



Carers 4 Carers

Finding support through supporting each other

February 2023



I wouldn't want to wish my life away but I have to say I'm always pleased when we come to the end of January. It means that spring is a little nearer and with it the emergence of one of my favourite flowers, the snowdrop. We've had some really cold spells this winter and although I love those beautiful cold clear days with a bright blue sky, they do also mean those energy meters will be spinning round fast. Last month we had a helpful visit from Alwynne Curley from Act on Energy. I took some notes and share some of the information in this newsletter for those of you who were unable to attend.

This month we welcome Hanna Sokolyk, a Ukrainian violinist who is living in Kineton. She'll be entertaining our carers and companions during our meeting. She plays everything from pop and rock to classical so there will be something for everyone. The date will be a significant one for Hanna as it is the anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. If you have one of the sunflower brooches that I was making last year, or alternatively an awareness ribbon, please think about wearing it to show your support. I'll have some spare ones ready for you so don't worry if you can't find yours.

We were delighted to learn last month that Carers4Carers has been awarded a grant from the County Council's Carers' Innovation Fund. This will help fund several of our meetings this year. It also allows us to purchase a keyboard and selection of small percussion instruments so that we can enjoy the benefits of more music making across both our groups. Well done Lisa, on another successful bid.

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. Anyone wishing to bring their loved one to attend the Companionship Group, especially for the first time, is asked to contact us in advance so that we can be sure that we can provide appropriate care.

Friday 24th February— Ukrainian violinist, Hanna Sokolyk, who is living with her host family in Kineton, will entertain us. This will be for both carers and companions. Anita will be on hand to offer some gentle hand massage treats.

Friday 24th March— Jaqui Smithson is a mixed media artist. She will show you how she takes

raw wool and, using the technique of wet felting, magically creates the most beautiful pictures. Jacqui is an entertaining demonstrator. The Companions will be doing a bit of gardening!

Friday 28th April— A visit from Wayne Cooke and colleagues from the Fire Brigade. They will be offering advice on fire and home safety.

SOME NOTES FROM OUR ACT ON ENERGY DISCUSSION

All carers should apply to be placed on their supplier's priority service register. It is a free support service to anyone in a vulnerable situation. In brief, the support it provides includes priority support in an emergency, advanced notice of planned power cuts and a password scheme. To be added to the register, contact your energy supplier and provide your contact details and information about your needs. There is too much information to be included here and so I am enclosing a separate page with the information provided by Ofgem.



If you have a complaint against your supplier or network operator (in our case, National Grid), you can complain by email, letter or telephone. Be sure to keep a record of any contacts you have, including a phone log. Details should be on your bill. Citizens Advice can provide you with template complaints letters and also have the power to act on your behalf. Act on Energy can help by setting up a 3 way call with your supplier. If eight weeks have passed and you have reached deadlock or you are unhappy with the company's response, you can complain to the Energy Ombudsman. Your energy company should tell you how to do this.

If you are unable to resolve an issue with the network operator, you should complain to Ofgem. Act on Energy can handhold vulnerable customers. They can help with energy bill advice, fuel switching, grant availability and referring to other agencies as appropriate. They can offer home visits. They also have a list of approved contractors if you should need work done.

The Energy Saving Trust provides helpful information on keeping your energy costs down. I'm attaching a copy of this for those of you who receive your newsletter by email. A computer will be available at meetings for those who receive a posted copy. Please ask to use it.

Government support Every household is eligible to receive a £400 discount on their energy bills. This is being paid in instalments of £66 and £67 per month between October and March. You will receive it either as a discount against your bill or by a payment into your bank account. For most people, this is automatic. Anyone on a traditional pre-payment meter should receive their discount in vouchers. In addition to these payments, if you receive a low-income benefit, disability benefit or winter fuel payment, you may receive additional cost of living payments.

Alternative fuel payments of £200 This is being paid to anyone who does not have an electricity account such as people who live in park homes or sheltered housing where the monthly rent or service charge includes their energy bills. It is also payable to those who use alternative fuels such as LPG, oil, coal etc because they are not on the mains gas grid. If you pay your energy bill by direct debit, the payment will go into your bank account. If you pay when you receive your bill, it will be credited to your energy account. Anyone with a pay as you go meter will receive details of how the payment will be made.

TECHNOLOGY AND MARMITE

What do technology and marmite have in common? Yes, you guessed it, you either love it or hate it!

For the younger generation, who have grown up with it and learnt how to use it, it seems it's almost an extension of their bodies. For older folk, it's not quite so easy. We often say if you want to sort out your TV or phone etc., ask a 6 year old. For many, we just don't get the point. Let's face it, we've managed so far without.



But as we get older, things become more difficult, mentally and physically and technology can help. It can also help us save money. How often have we been told that not leaving TVs and appliances on standby can reduce our energy bills? Well, that's all well and good, but if



you've got to move the furniture or bend down to reach the plug, what do you do?

We hear a lot about smart plugs, smart speakers, smart this and that. How can they help? If you already have internet in your home, these can be easy to set up and the beauty of many of them is that they are controlled by your voice. You just say 'Alexa, turn on/off the TV' and it miraculously springs to life. No

need to bend down and switch it on and no excuses for leaving it in standby. Smart light bulbs can be useful as you can turn them on and off with your voice which can be really useful if your hands are full or you're struggling to keep your balance.

Voice activated devices can also be very useful at reminding you about something. For anyone coping with memory loss, this can be invaluable. You can ask the device to remind you to take your pills, for instance.

If you don't have an internet connection in your home, there are plugs that can be used with a small remote control handset.

There are, of course, many specialist technologies that can improve the life of someone who struggles with everyday tasks but the ones I have mentioned are freely available to buy without a premium price tag. It's true that all this can be a bit of a minefield. If you have children or grandchildren who are 'into' technology, why not ask them for help? I'm sure they'd be delighted to help set you up.

MICHAEL WOODMAN

We were very sorry to learn at our last meeting that Michael had very recently passed away in hospital following a fall. We send our love and condolences to Mary and her family.

BLANKETS

In last month's newsletter I wrote that a number of handmade, lap-size blankets had been donated. We were delighted when Pam came along to deliver them and many of them have gone to good homes. We have one left. "Warm bags" mentioned at our meeting are available from Wellesbourne Library.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND LINKS



- **Caring Together, Warwickshire**, the new statutory carer support service for Warwickshire carers at phone 0800 297 5544 or visit www.caringtogetherwarwickshire.org.uk .
- For consumer complaint, consumer help and advice or to 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 an 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/>
- **Act on Energy**— for information about energy efficiency and hardship support. Phone 0800 988 2881 or visit actonenergy.org.uk/

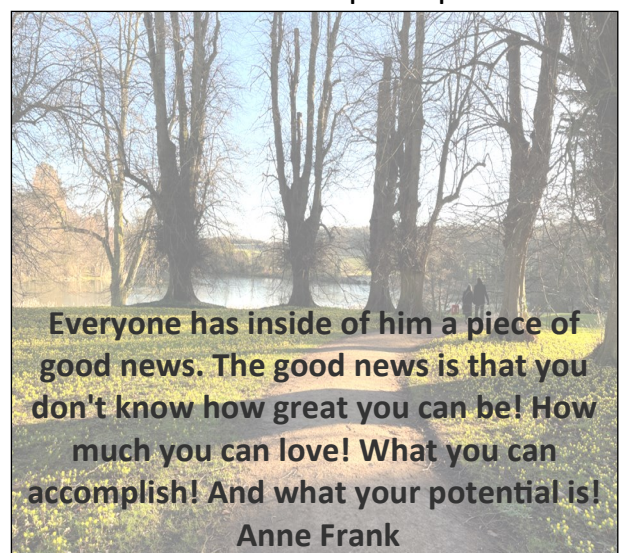
BACK&4TH TRANSPORT

We are able to help with getting to and from our meetings. Fully accessible, Back&4th can pick you up from home in Wellesbourne or from the Village Hall. We can also pick up in Kineton or nearby. Please book your place by 17th February at 6 p.m. There is a small charge for those able to pay it. Please phone or email for more details.



POSITIVITY CORNER

A time to reflect and perhaps to smile



Everyone has inside of him a piece of good news. The good news is that you don't know how great you can be! How much you can love! What you can accomplish! And what your potential is!
Anne Frank