINKS



- **Act on Energy**— for information about energy efficiency and hardship support. Phone 0800 988 2881 or visit actonenergy.org.uk/
- **Caring Together, Warwickshire**, the carer support service for Warwickshire carers. Phone 0800 297 5544 or visit www.caringtogetherwarwickshire.org.uk
- For consumer complaints, consumer help and advice or to report an issue to Trading Standards, please contact the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 0808 223 1133.
- Healthwatch Warwickshire— www.healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk ; 01926 422823 (9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on weekdays) and email info@healthwatchwarwickshire.co.uk
- **Omega**— phone 01743 245 088 or email info@omega.uk.net . These are also the contact details for Letterbox and Chatterbox
- **Samaritans**— phone 0116 123. Information about others ways of getting in touch can be found at <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- **Searchout Warwickshire**—the replacement for the Warwickshire Directory can be found at <https://searchout.warwickshire.gov.uk/>
- **Shipston Home Nursing**— phone 01608 664850 or find more information on their website: www.shipstonhomenursing.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
- **VASA**— for transport to medical appointments and support groups phone 01789 262889. They require at least 3 days' notice.
- Warwickshire County Council: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ 01926 410 410

BOOKING YOUR TRANSPORT TO OUR

Please let us know if you would like a seat on the Back&4th community bus by **Friday 19th April**. This is for anyone travelling from Wellesbourne or Kineton or nearby villages. If you're not sure whether you can come, it's still worth ringing up and booking a seat. Use the phone number or email address below to let us know and we'll be in touch the following week with a pick-up time. We request a small contribution towards the cost for those able to pay it.

POSITIVITY CORNER

A time to reflect and perhaps to smile

