

# Caring

Your members' magazine

NEWS • CAMPAIGNS • SUPPORT • EXPERIENCES

Issue 65 | March 2023



## Looking after us both

How staying active helps Jackie care for herself and her husband

**Carers Poverty Commission**  
Uniting against carer poverty

**Cost of living**  
Help managing your costs



# Member survey results

Over 1,150 members completed the survey and we were really pleased that over 80% of you said you would recommend membership of Carers UK to a family member or friend who is caring.

## About our members

- 74% of respondents said they had been caring for some time, with the majority caring for 15 years or more.
- The vast majority of respondents said they were caring full time, with 46% caring for 90 hours a week or more.

*Which part of membership is most important to you?*

1. Being part of a national movement of carers
2. Regular email updates
3. *Caring* magazine.

*What is the best thing about being a Carers UK member?*

- You said – information, support and belonging.

*“Having somewhere to turn for advice is priceless.”*

*“Being a member is more of a psychological boost, allowing me to feel a sense of belonging and therefore less ostracised.”*

*“Regular contact and updates and knowing that an organisation somewhere cares a little about me.”*

*How has your involvement with Carers UK helped?*

- Almost half of you said you feel more knowledgeable about your rights as a carer and the practical support available.
- A third of you said that you feel less lonely and isolated as a result of being a member.
- Over a third of you said you feel like you have a voice.

## Our updates

- 80% of you found our email updates excellent or good.
- 90% of you said you found *Caring* magazine excellent or good.

*“Find it very interesting reading stories from other carers.”*

What you'd like to see more of:

- updates on our campaigns and policy work
- real life stories from carers
- articles from experts and help and advice.



**74%**  
ad been caring  
for some time



**46%**  
are caring for  
90hrs+ a week

## Online meetups

- 18% of you had attended an online meetup (Care for a Cuppa, Share and Learn, Me Time). For those of you who didn't attend, the main barrier was a lack of time.
- For those who had attended, 79% would encourage a friend or family member to join.

*“[It's good to] chat honestly about how you feel. You feel guilty if you are honest about how you feel with friends and family - it's a safe space.”*

*Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the survey and share your thoughts with us.*



Welcome to your latest issue of *Caring* magazine. We've hit the ground running in 2023 and have much to update you on as we head into spring.

I'm delighted to say that since the last edition of *Caring*, the Carer's Leave Bill not only had its third reading in the House of Commons in February but has now successfully completed its first reading in the House of Lords.

This landmark bill will be a game changer for all working carers if it becomes law, as we very much hope it will. It means all employers will have to be aware of carers' needs in their workplaces, changing the lives of millions of carers who juggle work and care.

We've also analysed the newly released data from the 2021 Census, which shows a significant increase in the number of unpaid carers providing higher intensity of care, and an increasing proportion of unpaid carers in the most deprived areas of England


and Wales. We'll be using the evidence provided in these figures to continue to push the government to develop a fully funded strategy to support unpaid carers, which would help millions around the country get the practical and financial support they need to care without putting their health and livelihoods on hold.

I'd like to thank the huge number of you that responded to our recent members' survey, which provides us with incredibly useful information about what we're getting right and what more you want from us. Hearing directly from members is key to our work, and our staff will be working hard in the coming months to use your feedback to improve how and what we deliver for you.


Best wishes,  
**Helen**

Our mission is to make life better for carers:

We give expert advice, information and support 

We connect carers so no one has to care alone 

We campaign together for lasting change 

We innovate to find new ways to reach and support carers. 

## CARERS UK HELPLINE

T 0808 808 7777

Opening hours:  
Monday–Friday, 9am–6pm

E [advice@carersuk.org](mailto:advice@carersuk.org)

## KEEP IN TOUCH

Carers UK  
20 Great Dover Street,  
London SE1 4LX  
T 020 7378 4999  
E [info@carersuk.org](mailto:info@carersuk.org)  
[carersuk.org](http://carersuk.org)

Carers Scotland  
T 0141 445 3070  
E [info@carerscotland.org](mailto:info@carerscotland.org)  
[carerscotland.org](http://carerscotland.org)

Carers Wales  
T 029 2081 1370  
E [info@carerswales.org](mailto:info@carerswales.org)  
[carerswales.org](http://carerswales.org)

Carers Northern Ireland  
T 028 9043 9843  
E [info@carersni.org](mailto:info@carersni.org)  
[carersni.org](http://carersni.org)

## In this issue...



Brightening  
Blue Monday



Caring for someone  
with sight loss



Green fingered  
gardening tips

## Celebrating our 500th online meetup



This January, we were really excited to celebrate our 500th online meetup event for carers.

Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, thousands of carers have found connection through Care for a Cuppa sessions, or taken part in fun and relaxing activities such as Pilates, meditation and dance with Share and Learn.

To mark our 500th meetup, session attendees enjoyed some uplifting singing from Norman Blackmore, a

Carers UK member and Care for a Cuppa regular from Wales. The group also spent some time reflecting on what the sessions have meant to them.

If you haven't tried our online meetups before, why not give them a go? Find out more about the sessions and how to join at [carersuk.org/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing/online-meetups](https://carersuk.org/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing/online-meetups)

**“As a carer, I received no training... but through connecting with a positive network of support with other carers, I have gained strength in knowing that I am not alone.”**

– Jaycee, Carers UK member

## Fundraising events

Do you know a keen runner or someone looking to take on a new challenge? Do they want to join #TeamCarers and raise money for Carers UK?



We have places available in a range of events including:

- Cotswold Way Challenge 24–25 June 2023
- Cardiff Half Marathon 1 Oct 2023
- Royal Parks Half Marathon 8 Oct 2023
- Bath Half Marathon 15 Oct 2023
- Manchester Half Marathon 15 Oct 2023.

All members of #TeamCarers will receive support from the fundraising team in the lead up to the event and a Carers UK running vest to wear on the day.



For more information and to secure a place, email [fundraising@carersuk.org](mailto:fundraising@carersuk.org)

# Carers Week 2023 theme announced



We're pleased to announce that this year Carers Week will be taking place from 5-11 June 2023, with charities, organisations and individuals getting together to show support for the millions of unpaid carers in the UK – and to spread the word about the challenges they face throughout the year and what needs to be done to improve their daily lives.

Carers Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring and help people who don't think of themselves as having caring responsibilities to identify as carers and access much-needed support.

The campaign is brought to life by thousands of individuals and organisations who come together to provide support for carers, run activities and highlight the vital role carers play in our communities.

The theme for Carers Week 2023 is:

## **'Recognising and supporting carers in the community'**

This Carers Week, we want communities across the UK to come together to recognise the huge contribution unpaid carers make to society.

Politicians, employers, health and social services, businesses, education providers and members of the public all have a role to play in raising awareness of caring and making sure carers are able to access the information and support they need.



Visit [carersweek.org/newsletter](https://carersweek.org/newsletter) to get the latest updates and information about how you can get involved in Carers Week 2023.

## Carers Wales Carers Summit

We held our biggest ever Wales Carers Summit throughout February with 16 sessions of carers telling us about their ideas around the priorities for change should be.

The event culminated in a plenary session with decision makers from across key sectors of health, social care and the Welsh government.

Once again, carers voices are shaping the way decision-makers are thinking and we'd like to thank everyone who participated.



# Carers Northern Ireland Summit

The Carers Northern Ireland Summit 2023 is just around the corner, and there is still time to secure your free place.

Taking place on Monday 20 March, this hybrid event can be attended in person at NICVA in Belfast and online via Zoom.

The day will focus on what a new Carers Strategy for Northern Ireland should look like and how it could address the biggest challenges facing local carers today.

With invited expert speakers from around the world, we will examine the future of carer support in Northern Ireland and international best practice. Some of the invited speakers at the conference include:

- **Peter May**, Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health



- **Stecy Yghemonos**, Director of Eurocarers
- **Professor Sue Yeandle**, Director of the Centre for International Research on Care Labour and Equalities.

The conference will be a great opportunity for collaboration, networking and the sharing of ideas.

To attend or ask any questions, please contact [reception@carersni.org](mailto:reception@carersni.org) or 028 9043 9843

## NI Carer Poverty Commission

Carers Northern Ireland has recently launched its Carer Poverty Commission with a group of experts, and will be spending the next 12 months gathering evidence on the impact of poverty on local households, organisations and directly from carers.

The Commission is led by Carers NI and involves unpaid carers along with key figures from academia, the community sector, food bank providers and other poverty experts.

If you're an unpaid carer in Northern Ireland, the Carer Poverty Commission is keen to hear and involve you. There are opportunities to contribute and have your say across the spring and summer months.

The Commission's Chair, Helen Barnard, a renowned poverty policy expert, had this to say about the work of the commission:

*"Caring for our loved ones is at the heart of most families and communities, but it is too often undervalued. It's unacceptable that those doing this vital work so often pay a heavy penalty, both financially and emotionally. We can and must take action to ensure carers have financial security and the right support to enable them to not just survive but to thrive."*

The Commission will be designing recommendations for the Stormont Executive to help tackle poverty and destitution among Northern Ireland's carer population.

For more info on the Carer Poverty Commission, email [povertycommission@carersni.org](mailto:povertycommission@carersni.org)

# New Scottish carers strategy published

A new strategy for carers in Scotland was published in December 2022 by the Scottish government.



The wide-ranging strategy addresses five different areas which affect carers: living with Covid; valuing, recognising and supporting carers; health and social care support; social and financial inclusion; and young carers. The strategy includes an

action plan, and Carers Scotland and other carer organisations will be working with the Scottish government on how these areas are implemented and monitored – and how this and other work delivers on improving the lives of carers in Scotland.

The full strategy is available at [www.gov.scot/isbn/9781805253037](https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781805253037) and the executive summary can be found at [www.gov.scot/isbn/9781805253020](https://www.gov.scot/isbn/9781805253020)

## Carers featured on Scottish television

We were very pleased that STV chose to highlight the challenges that carers face on a dedicated edition of Scotland Tonight recently.

The programme featured two carers: Julie, who cares for her mum, and Nicky, who cares for her two sons. These carers generously shared their lives on camera and talked about the difficulties they had experienced (and continue to experience) in supporting their loved ones. Alison from Carers of West Lothian also took part, talking about the support carers need and what carers centres can provide.

Fiona Collie from Carers Scotland and Annie, a carer from Glasgow, appeared live in the studio, talking about

what needs to change and what help is needed. The Minister for Social Care, Kevin Stewart MSP, also took part.

An important part of the programme was to encourage carers watching to come forward for support. We know that many carers can take years to recognise themselves as carers and reach out for support, including from our helpline and from carers centres. Encouragingly, we have had a number of carers reach out to us at the Carers Scotland office and to our helpline, taking the first step to

accessing practical, financial and emotional support.

### Watch

Although the full programme is no longer available to watch online, the film of both carers and Alison is available on STV's YouTube at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rco1rdbMXX8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rco1rdbMXX8)



# Brightening Blue Monday

The winter months can feel particularly isolating for unpaid carers. To help lift carers' spirits this January, we welcomed over 280 carers to Brightening Blue Monday, an afternoon of inspiring wellbeing tasters and supportive Care for a Cuppa chats.



We also sent out 100 mini hampers to Carers UK members selected at random to provide a small boost at what is often a difficult time of year.

Tasters on offer included energising fitness from Carers Active instructor Sophie, relaxing mindfulness with Mike Buckley, and self care and sleep tips from former carer and author Sara Challice.

Carers were also treated to some inspiring poems and uplifting songs from Carers UK members Sarifa Patel and Norman Blackmore, and Matt Hill rounded off the event with some moving folk songs.

*“The whole afternoon has been great. Sometimes refreshing, sad, entertaining,*

*useful, inspiring... well done and thank you so much.”*

*“I did enjoy yesterday’s virtual session and particularly liked the invigorating exercise. Norman had me laughing until I cried. Sara’s tips are very helpful indeed.”*

*“Thank you so much for the wonderful hamper. My daughter who is a young carer and I loved opening it. So kind and thoughtful of you to brighten up a very wet dark day in January.”*

We were really pleased that 92% of carers who joined Brightening Blue Monday rated the event as ‘excellent’ or ‘good’, and 85% said they felt better for attending. This event was funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and we are grateful for their support.

**“Thank you so much for the wonderful hamper... So kind and thoughtful of you to brighten up a very wet dark day in January.”**

If you couldn’t attend, here are some wellbeing resources to help lift your spirits:

**Carers Active Hub** - free videos and resources to help you stay active and well: [carersuk.org/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing/carers-active-hub](https://carersuk.org/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing/carers-active-hub)

**Sound Asleep** recording on sleep and relaxation for carers: [youtu.be/p1s1Tr9I5oo](https://youtu.be/p1s1Tr9I5oo)

**Our Helpline** is available at [advice@carersuk.org](mailto:advice@carersuk.org) or you can call 0808 808 7777 from Monday to Friday, 9am – 6pm.

Visit the **wellbeing section** on our website for pages on looking after your body, sleep and taking a break: [carersuk.org/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing](https://carersuk.org/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing)

You can also find out more about **carer’s assessments**: [carersuk.org/help-and-advice/practical-support/carers-assessment](https://carersuk.org/help-and-advice/practical-support/carers-assessment)



# Saving money when getting out and about

It can be a fine balance to manage the finances in a household while ensuring those you care for are happy, stimulated, and can do the things they enjoy.



There are a number of different schemes offering free or reduced cost tickets for carers, but finding out about these schemes and how to use them can be a minefield. We share some tips to getting discounted or free entry.

## How to “prove” you are a carer

Sometimes you’ll be asked to show evidence of your carer status. Of course, in many places there is no such thing as an official carer ID card. Here are a few example forms of self-identification that are commonly accepted:

- Attendance Allowance letter (AA)
- Carer’s Allowance letter of award
- Disability Living Allowance letter (DLA)
- Personal Independence Payment letter (PIP)
- Armed Forces Independence Payment letter (AFIP)
- Valid Blue Badge.

Letters will generally need to be dated within the last 12 months. It’s also worth getting in touch with your local council and/or carers centre, to see if they operate a local carer card scheme.

The person you care for may be eligible for an Access Card, which can be marked with a symbol to indicate that they need someone accompanying them. This can be used to gain free access for a carer at many venues, which can be searched on their website. Please note that this card costs £15 and is valid for three years: [www.accesscard.online](https://www.accesscard.online)

## How to find a scheme

Sometimes it takes a little bit of detective work to find existing schemes that offer free carer companion tickets.

For visiting the cinema, there’s the CEA card scheme which you can find out more about on their website: [www.ceacard.co.uk](https://www.ceacard.co.uk) or call 01244 526 016.

The National Trust offers an Essential Companion card; if the person you care for is a National Trust member, the card will allow free entry for one or two carers or companions accompanying them: [nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/access-for-everyone](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/access-for-everyone)

When looking for schemes online, try searching “free carer ticket” or “companion ticket” and the name of the venue.

Are you aware of a national carer discount scheme that might be useful for other carers? Let us know by emailing [comms@carersuk.org](mailto:comms@carersuk.org)



# Looking for day trips and holidays with a difference?



**Fully accessible crewed day trips  
and self drive holidays on the Kennet and Avon Canal.  
Our boats are fully accessible with easy wheelchair access  
and lifts fore and aft. Large shower, toilet, and kitchens.**

**Bruce Boats of Great Bedwyn**

visit our website: [bruceboats.katrust.org.uk](http://bruceboats.katrust.org.uk)

Contact us via Kennet and Avon Canal Trust

Tel : 01380 721279 or [bookings@katrust.org.uk](mailto:bookings@katrust.org.uk)

Great Bedwyn Wharf, Brook Street, Great Bedwyn, Wiltshire SN8 3PB

Registered Charity No: CC209206

# Access all areas: accessible travel for carers

Many of us feel apprehensive about days or trips out because of access needs, whether for ourselves or those we care for. Luckily, there are now tools to help you plan and take the stress out of visiting new places.

Accessibility means something different to everyone, but many of us are familiar with coming up against obstacles such as uneven floors, steep stairs, and a lack of wheelchair access or hearing loop facilities. Organisations like AccessAble: [accessible.co.uk](https://www.accessible.co.uk), available as an app or via their website, gather detailed reviews for venues across the UK such as shops, hospitals, restaurants, railway stations and hotels.

All too often, a venue's website might say 'wheelchair friendly' or 'disabled access' but in reality has a step up to the main entrance, or a small disabled toilet when a changing places toilet is required: [changing-places.org/find](https://www.changing-places.org/find) Each of the venues reviewed on AccessAble has been visited in person by a trained surveyor to gather detailed information and photos to help you make more informed decisions when going out and about.

Transport can also be a huge challenge when you or the person you care for have access needs.



The Transport for London website has a helpful accessible travel planner on their website [tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility](https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility) There is also a version of the London Underground map with varying access at each station clearly marked. Many towns and cities are starting to make similar tools available, so try searching online using phrases such as "accessible travel planner" and the name of the area you are visiting.

Free apps like CityMapper may help you plan journeys with detailed directions and travel options, with

wheelchair-accessible route planning available in an increasing number of locations. Many UK towns and cities will have a visitor centre with a number to call for help with accessibility on local public transport.

If you are travelling by train, you can book assistance up to two hours ahead of travelling with Passenger Assist: [www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations\\_destinations/plan-assistance.aspx](https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/plan-assistance.aspx) To book, download the Passenger Assistance by Transpourt app, call 0800 022 3720, text 60083 or visit [booking.passengerassistance.com](https://www.passengerassistance.com)

Feeling more confident about planning an outing? Take a look at the article on page 9 for help finding free or reduced-cost carer tickets to venues.

# Census 2021 data shows increase in substantial unpaid care

On 19 January, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published new Census 2021 data about unpaid carers which showed growing intensity of care across England and Wales.

The data showed that there has been a distinct increase in the number of people providing substantial hours of care. A further 260,000 people are providing 20-49 hours a week compared to 2011, while the number of people providing over 50 hours a week has also increased by 152,000 people. This is significant because of the devastating impact that substantial unpaid care of over 20 hours per week can have on carers' health, wellbeing and ability to juggle work and care.

However, despite the pandemic, surprisingly the overall number of unpaid carers has fallen from 5.8 million in the 2011 Census to 5 million in the 2021 Census across England and Wales, mostly through a reduction in the numbers of people providing lower hours of care.

The ONS suggests a number of reasons for this, including changes in the nature of caring during the pandemic and the high levels of deaths during the pandemic. However, it also suggests that the change in question framing could have made a difference. Whilst the 2011 Census question mentioned providing unpaid care for family, friends or neighbours,

**152,000**

The additional number of people providing more than 50 hours of care a week



the 2021 question referred to caring for anyone. This will have had an impact because people don't recognise themselves as unpaid carers.

A further data release on 13 February by the ONS also showed a widening gap in the percentage of unpaid carers in the most and least deprived areas of England and Wales: [carersuk.org/press-releases/higher-proportion-of-unpaid-carers-in-the-most-deprived-areas-of-england-and-wales](https://www.carersuk.org/press-releases/higher-proportion-of-unpaid-carers-in-the-most-deprived-areas-of-england-and-wales)

The data additionally showed that, for both men and women, the older age groups provide the highest hours of unpaid care per week. Women aged between 75 to 79 years and men aged between 85 to 89 years provided the highest percentage of 50 hours or more of care, compared with all other age groups. Shockingly, there has been an increase in the percentage of women aged 85 years and over providing unpaid care (6.3% in 2021 compared to 5.9% in 2011).

Read the full press release at: [carersuk.org/press-releases/census-2021-data-shows-increase-in-substantial-unpaid-care-in-england-and-wales](https://www.carersuk.org/press-releases/census-2021-data-shows-increase-in-substantial-unpaid-care-in-england-and-wales)

# Wednesday night relaxation sessions

Colette, an unpaid carer for her husband, explains how Carers NI's relaxation sessions have benefited her wellbeing.

Throughout her caring journey, Colette has regularly attended our online Share and Learn relaxation sessions, facilitated by StretchBodyMind Founder and Director, Victoria Cunningham. Here, she explains what the sessions involve and how they have helped while she is caring.

“ I am so thankful to the Carers NI team for introducing me to the Wednesday night yoga sessions with Victoria. I started these sessions in late August 2022, the night before my husband's first chemotherapy session, and they have provided me with a sense of peace and empowerment that has enabled me to cope with the many challenges of a being a carer for someone with cancer. As Victoria herself would say, 'We can do hard things', without losing our kind and generous selves.

**“They've provided me with a sense of peace and empowerment that's enabled me to cope with the many challenges of a being a carer.”**

The sessions begin with a series of seated yoga stretches, starting from the head and neck down to the toes, or vice versa, ensuring that every part of the body is 'woken up' and relaxed. I found these simple moves to be very helpful, particularly the shoulder stretches and the seated hip rolls to release tension in the lower back as, like most women, these are the areas in which I tend to store stress. Next, we do a series of timed breathing exercises, some of which can be quite bizarre and make us laugh! It's just as well that no video of the session is allowed so no one can hear us.



The purpose of the breathing exercise is to calm the mind so that we are more receptive to the guided meditation/relaxation session which follows. This is my favourite part of the class as Victoria is wonderful at visualisation exercises. She has such a calm voice, and we always feel safe and comforted in her presence, even though the sessions are conducted virtually.

My favourites are 'The Lighthouse', where we focus on the colour of each of the seven floors in a lighthouse, and the 'Walk in the Woods', which ends with us writing our worries on a piece of paper and placing it in a box at the foot of a large tree. I feel calmer now, even as I recall these!

Each week is slightly different as Victoria introduces us to different exercises and guided meditations. The session last for 45 minutes, after which we have 10-15 minutes to ask questions, offer comments on the session or just to chat. Over the weeks we've become a caring community and I really enjoy listening to the other members of the group as they share their experience.

If you would like to find out more about the Share and Learn options for Carers in Northern Ireland, please email [geraldine.green@carersni.org](mailto:geraldine.green@carersni.org)

# Time to spend on yourself

Jackie shares how she looks after her wellbeing by staying active alongside caring for her husband

“My husband Paul was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease in 2015. As Paul has ALS [a form of Motor Neurone Disease], the progression has been very slow and initially involved walking with a stick, then a rollator, and sometimes a manual wheelchair.

Up until August last year I was caring for Paul 24/7. He then had to move to a bedroom downstairs and had a buzzer he could press if he needed anything during the night. He was getting me up two or three times a night to go the toilet, which is when we managed to get carers to come in overnight. This has been a great help, but I am still solely responsible for care during the day. It has got to the stage where I have to do almost everything for him. He needs help to go the toilet, and I make all meals, help him with eating, sort out medical appointments and take him to them.

The biggest challenge for me is not being able to do

**“I have found it very hard to cope with the limitations of our situation.”**

what I want without having to think about Paul's needs. This sounds very selfish, which it is, but because I have always been a very independent person, had my own career, always liked going on holidays and socialising, I have found it very hard to cope with the limitations of our situation.

I have had wonderful support from my family. Our two daughters have been fantastic and help out with looking after Paul whenever they can. One lives in Surrey and one has a young family and is also working, but I know they are there whenever I need them.

I also have great support from my two sisters and brother, and friends have been very good in coming round to see Paul and being with him if necessary.



**“My advice to other carers is to try and get a diagnosis as soon as possible and to accept any help that is available.”**

Recently we have found a small business locally who provide care as companions, shopping and medication assistance etc., so we may well utilise this in the future.

I have also had the support of an MND visitor; because of Covid we have only recently been able to meet up but have had monthly telephone contact for a year or so now.

My advice to other carers is to try and get a diagnosis as soon as possible and to accept any help that is available. Also to think ahead a little so that things are in place when you need them, rather than having to sort something out as a matter of urgency. Admit if you need help and don't just soldier on your own, and try and get some time for yourself to recharge the batteries.

**“Because of the time restrictions in being a carer I have found online classes an absolute godsend, and would not want to be without them.”**

I have always been interested in being fit and used to take part in Zumba and Pilates classes, as well as playing tennis socially and running. When Covid arrived I found classes online and continued with Pilates. Because I was registered with Carers UK I became aware of Staffordshire Together for Carers, which provide a range of free classes, and through them I take part in a weekly yoga class. My sister introduced me to an organisation called Goldster, which initially was free, who provide lots of different exercise classes as well as relaxation ones. They now charge £9.99 per month but you can take part in as many classes as you wish, and they now also include cookery, painting, reading and many more activities. Because of the time restrictions in being a carer I have found online classes an absolute godsend, and would not want to be without them.

I was interested in taking part in the Carers Active Stories video project because I strongly believe



that exercise is essential to wellbeing and it is important that this message gets across to everyone in a caring role.

If you've never exercised before there are plenty of classes for beginners. Don't feel intimidated about the prospect of joining a class; everyone has to start somewhere, and it will make you feel better, stronger and more positive about your situation, and make you more able to care.

I particularly enjoy gardening and am able to lose myself in the garden and the plants. Even if you are only able to go for a short walk around the garden, local park or street, please do it as it will help you remain focused when you return to the daily routine.

As well as the physical activity of exercising, which is known to produce endorphins, the chance to spend time, even if only half an hour, away from a caring role, is invaluable. It is time to spend on yourself, to forget all the other things that need doing and get away from stress.



## Get motivated with Carers Active

A Carers Active video story featuring Jackie will be available to watch soon on the [Carers Active Hub](https://carersuk.org/cuppa), where you can also find movement videos and activity ideas to help you stay active while caring.



During April, we'll be supporting carers to be physically active through our Carers Active April campaign.

Visit [carersuk.org/carers-active-april](https://carersuk.org/carers-active-april) to take part!

# Take a walk during Carers Active April

Walking can be a great way to get active and explore your local area while connecting with others.

During Carers Active April, two organisations are offering supported walks that you can join with or without the person you care for.

### Stepping Out With Carers

Activity, adventure and access to cake are central to the philosophy of Stepping Out With Carers which offers free walks somewhere green and gorgeous to carers and those they care for. Last year Stepping Out contributed to Carers Active April with excursions that included the stunning gardens and bluebell-strewn grounds of Sissinghurst in Kent and the lavish Tudor estate of Knebworth in Hertfordshire.

Stepping Out operates in Manchester, Doncaster, Hertfordshire, Essex and Kent and is informed at every level by carer demand. It turns out that what carers and those they care for need for a rejuvenating, sociable, scenic, stress-free day out is this: beautiful venue, achievable activity, great sociability, available transport and healthy refreshments (not just cake!). So every Stepping Out event offers two walks: one a good march through fascinating terrain led and supported by volunteers and the other shorter, flatter and easier but no less picturesque, for people who use wheelchairs or have other mobility issues. Carers may come on their own or with the people they care for.

To know more about this year's Carers Active April adventures including National Trust's Ightham Mote in Kent, Capel Manor Gardens in north London and Debdale Park in Manchester: contact [hallosteppingout@gmail.com](mailto:hallosteppingout@gmail.com) or visit [carerssteppingout.co.uk](http://carerssteppingout.co.uk)



*Anthony and his mum Margaret, who he cares for, on a Stepping Out walk in Manchester*

### Ramblers Wellbeing Walks

At Ramblers Wellbeing Walks, we spread the joy of walking together. And with over 45,000 free walks taking place all over the country, we help everyone to take that first step towards a healthier and happier lifestyle.

A good walk is so much more than just stretching your legs. It's a chance to unwind, meet new people and discover nature on your doorstep. A short stroll may not seem like much: but the impact can be massive.

With short, accessible walks planned out and led by experienced volunteers, we make getting active easy. All you need to do is pull on your shoes and come along. We are supported by a national network of volunteers, so you'll be sure to find a walk near you. And with every walk uploaded to our website [beta.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/wellbeing-walks](http://beta.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/wellbeing-walks), getting active is just a click away.

Why not try it out during Carers Active April? Getting started is easy. Simply go to our website, type in where you live and choose a walk that suits you. Our walks start at ten minutes long and range from a slow to steady pace so we have something to suit everyone. And wherever you choose, you'll be guaranteed a warm welcome.



# Caring for someone with sight loss: Sue's story



Sue shares what it's like to care for her husband, who has sight loss, and the challenge of keeping his boredom at bay.

“I've been in a caring role for my husband for two years, but more than ever since he lost his eyesight in one eye following an infection. He also has macular degeneration in his good eye, so his overall eyesight is poor.

I spend much time dealing with his correspondence and cleaning up mishaps that he has no idea have happened.

The main challenge I've found has been keeping up with the constant stream of things that need attention, such as his banking, credit payments, GP calls and podiatry referrals. He has also become bitter about his new experiences and loss of his previous abilities, which has had quite a negative impact on us.

**“The main challenge I've found has been keeping up with the constant stream of things that need attention.”**

Boredom has, I'm sure, contributed to his bitterness, and has shown me a different side to his personality unfortunately. I'm looking into purchasing larger games for us to take part in from RNIB shop, as playing Scrabble or cards is no longer of any use.

I've reached out to Carers Support during the troublesome times and these people have been a godsend when I've not known where to turn.

To keep going, I remember that there is relief from the problems and hostility.

It's then I see the man that I married once again and can focus on the happier times that we shared together.

I would love to know what more can be done to occupy a partially sighted man, who used to be very active - he drove a car, played indoor games, did DIY. What do blind people do to relieve their boredom? I am at a loss to know what I can do. ”

## RNIB's Focus on Friends and Family course

RNIB offers a course for adults who have a friend of family member with a visual impairment.

It's a four-week course that takes place over the phone. Each session is 60 minutes long and family members and friends of those with visual impairment will receive practical advice and information on organisations, products and services that can help. There are plenty of opportunities to learn from and discuss personal experiences too.

Visit [rnib.org.uk](http://rnib.org.uk) or call 0303 123 9999 to find out more.

Do you care for someone with sight loss? What hobbies and interests do you and the person you care for enjoy? Let us know by emailing [comms@carersuk.org](mailto:comms@carersuk.org)

# Preparing for life after loss

Grief is unique with no two experiences being the same, but understanding grief can aid you in your grieving journey and help you come to terms with your loss.

### What is grief, and what have I lost?

Grief is a natural reaction to loss. It is possible to grieve different types of loss, including the loss of any relationship, such as the loss of a loved one, pets, break ups – the list is endless.

When caring for a loved one, their death can result in multiple forms of grief. You may even experience anticipatory grief if they have a terminal condition – the feeling you have already ‘lost’ them before they have died. It is crucial to note that the anticipatory

grief experience is not any simpler to navigate. Anticipatory grief can result in confusing, complex emotions, such as anger, guilt and resentment.

Whilst grieving the loss of a person, you can experience all types of emotions.

Common emotions and feelings you may experience include loneliness, isolation, anger, sadness, confusion, fatigue, anxiety, loss of faith, resentment, longing, oversensitivity, sleep disturbance, loss of appetite, withdrawals, avoidance and restlessness. Alongside this,

you’re learning to cope with how this has affected your overall life, family, work and wellbeing. Losing them will have a profound effect on your daily life and routine, so it’s important to be kind and patient with yourself.

**“When caring for a loved one, their death can result in multiple forms of grief... Anticipatory grief can result in confusing, complex emotions, such as anger, guilt and resentment.”**

## Making memories

If you are caring for someone towards the end of their life, creating positive memories with them can be fulfilling. For example, planting a flower or a tree, creating photo albums, making paintings or hands castings, or compiling playlists of favourite songs can all evoke a feeling of closeness to your loved one. It may also be reassuring to ask what their wishes are for their end of life care before they are unable to express this for themselves – for example they may wish to complete an Advance Decision.

For more information and guidance on end of life planning, visit the Carers UK website or call Compassion in Dying on 0800 999 2434.

## Seeking support

Seeking help professionally or amongst your support network is invaluable. For example, you could talk to your GP or a bereavement support service. You may find talking therapies helpful for grief, anxiety and depression. Hypnosis and alternative forms of therapy can also be helpful. These types of therapy can be useful in helping you feel more hopeful about the future ahead, such as using affirmations to help direct your thoughts and visions of a happy future.



## Self help

You could explore other ways to help you understand your feelings and navigate them. For instance, journaling could help with emotional awareness and recognising triggers. Planning to help you cope when faced with unsettling reminders can leave you with a toolkit designed for your grief journey; for example, some techniques to manage anxiety include box breathing, meditation, yoga and mindfulness. It is also useful to create rituals to continue each year when significant days come around, such as anniversaries, birthdays, and death anniversaries.

## Creating a new meaning for your life

When the time feels right, try to plan what to do with your time, such as taking up hobbies, considering a job or joining a charity/doing voluntary work, joining a gym, joining support groups, connecting with friends and socialising. Taking things

**“Seeking help professionally or amongst your support network is invaluable... you could talk to your GP or a bereavement support service.”**

slowly is important. If you have religious or spiritual beliefs, exploring your views may help you find inner peace.

Overall, it is essential to know and believe that life will and does go on. Whilst everyone will have their own way of coping with grief and the complex range of emotions that accompany it, it may be comforting to know that there are others who will relate to what you are going through and who can support you.

Providing care for anyone towards the end of their life is commendable; you are making their last moments count and you can hopefully take some solace in that.

Thank you to Suniti, who hosted a Share and Learn on bereavement, for her support with this article.

If you need more support, visit [carersuk.org/bereavement](https://carersuk.org/bereavement)

# Carers Wales new guides galore

Carers Wales have been releasing plenty of new guides to support Welsh carers.

Over the last couple of months, our *Coming out of hospital* guide has been completely revamped to reflect the Welsh changes throughout the past two years. We also have a new guide on complaints, ready for the establishment of the new complaints body in Wales from April.

In the next few weeks, we are releasing *Looking after someone* in multiple languages, reproducing the guide for additional support of those in the LGBTQ+ community, and we might even have a couple of new videos coming too.



Find our guides at [carerswales.org/guides](https://carerswales.org/guides) and our videos at [carerswales.org/videos](https://carerswales.org/videos)

# Volunteer with Carers Wales

We're delighted to have received funding to support our volunteers to get into the community and support other carers with the right information and guidance.

We have designed new packs with t-shirts, table runners and all the new guides due out at the start of the financial year in April, so that more carers can get the vital information that all carers deserve.



If you'd like to host stands in your local community, find out more about becoming a volunteer with us by emailing [volunteer@carerswales.org](mailto:volunteer@carerswales.org) or calling 029 2081 1370.

# On the tip of my tongue

Jonathan Hirons shared his new documentary, *On the tip of my tongue*, with carers at our online Share and Learn session last year, shedding light on aphasia. We spoke to him about living with aphasia and how he's raising awareness of the condition.



## What is aphasia?

“More than 350,000 people in the UK are living with aphasia: a disorder of language and communication ([www.stroke.org.uk/what-is-aphasia](http://www.stroke.org.uk/what-is-aphasia)). Aphasia is caused by damage to the brain. The most common causes are stroke, severe head injury, brain tumour, or another neurological problem such as dementia.”

## What is it like to live with aphasia?

“As there are different types of aphasia, people with the condition will have different experiences. In my case, I have broadly Broca's aphasia which means I can understand speech and know what I want to say. Yet, it can be very difficult to find the right words.

Often I use single words or short sentences that take a lot of effort. I can miss out some words, or use sounds that are not clear. It also affects my writing.



“If you care for someone with aphasia, be patient and let the person speak. Try not to finish their sentences or guess what they would like to say.”

## What prompted you to make documentaries about aphasia?

“As I got to know other people with aphasia, I realised that there is little help out there once the rehabilitation has ended. I had the idea of making a documentary about aphasia and how it changes people's lives and the lack of support.”

## What impact do you hope your documentaries will have?

“The films will help me continue to raise awareness about aphasia.

However, there is much more to be done in giving professionals to tools to understand the condition and what could be done post rehabilitation.”

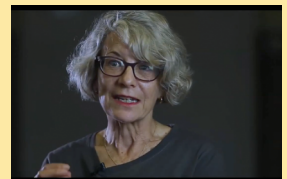
## What would you say to someone caring for someone with Aphasia?

“Persevere. It may seem to be hopeless, but improvements will come. Engage with fellow sufferers and if possible, join a group.”

## Watch

On the tip of my tongue: [tipofmytonguefilm.com](http://tipofmytonguefilm.com)

What is Aphasia?: [watch.buffaloulounge.co.uk](http://watch.buffaloulounge.co.uk)



Find out more about aphasia on the British Aphasiology Society website: [www.bas.org.uk](http://www.bas.org.uk)

## Life after caring

Annette Greatorex cared for her mum for over a decade. She shares how her life has changed since her caring role came to an end.



“The past 12 months or so have been the most challenging, sad and life-changing months of my life. Having cared for my dear mum for the past 11½ years, my role as a carer came to an end on 20 June 2022. The loss was immense and left a huge gaping hole. I felt alone and all at sea. I turned to Carers UK, and I’m so immensely glad that I did. I found a welcoming community of caring people who simply understand.

Carers UK really kept me going when I was struggling in the early months of my grief. I joined in Care for a Cuppa sessions and took part in numerous Share and Learn sessions, which gave me a focus and really helped to keep my spirits up.

I also made use of the Helpline and Listening Support Service. The Helpline was understanding, supportive, knowledgeable and informative.

**“The loss was immense and left a huge gaping hole. I felt alone and all at sea. I turned to Carers UK, and I’m so immensely glad that I did. I found a welcoming community of caring people who simply understand.”**

The Listening Support Service volunteer was likewise understanding and supportive, but also just listened and made me feel heard.

In my first Listening Support call, I talked about my job situation and got quite upset during the call. I was unemployed when my mum died and struggled for months to feel ready to embark on finding a new job. I was terrified that I would get upset in an interview and not represent myself in the way that I would wish to.

By the third call, I informed the volunteer that I had 1) been to London and had queued for 10½ hours with my old childhood friend to pay my respects to the Queen lying in state in Westminster Hall; 2) contacted an employment agency; 3) had two job interviews via video-conference; 4) been offered both jobs; and 5) I was starting my new job the following week. I think you will agree that the three calls marked quite a turnaround in my situation and how I was feeling.

**“It is great to be working once again and lovely to have the chance to socialise with my new colleagues.”**



On starting my new job, I was incredibly nervous. However, I needn't have worried. My new employer and colleagues have been so kind, welcoming and friendly. It is great to be working once again and lovely to have the chance to socialise with my new colleagues.

Since my caring role came to an end, I am now able to put myself first. I hadn't done that for such a long time to the point that I'd lost sight of myself as I always put my mum first. But now I can say “yes” to things that I could never have said “yes” to before.



I've had my first night away from the house in 11½ years. It was nothing fancy – just one night at a friend's house – but it was a huge deal for me. I even went to my first work evening party in many years and had a dance! But I have also had my first Christmas without my mum. Mum would have turned 89 years old on Christmas day.

If your caring role has come to an end, take things slowly and at your own pace. Everyone's grief is different. You've got nothing to lose and everything to gain – take up any offers of help and support. Get in touch with friends, arrange meet ups and re-establish relationships.

When you're no longer a carer you realise just how much you did for your loved one and what you gave up to fulfil that role. Be super proud and take comfort in knowing that you have done the most amazing thing by caring for your loved one.



# Carers UK launches new Carer Poverty Coalition

In February, over 90 organisations led by Carers UK came together to launch the Carer Poverty Coalition, which will campaign to end the financial hardship experienced by millions of unpaid carers across the UK.

The Carer Poverty Coalition, which includes a mixture of charities and local organisations, aims to build awareness of carer poverty and the impact that the cost of living crisis is having on unpaid carers, and to improve the limited financial support available to them. Crucially, the coalition will also look at what carers need to support them to continue with paid work, alongside their caring role, for as long as possible.

Carers UK research released last autumn revealed that one in four carers (25%) were cutting back on food or heating to make ends meet during the cost of living crisis, rising to 35% of those receiving Carer's Allowance at £69.70 a week – the main benefit for those caring for 35 hours a week or more. A significant number of carers were also using food banks – 8% of those in receipt of Carer's Allowance. New data now suggests that close to one million people in England are claiming Carer's Allowance.



The coalition is campaigning to see a benefits system that better supports people providing high amounts of unpaid care, along with changes to help carers stay in paid work for longer while caring. A small steering group of current and recent former unpaid carers is providing insight and comments on major policies and plans.

**62%**

of carers say the cost of living crisis is impacting their health



Carer  
Poverty  
Coalition

State of Caring 2022, Carers UK

**27%**

of carers are struggling to make ends meet



Carer  
Poverty  
Coalition

State of Caring 2022, Carers UK

You can find out more information about the Carer Poverty Coalition on our website: [www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/carers-poverty-coalition/](http://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/carers-poverty-coalition/)



# Carer's Leave Bill passes all stages in House of Commons

The Carer's Leave Bill, which could see more than two million carers balancing paid employment with their unpaid caring responsibilities get crucial access to one week of unpaid Carer's Leave, passed Report Stage and Third Reading in the House of Commons in early February. The legislation will now pass to the House of Lords for its next stages.



More than 75 MPs have supported this Private Member's Bill, which was brought forward by Wendy Chamberlain MP, the Liberal Democrat MP for North East Fife, in June 2022. Carers UK has worked closely with Wendy to make sure the Bill becomes law and is strongly supportive of it.

Millions of unpaid working carers in the UK face the daily pressures of juggling their unpaid caring role with paid employment. The stresses and strain of doing so has meant hundreds of thousands of carers have had to leave the labour market – 600 people per day, on average.

**600**

people per day have left work due to their caring role



Many working carers have said that they are tired, stressed and struggling to manage their own physical and mental health as well.

This Bill would mean that eligible employees could take Carer's Leave for planned and foreseen caring commitments for the very first time.

You can find more information about the Bill and our campaign on our website: [www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/our-campaigns/right-to-carers-leave/](https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/our-campaigns/right-to-carers-leave/)

# Green fingers

As springtime approaches, read our tips and suggestions for using gardening to support yourself and the person you care for.



Gardening and spending time in nature can be good for our physical and mental wellbeing, and people often find that gardening boosts their mood. Have you ever tried gardening with the person you care for?

Many activities in gardens and nature can be done together. Or, if gardening alone is more suitable, you might find that it gives you something to focus on, a welcome distraction and a way to work out stress through physical activity.

### Before you start gardening, think about...

#### 1. What is most enjoyable?

Talk to the person you care for about what they like best about the garden and what you want to put your

time and energy into. For example:

- growing plants with a personal connection to you or the person you care for
- having a tidy lawn and garden
- growing food to cook at home
- having a garden that attracts lots of wildlife
- making time to sit in the garden.

#### 2. Any limitations you have

This can help define:

- what can be done independently by the person you care for
- what you do together
- what you do yourself
- anything you may need professional help with.

It might suit the person you care for better to watch you gardening and talk about it together, or to spend time in the garden and see what's changed, rather than gardening themselves.

#### 3. Any changes needed to your garden

It may be helpful to make a few changes to your garden, such as:

- adding more seating, possibly nearer to your home
- using pots or even raised beds if these are easier to work with
- reviewing potentially hazardous features, like overhanging branches or ponds.

Many changes can be small and easily made, but some are more costly. Thrive's guide to getting help in the garden includes some possible sources of financial support: [thrive.org.uk/get-gardening/getting-help-with-your-garden](https://thrive.org.uk/get-gardening/getting-help-with-your-garden)

#### 4. Adapting for health conditions

Gardening and time in nature should be enjoyable and comfortable. You can find information about gardening with different conditions using the filters on this webpage: [thrive.org.uk/get-gardening](https://thrive.org.uk/get-gardening)

#### 5. Tools and equipment

Often, gardening can be done with a small number of inexpensive tools, and

specialist and adapted tools can make some activities easier. It is only worth getting new tools as and when they are going to be used. And, whenever possible, try the tool before buying it to make sure it's comfortable.

Find advice in Thrive's guide to specialist and adapted tools: [thrive.org.uk/get-gardening/specialist-or-adapted-tools](https://thrive.org.uk/get-gardening/specialist-or-adapted-tools)

## Tips for supporting the person you care for in the garden

### Prepare well

A little preparation can make all the difference; wear clothing that suits the season and do a simple warm up exercise, like stretches or a short walk around the garden.

Gather all the equipment needed and bring it to where you'll be working. This will save you from having to make lots of trips.



### Let them work at their pace

When gardening, the 'doing' is just as important as the result. Let the person you care for work at their own pace and don't worry if something isn't finished or done 'properly'.

### Avoid strain

Lifting heavy things or bending uncomfortably for long periods can cause strain. Try not to stay in any one position for too long and make sure you both take regular breaks.

### Gardening activities

When planning what to do in the garden, your levels of energy and motivation are important.

If you are getting started, you could pick simple small-scale activities, like planting a container, and build up to more energetic activities over time.

### Light physical activities

- Sowing seeds in trays (spring/all year round).
- Planting a pot, container or hanging basket (spring/all year round).
- Watering houseplants.
- Deadheading plants (summer, autumn).
- Filling bird feeders (winter/all year round).
- Weeding pots and containers.

### More energetic activities

- Clearing and tidying the garden.
- Painting fences or sheds.
- Planting bulbs in the ground.
- Watering plants outdoors.
- Weeding borders.
- Pruning.

### Spending time in nature

- Spend five minutes observing the plants and wildlife in your garden.
- Have a drink or eat outside.
- Sit and talk outside.
- Take photographs, from a plant close-up, to wildlife, to the sky.
- Take a sensory trip around the garden. Focus not only on sights, but what can be heard, smelt or felt.

### Indoor activities

Some of the light physical gardening activities can be done indoors. Or try:

- Creating a seasonal nature box filled with interesting items from the garden.
- Taking time to appreciate the view from your window. It is worth having interesting plants or bird feeders in sight of the window.
- Preparing to grow plants or flowers by looking at magazines and seed catalogues.

*We would like to thank the gardening for health charity, Thrive, for allowing us to publish this abridged version of their article for carers.*

# Cost of living: managing your household costs



The rising cost of living is a big concern for carers. Many already face high caring-related costs that can't be cut back on without affecting the person they care for. But there is support available and ways you can make your money go further.

Secondsight, a benefits, wellbeing and financial education specialist, shares three quick tips that you may find helpful. This article is for information purposes only and should not be seen as advice.



### 1. Smart shopping

There are a number of apps and websites where you can purchase groceries that may be nearing the end of their life at a reduced cost.

You could also consider using cashback sites when making purchases. Cashback websites pay you when you go through them to spend with retailers rather than going direct. The amount you receive into your cashback account will vary based on your purchases, but you can usually withdraw this money once it arrives.

If you are employed, you could ask your employer whether they offer a discount voucher scheme to save money on grocery bills and everyday purchases.

### 2. Manage your subscriptions

Try to keep on top of your direct debit payments and any subscriptions services you may be signed up to. You could be paying for something you no longer need or use. Review your usage history, and if you find you're not using a particular product, you might wish to consider cancelling your subscription and saving this money, or spending it elsewhere.



### 3. Comparison sites

Could you get a cheaper deal on your regular bill payments such as energy bills, insurances and phone tariffs? At renewal time, it may be worth considering comparison websites to understand if you could get a better like-for-like deal.

If you are worried about your financial situation or struggling to meet your payments, you can seek help from Citizens Advice ([citizensadvice.org.uk](https://citizensadvice.org.uk), 0800 144 8848 in England, 0800 702 2020 in Wales) or StepChange ([stepchange.org](https://stepchange.org), 0800 138 1111). If you are employed, you may wish to refer to your Employee Assistance Programme.

*Secondsight is a trading name of Foster Denovo Limited, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.*

For more information on financial support that may be available to you, you can contact the Carers UK Helpline by emailing [advice@carersuk.org](mailto:advice@carersuk.org) at any time.



# TAKE THE GUESSWORK OUT OF CARING



## WITH THE TENA SMARTCARE CHANGE INDICATOR



For more information  
open the camera  
on your phone and  
scan the QR code.



Alternatively you can  
email [support.smartcare@tena.co.uk](mailto:support.smartcare@tena.co.uk)  
or call 0800 0355981.

The SmartCare Change Indicator tracks the moisture level of your loved one's incontinence product and notifies you when it suggests a change.

SCO15 0223

## It's a dog's life!

In the latest issue of *Caring*, we asked you to share your pet stories with us. Here three Carers UK members introduce us to their furry friends

### Lynn's miniature schnauzers

My husband and I have two miniature schnauzers. They mean the world to us both but especially to my husband. Unfortunately, he had to give up work in 2019 due to ill health and I was still working. So to keep him company, we decided to get another dog but it ended up being two!

We rescued them but really they rescued him. They always give him a warm welcome and something for him to look after and talk about as he looks after them when I have to go out. The dogs love a fuss but to be honest my husband loves fussing them too.

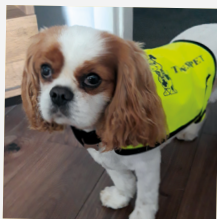


Marley & Maisie

### Angela's Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Morgan

In 2017, my husband of 55 years old was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. To help with his condition, we decided to get a puppy. We named him Morgan after his dad's favourite drink, Morgan Spice.

Both my husband and Morgan became inseparable. My husband had wandered during the night when everyone was asleep. Morgan woke me up by tapping my face so I could help his dad. Morgan is now working as a Therapet with Canine Concern Scotland, visiting nursing homes around Glasgow and other areas, and helping with stress at work.



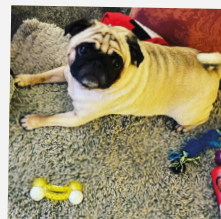
Morgan

### Karen and her pug Lucas

My dog Lucas has been in our life for four years and has been a great emotional support. He helps to keep us all on our toes and keeps my daughter, who has autism, calm.

No matter what kind of day you are having, he is always happy to see us and gives us as much love and support as we do him. He has helped me to get out of the house when I have had days I haven't wanted to.

We go for long walks together and he helps me to connect with other people. My daughter communicates really well with him and loves him so much.



Lucas

### Got springtime activities planned? Share your ideas with us

As the weather starts getting warmer and the days get longer, you may be thinking about making the most of spring. Whether it's getting out and about, doing something active or enjoying a favourite hobby, we'd love to know what helps you feel brighter and more energised at this time of year. So, get in touch and let us know what boosts your mood.

# Carers Connect Q&A



## Question 1

“I wanted to know if I’m the only carer who desperately wants to find a friend to share their days with. I’ve been my wife’s carer for the last 16 years and have gradually watched her deteriorate to the point where I realised that she had no idea who I was and certainly had no idea that I was her husband!

I found someone who was very keen to chat and we spent hours messaging, talking on the phone and video calling and I became fond of her. I’ve felt guilt throughout this relationship and now wonder if it’s worth the difficulty and stress of looking for someone else. Has anyone else been in this position?”

## Reply from the forum #1

“Have you considered joining a club of some sorts? I know it’s difficult as I haven’t, even though I lost my husband over three years ago. I do hope you can find someone to chat with. Our member corner is good for a chat. You can vent or say about your day even if to say you have been shopping. Anything!”

## Reply from the forum #2

“I suspect finding a partner other than the person we care for is not all that unusual. Easier said than done of course, however I’ve managed it these past five years, with the blessing of both families concerned. I have two provisos to ensure things go well: firstly that no one gets hurt, secondly absolute openness and honesty. We’re not angels or villains, just ordinary folk who want to be happy. So go for it if the chance arises.”

## Question 2

“Having to handle my mum’s physical and emotional needs along with my siblings’ meltdowns are using up all my energy. I’m tired all the time and sick with worrying about managing everything. If I called social services and told them I was not going to do this anymore, could they still force me to care for my mum? Would they make me take the offer of a couple of home visits a day? I hate sounding so heartless, I do love my mum, but the stress is killing me.”

## Reply from the forum...

“You sound very stressed and I can see why! I have been caring for my mum for 11 years and I am only bumbling along... but I do know you cannot be forced to care. If your mother has care needs the local authority is obliged to provide them. Don’t think you have to accept caring for you mum in your own home because you don’t, you need to look after yourself otherwise you will be ill!”

Talk 24/7 to carers who understand at: [carersuk.org/forum](https://carersuk.org/forum)

If you need information or support, our Helpline is available on 0808 808 7777 from Monday to Friday, 9am – 6pm or you can email [advice@carersuk.org](mailto:advice@carersuk.org)



# Leave a lasting gift for carers

We are asking you to help us  
fight for the rights of carers.

With a gift in your will we can continue  
to support carers long into the future.

We are offering to pay for a limited  
number of free, no obligation wills  
to be written for supporters and  
members aged 55 and over through  
the National Free Wills Network.

To find out more contact  
[legacy@carersuk.org](mailto:legacy@carersuk.org)

