



CareLine

The FREE magazine for unpaid carers in East Sussex



In this issue:

- Annual Carers Voices Conference
- Carers' views
- Know your rights as a carer
- Looking after your wellbeing
- Young carers through the pandemic



Looking after your wellbeing

Carers staying connected - can you help?

Carers often tell us that caring can be a lonely task, and the pandemic has compounded the isolation which many carers are experiencing.

You have told us that the measures in place to control the virus have brought their own challenges to anyone with caring responsibilities.

Alongside anxiety about you or the person you care for being exposed to the risk of Coronavirus, many carers have lost support they had in place prior to lockdown, making it harder to juggle caring and other commitments.

Staying connected with someone who understands makes a big difference. Carers often tell us that a regular chat with another carer – or someone who understands caring – helps to reduce the pressure and know that you are not alone with your caring role.

To help carers who feel isolated, we are seeking volunteers to deliver our new Carers in Touch listening service.

The service provides a friendly voice and support to carers who would like to talk to someone. Volunteers will be making phone calls to carers to check in on how they are and have a chat.

If you can spare two hours a week to make calls from home, get in touch with our Volunteer Coordinator, Tracy Luker, on traceyl@cftc.org.uk or 07754 800183.

Full training and support will be provided.

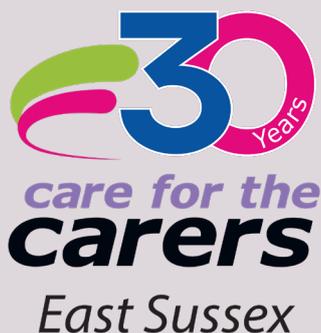


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New carers group

Our new Mental Health Carers Support Group is a free, monthly group for carers in East Sussex of people with mental health issues. The group is online on the first Tuesday of the month. It's a social, relaxed space to meet with other carers over a cup of tea or coffee. **For more information and to join, call 01323 738390 or email info@cftc.org.uk.**



Welcome to this edition of CareLine

Welcome to the Autumn edition of CareLine. The last few months have been incredibly difficult, for carers in particular, so I hope that you and yours are well.



Jennifer Twist

Our Annual Carers Voices Conference reflected the challenges of caring through the pandemic as well as for some people, the benefits of reconnecting with family. Many carers shared similar experiences of lockdown, getting used to online technology at a fast pace, finding health and social care services hard to access, or feeling isolated and invisible during these last few months.

It was great to connect with many of you during the conference. Your feedback has shaped a series of practical recommendations. We will be proactively sharing these with key decision makers, partners and service providers to influence on your behalf and make a positive change for carers.

We are also looking ahead to Carers Rights Day in November: a day to spotlight the rights that all carers are entitled to and raise awareness. We'll be doing all we can to spread the word. We are also supporting Carers UK's Fairer for Carers campaign, calling on the Government to increase Carers Allowance and ensure carers have better financial support.

With the Government's Coronavirus measures still changing, and with the onset of winter, it is likely there are more tough times ahead.

At a time when it is still hard to get together in person, do remember that Care for the Carers is here for you.

Our services have moved online and you can still connect with other carers through our groups. If you don't use the internet, do keep in touch by phone - whether it's for a one-off question or you'd like to have a chat regularly. We'd love to hear from you.

Jennifer Twist, Chief Executive

NEWS in Brief



Fairer for Carers campaign

Echoing Carers Rights Day, we are pleased to join Carers UK and 91 organisations in signing an open letter highlighting the level of Carer's Allowance, sent to the Work and Pensions Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Local carers have consistently raised that the rate of Carers Allowance is too low, so we're delighted to have the opportunity to address this issue formally at a national level.

Carer's Allowance is the main benefit for carers and remains the lowest benefit of its kind at £67.25 per week. Despite the huge contribution unpaid carers make to society, too many face financial hardship. The Coronavirus crisis has only increased the difficulties many carers face due to rising costs and higher spending during the pandemic; from paying for additional bills to buying equipment to adapt homes.

Find out more about the Fairer for Carers campaign at: www.carersuk.org and follow the hashtag #FairerForCarers on social media.



Help for carers during coronavirus

We are still here for carers and offering our services and carers groups by phone and online. If you need support, help or information, please do get in touch with us.

East Sussex County Council and local councils, working with partner organisations, voluntary and community groups, have set up community hubs and contact centres to ensure that the most vulnerable local residents can access contact, food, essentials and medication if they cannot get this help from their carers, friends or neighbours.

You can find up to date information about Coronavirus on the government website at: www.gov.uk/coronavirus and further information and contact details for each Community on our website, along with FAQs help and advice at: www.cftc.org.uk/coronavirus.

New services for local Young Carers coming soon

We're excited to be working towards launching additional support for young carers in East Sussex, working with local partners. This will complement the East Sussex Young Carers service provided by Imago and our Children in Need project 'Teen Talk'.

Young carers are facing additional difficulties during the pandemic. Find out more on page 11.



Your rights as a carer



Carers Rights Day takes place on 26th November 2020. Every carer has rights and there is help and support.

There are an estimated 68,000 unpaid carers in East Sussex, many of whom are not aware of their rights or what support they are entitled to. Whether you are a new carer or have been caring for someone for a while, it is important that you understand your rights and are able to access the support that is available to you as soon as you need it. The Care Act 2014 provides carers with certain rights, and it is useful to be aware of these and how they can support you in your caring role.

Carer's Assessment

If you are looking after someone who can't manage without your help and they live in East Sussex you can approach Adult Social Care and ask for a Carer's Assessment. You could be caring for someone in your family, a partner, a friend or neighbour.

Where you are sharing caring responsibilities with another person, including a child under 18, you can each have a Carer's Assessment. You can have an assessment even if the person you care for does not meet the eligibility criteria, or has chosen not to seek support from Adult Social Care.

Flexible working and taking time off in emergencies

If you are working, as an unpaid carer you have a right to request flexible working, time off in emergencies and parental leave.

The Employment Rights Act 1996 gives all employees the right to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off work in order to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. It is at the discretion of the



employer, whether or not the time off is paid or unpaid. If you are an employee with 26 weeks continuous employment at the time you make an application, you have the right to request flexible working. You also have the right not to be discriminated against or dismissed because you have made the request.

Financial entitlements

It is important to know what benefits you and the person you care for are entitled to. It might make a difference to your pension entitlements in the future or bring in extra money to help pay for care. To find out what benefits you may be entitled to call HARC on 01424 428375 or call Carers UK Adviceline on 0808 808 7777.

Further information and advice

Our team are here to support you with understanding your rights as a carer. We can help you to access the health and social care systems you need. Get in touch on 01323 738390, email us on info@cftc.org.uk, or text us on 07860 077300 or email advice@carersuk.org.

For a carer's assessment, go to: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/socialcare/carers/assessment or contact Health and Social Care Connect by phoning 0345 60 80 191 (calls are charged at your phone company's local rate). Textphone: 01323 466630, email HSCC@eastsussex.gov.uk, or text message 07797 878111.

For useful information about the Care Act and fact sheets about Carers Rights and benefits, visit Carers UK: www.carersuk.org. **Keep a look out on our website, e-newsletter and social media about Carers Rights Day and how to get involved.**

Carers group directory

See www.cftc.org.uk/carers-groups for further details of all of our groups and times. Or call 01323 738390, email info@cftc.org.

Please note that due to coronavirus our Carers Groups are currently taking place by phone and online.

We are planning a phased return to running face-to-face carers groups when it is safe to do so.

Carers Information and Advice Groups

Regular meetings for all carers, facilitated by Carer Support Workers.

When: Monthly

Where: Phone or online for the following areas: Crowborough, Eastbourne, Hastings, Herstmonceux, Mayfield, Rye, Sidley, Wadhurst and Willingdon.

Evening group for carers including working carers

When: 4th Tuesday of every month, 6pm-8pm.

Where: Phone or online

Carers Wellbeing Groups

Regular, informal drop-in groups for all carers.

When: Monthly

Where: Phone or online for the following areas: Bexhill, Broad Oak, Crowborough, Hailsham, Langney, Peacehaven, Lewes Area, Seaford, and Uckfield.

Mental Health Carers Support Group for carers of people with mental health issues.

When: Third Saturday of every month, 10am-12pm

First Tuesday of every month 10.30am-12pm.

Where: Phone or online.

Young Adult Carers (YACs) Groups are monthly evening groups for carers aged 17-25 yrs. Get in touch for dates. 01323 738390, info@cftc.org.uk, or text 07860 077300. Phone or online.

Care for the Carers Making Memories groups - for carers of people with dementia

Support and activity groups for carers who care for people with dementia alongside the person they care for. Carers of people with dementia are also welcome to attend on their own. Phone or online.

Seaford: 2nd Thursday of every month, 2pm-4pm

Bexhill: 3rd Wednesday of every month, 2pm-4pm

Hailsham: 4th Wednesday of every month, 2pm-4pm

Carers please note: We ask that the person you care for be settled and able to engage. If their dementia is at a more advanced stage and they are likely to become

agitated or restless, the group will not be suitable for them.

Alzheimer's Society Sussex Helpline

provides support and information. Contact: 01273 726266, Brighton@alzheimers.org.uk

Amaze provides information, advice and support. For 0-25s with SEND and their parent carers in East Sussex. sendiass@amazesussex.org.uk 01273 772289 (leave a message).

DISC Dementia Support provides a support service for the carers of people with Dementia throughout East Sussex. Contact Emma 07591250988 or Louise 07591251005, admin@discdementiasupport.org.uk

There are a wide range of carer services running in East Sussex that the Care for the Carers' team can support you to access, including courses for carers of people living with dementia run by Alzheimer's Society and DISC, creative sessions run by Culture Shift, wellbeing courses run by Coastal Wellbeing, and more.

Get in touch with our team to find out more, or find organisations on our website at:

www.cftc.org.uk/local-partners

Events for carers



Quiz night for carers

We're inviting carers in East Sussex to join our quiz night on Thursday 19th November 2020 7pm to 8.30pm. Participants will have a delicious cream tea box delivered to enjoy during the quiz! **To request a place, contact Hannah Taylor on 01323 738390 or email info@cftc.org.uk** The quiz will take place using Zoom and we'll send the link and joining instructions.

Book yourself on a wellbeing cruise

Carers in East Sussex are invited to take a wellbeing cruise with Coastal Wellbeing during September and October. There will be games, discussion, virtual tea and cake at the captain's table - best dress optional!

You will return to shore after exploring your wellbeing and connecting on this virtual two-hour mini-break. The sessions take place on 30th September, 7th and 14th October 2020, 2pm-4pm and will be online using Zoom. **To book, contact Hannah at Care for the Carers on 01323 738390 or email info@cftc.org.uk.**



Ageing Well Festival during September and October

For Older People's Day, the Ageing Well Festival 2020 is celebrating all the wonderful things people over the age of 50 contribute to our communities in East Sussex, as well as inspiring generations to live long and full lives, promote health and wellbeing and above all have fun! There is a wide range of online events taking place throughout September and October with informative events, quizzes, inspiring stories and creative activities. Take a look at the free activities and get involved at: www.your.eastsussex.gov.uk

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Carers give their views

We were pleased to hold the Annual Voices Carers Conference during July, despite it being a very different format to our usual face-to-face event and with the added challenges of carers caring through a pandemic. Here we take a look at the key issues and experiences shared by carers and health and social care professionals who took part.

Caring through Coronavirus

Those who were new to caring and without established support felt particularly vulnerable during the pandemic. All of the carers we spoke to described having to “muddle through” and find out what support was available, with various changes to services and often poorly updated information. Access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was a major issue for some carers and an area where there was significant confusion.

Several carers shared that as a result of the lockdown restrictions, the condition of the person they care for significantly deteriorated.

“I used to be able to take Mum out and about, as we could manage the transfer into the car, but she’s lost muscle strength during lockdown so we won’t be able to do this now. I worry about what that means for the future as it will be a lot harder to get out.”

For some carers, the generally poor level of carer awareness within the community, was worsened during the pandemic, and carers were even more hidden than they were before.

Loneliness and isolation

Carers shared that loneliness and isolation is a common impact of being a carer and when becoming a carer, life is different. They described the isolation which comes from the lack of carer awareness and understanding amongst the general population along with the stigmatisation of carers and the people they care for.

Isolation from activities was highlighted with carers losing opportunities of work, friends, travel, future plans and shared activities with the people they care for.

“I’ve lost friends because they don’t get it when you say you can’t go out.”

Health and Social Care

Feedback from carers identified a need for a flexible and carer-aware response from Health and Social Care. Carers do not receive relevant information and support when they need it, and Health and Social Care systems do not consistently work effectively for carers.

Carers identified a number of barriers to accessing services, including concerns that people don’t know what they are eligible for. There is poor communication between services with carers having to repeat their story on numerous occasions.

Carers emphasised the importance of health and social care practitioners taking their views into account, and involving them in care-planning and decision-making.

Carers also spoke positively of the variety of support they have accessed since finding out about what is available.



Access to services has been difficult for most carers. Carers reported their experience of a continued struggle to get the help needed, and this struggle has been intensified by the pandemic.

"During COVID-19, you can't get through on the phone to the hospital and you're not able to get any non-urgent treatment from them if you do get through. You can't get a GP appointment for routine injections or anything, so what's the point?"

Digital and technology

There are a significant number of barriers to digital engagement, including varying levels of technical knowledge, equipment or software being out-of-date and costly to keep updated, a preference for face-to-face contact and limited privacy in the home for digital engagement and support.

Carers identified that they needed assistance to increase their digital knowledge and skills.

"I want to get myself a smartphone and I haven't got a clue what I need or where to start. I'd love to have a person who could walk me through and tell me what I need to do."

Additional feedback

Other feedback included carers should have a legal right to time off from work to support their caring responsibilities, and concern about how Coronavirus is affecting Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, with organisations proactively ensuring that BAME carers are supported.

Clap for carers

Carers were also concerned that the 'clap for carers' during the pandemic for paid care staff, represented how the country ignores and undervalues unpaid carers, and highlights how much greater carer awareness there needs to be.

"Everyone is focused on the NHS – not carers – and we work longer hours!"

Coping strategies

Carers shared a range of coping strategies they use to overcome loneliness and isolation, including connecting with other carers, exercise, learning, making time to speak to friends and planning something to look forward to.



"Not having any social interaction increases the feeling of loneliness, our Zoom meetings have been something to look forward to."

"It has been difficult at times but it makes me feel so much better to know that people like [Care for the Carers] are here for me whenever I need you."

Read the full conference report with carers' feedback, recommendations and next steps at: www.cftc.org.uk/latestnews.

There is support available to carers to develop computer skills and knowledge through Association of Carers' Computer Help at Home service. More information is at: www.associationofcarers.org.uk.

Looking after your wellbeing with a Wellness Recovery Action Plan

We are living through one of the most challenging periods of our time, and it's even more important for carers to take some time out for self-care. Lucy and Molly from Coastal Wellbeing run Wellness Recovery Action plan courses for carers. Here they describe the plan and how it can help.



You may have heard it said that with Coronavirus

we are “all in the same boat.” Perhaps a truer and more helpful analogy is that we are all in the same ocean, each of us in a different boat. We can use our Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) to help us navigate a way through and get clearer about what we need to stay afloat, who is on board to support us, what helps when entering choppy waters and what we need in place to find a safe harbour.

Most of us have heard from or said to someone we care about, “look after yourself”. If we were to pause and give it some thought, we might wonder what does it really mean to look after myself? At the heart of WRAP is the understanding that you are the expert on yourself and your own self-care. With WRAP we want to create space for you to explore options, discover and give value to what matters to your wellbeing.

In WRAP we talk about hope – that is, the belief that we can recover a sense of wellbeing no matter what life throws at us. Hope is about noticing the little things – moments in our everyday lives that make us smile, feel grounded, calm or at ease.

Caring can be a lonely voyage and during the pandemic we have experienced added separation from friends, loved ones, routines and activities that help us to get a hold of hope. Through our work and own lived experience, we have come to understand that the hopeful moments usually have little to do with spending money or grand gestures. More often what helps are the small things: noticing a beautiful sunset, being on the receiving end of a warm smile, an act of kindness, feeling cosy, a favourite TV or radio programme, a tasty meal, a good conversation, laughter, peace and quiet.

WRAP helps us to be intentional, to take action. One of the ways we can recover wellness is by knowing what wellness tools help us to look after ourselves day-to-day as well as recover from setbacks when they happen. A wellness tool is anything safe and simple that helps you to maintain wellness: a cup of tea or coffee, a chat with a friend, taking a nap, saying no, asking for help. The number of wellness tools you can have in your wellness toolbox is unlimited.

When lockdown first hit, having a routine was vital to staying well. It helped us to feel prepared and ready for the day ahead amid all the uncertainty. Wellness tools can be mundane, routine, exciting and anything else in between. The point about naming our wellness tools is that by doing so we can begin to see their value, to understand why they matter. It can help to write them down. What are some of yours?

Connecting with what gives us hope and remembering our wellness tools can help us to stay on course or find a safe place to drop anchor if we need to. Whatever your caring situation, whatever kind of vessel you are sailing in, your wellbeing matters.

We'd love to welcome you on board a Wellbeing Cruise or a WRAP for carers course soon. Keep an eye out on our website, or sign up to our monthly e-newsletter to receive dates on forthcoming courses at www.cftc.org.uk.

Young carers face pandemic challenges

To find out more about the impact of Coronavirus on young carers, Carers Trust recently carried out a survey with young carers and young adult carers across the UK. Nearly 1,000 carers responded. They shared their worries relating to the pandemic and increased isolation caused by lockdown having affected their wellbeing. There are an estimated 21,000 young carers in East Sussex.

Even before the outbreak of Coronavirus, young carers and young adult carers were all too often spending significant amounts of time caring for a relative in addition to the time they needed to spend on education, work and time for themselves.

Coronavirus has significantly increased those pressures. The Carers Trust survey found that 58% of young carers who are caring for longer since Coronavirus are spending on average ten hours a week more on their caring responsibilities. Among young adult carers the proportion is even higher at 63.6%.

Most shockingly of all, 7.74% of young carers and 14.94% of young adult carers who responded to the survey, said that they are now spending over 90 hours a week caring for a family member or friend.

When asked what difference Coronavirus had made to them, 56% of young carers said their education was suffering and 40% said their mental health had worsened. Asked the same question, 59% of young adult carers said their mental health had become worse and 42% said they had been unable to take a break from caring.



A Sussex based charity, Priority 1-54, recently distributed over 250 Pour Your ART Out graffiti art packs with Arts Council England funding, to support young people's wellbeing during the pandemic and lockdown. The packs were sent out to young adult carers in East Sussex as well as primary and secondary school-aged young people.

One young adult carer in East Sussex says:

"My days during lockdown were difficult because it took away all of my daily routines, like going to the gym and my walks. Being indoors everyday was having a huge impact on my mental health. I felt like I was gonna be struck indoors for the rest of my life."

"But there were some things that kept my mind off the lockdown and they were my Xbox, art, my dog, my mates and the art pack that was given to me by Rachel (from Care for the Carers) and those who made these amazing pieces for us to colour in. All these things kept me sane through the hard times. I could not thank you all enough for this."

Care for the Carers facilitated social distanced games of rounders for Young Adult Carers to enjoy in Eastbourne and Hastings. The games gave the groups an opportunity to relax, have fun and meet up with other again.

We will be launching our new services for East Sussex young carers in the near future. If you are a young carer or young adult carer and need support or help, please get in touch with us. Call 01323 738390, text 07860 077300 or email us on info@cftc.org.uk. You can see the young adult carers' graffiti artwork on our website at: www.cftc.org.uk.

Welcome to the latest businesses to sign-up to

The East Sussex Carers Card

The card has three functions:

- Identifies you as a carer in an emergency
- Emergency respite plan
- A discount card

To see the full directory of hundreds of services, local businesses, retail and leisure attractions, visit: cftc.org.uk/get-a-carers-card or call 01323 738390. See the latest offers below, full details online.



With an East Sussex Carers Card you can set up a CRESS (Carers Respite Emergency Support Service) plan as part of your carer's assessment. Care for the Carers can help you to set up a CRESS plan if you do not want a carer's assessment.

Discounts for carers

If you do not wish to put an emergency plan in place but would still like to benefit from discounts for carers, apply for a Carers Card directly from Care for the Carers: Call **01323 738390**, or visit www.cftc.org.uk/get-a-carers-card

This card is also available to parent carers of children.

Please note that older versions of the emergency alert card are still valid to be used to access Carers Card discounts.

Please mention the Carers Card when booking.

Don't forget you can get hospital parking for £1.70 at both the Conquest Hospital Hastings and Eastbourne DGH by showing your Carers Card.



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East Sussex. www.baytreefoods.co.uk
Tel: **07736 525841**. Carers eat free - any catering or gift basket service for a minimum of 2. Minimum spend £15.



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Please complete. Post to Care for the Carers, **FREEPOST RTAC-GURC-XUJC** Highlight House, 8 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne BN21 3UH

I am a carer:

- Send me future editions of **CareLine** via email instead of post
- Please send me **CareLine** by post
- Please update my address
- Please contact me about the help available
- I would like to be part of the **Carers Voices network**

I am no longer a carer:

- Reason _____
- Please unsubscribe me from **CareLine**
- Please send me the **"After Caring"** booklet