

# Seeing Carers:

a carers'  
photography  
project





# Seeing Carers:

a carers' photography project



Front cover: John Cole  
Inside cover: Helen  
This page: Suzun



# Contents

## about Care for the Carers

Care for the Carers is the leading organisation supporting unpaid carers in East Sussex. Our aim is to work with carers until all East Sussex carers have recognition, choices, influence and access to quality support and services that they need and want. Our role is to support carers through services including direct support, groups, activities, counselling and an information network, including an annual carers' conference. Last year we supported over 9,000 carers across the county.

[www.cftc.org.uk](http://www.cftc.org.uk)

## about John Cole

For over forty years I have worked all over the world as a professional photographer, and I bring this wealth of experience to my teaching. My passion for photography is reflected in my teaching, where my goal is to inspire, enthuse and motivate students to express their creativity through their photography. Although I have photographed countless celebrities, my real love is working with ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Such as the carers who I taught.

[www.johncole.co.uk](http://www.johncole.co.uk)

Carers first names only are used in the photograph credits for privacy.

<b>Introduction</b>	5
<b>Adrian</b>	6
<b>Alannah</b>	10
<b>Amanda</b>	14
<b>Bethany</b>	18
<b>Claire</b>	19
<b>Cara's story</b>	22
<b>Daryl</b>	30
<b>Frank</b>	31
<b>Heather</b>	32
<b>Helen</b>	33
<b>Jane</b>	36
<b>Jennifer</b>	44
<b>Mandy</b>	46
<b>Maureen</b>	51
<b>Sue</b>	52
<b>Suzun</b>	56
<b>Tina</b>	61
<b>About the project by John Cole</b>	66
<b>Last words</b>	70



# Introduction

Neil Churchill OBE, Care for the Carers Chair

**At Care for the Carers our priority is to ensure carers are visible and their experiences are valued and understood.**

This book is the result of the Care for the Carers' Photographer in Residence project that used photography to help carers explore their caring role and share their experiences of caring with the wider public. Hastings-based photographer, John Cole, was invited by project managers, 18 Hours Ltd, to run a series of accessible, fun, practical workshops around the central theme of 'caring'.

People will only recall 10% of what they read or hear in relation to the written word but if you add images to that then that increases to about 65%. This powerful form of visual storytelling will really stay with you and speak to some of the challenges as well as

the joys of being a carer. The images capture different feelings, emotions, and experiences from carers across East Sussex.

The Covid-19 pandemic created unexpected opportunities to run more workshops, and in particular, to run workshops online during the first lockdown – a very isolating and difficult experience for many, and especially for carers.

During the pandemic there were 6.5 million unpaid carers looking after friends and loved ones and the impact of the lockdown and the virus was substantial for carers. It was important to find a way to continue to deliver the project; using creativity to enhance mental health and wellbeing, and to provide an uplifting break from their caring responsibilities.

Fifteen sessions reached 84 carers.

Left: photograph by Cara



*“Wonderful, warm and welcoming. It was a very informative and extremely interesting course! I loved learning about the importance of ‘light’.”*

**Feedback from  
course participant**

Adrian



Adrian



Adrian



Alannah



Alannah



Alannah



Alannah





*“The whole experience has been uplifting. I loved the practical exercise. The group is so friendly – it makes a lovely learning session.”*

**Feedback from  
course participant**

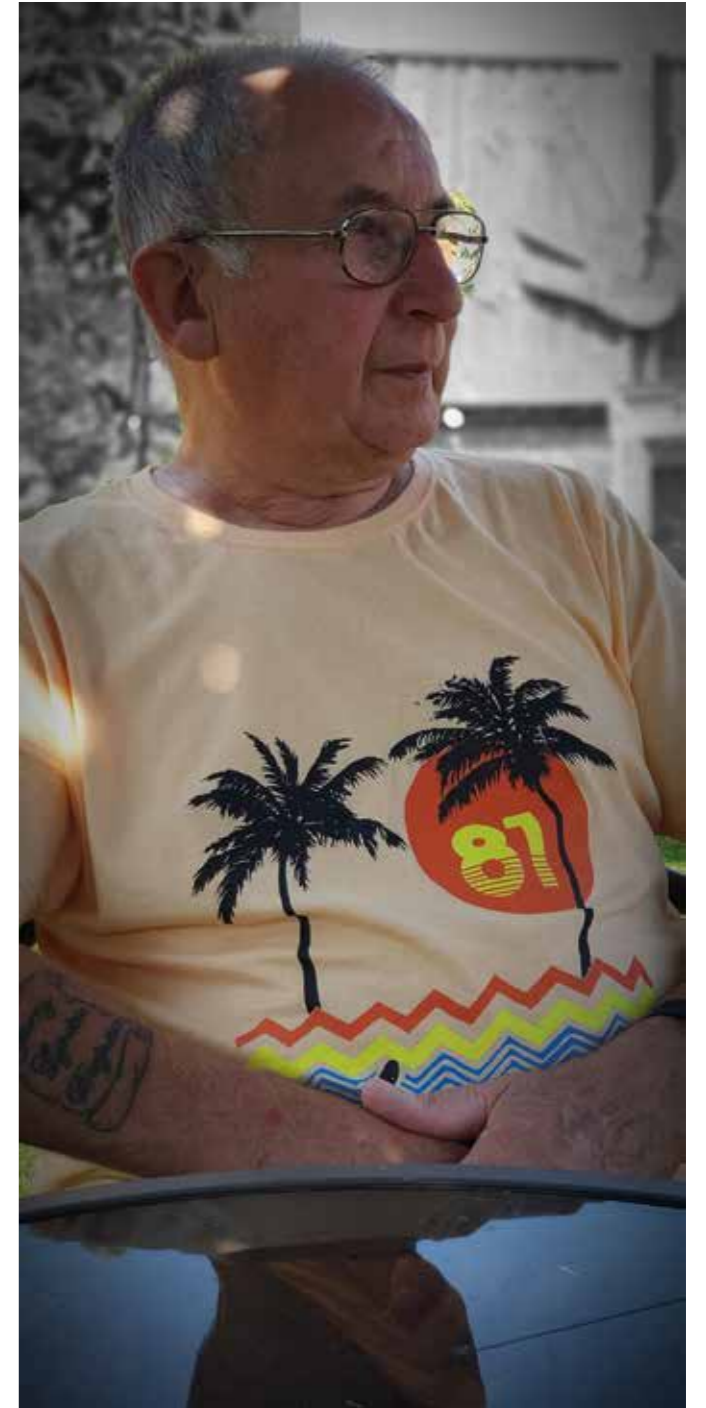
Amanda



Amanda

*"An excellent introduction to portrait photography. I enjoyed meeting other carers and sharing this opportunity to meet the public, and take portraits of them. A new experience. Capturing the moment."*

**Feedback from course participant**



Amanda



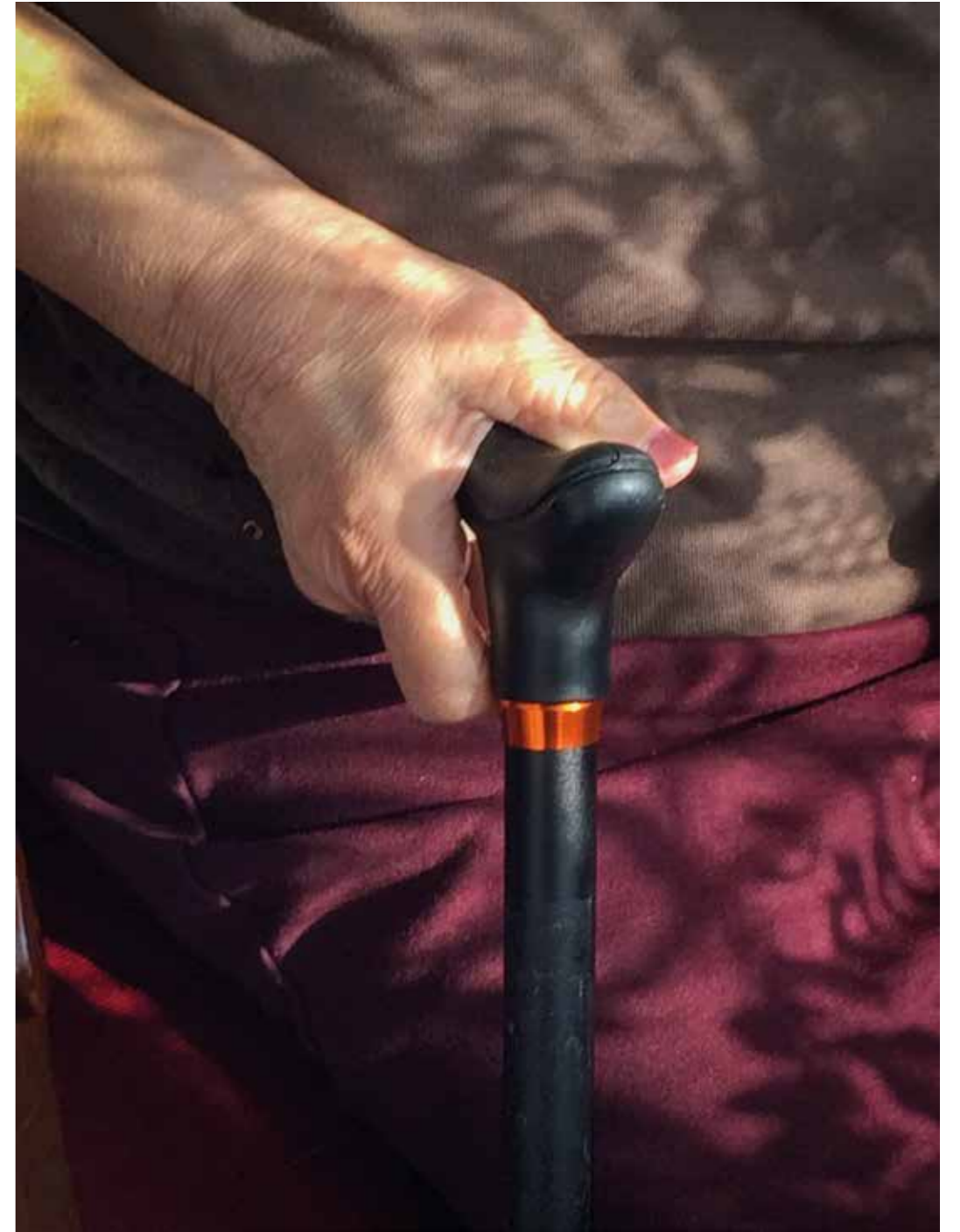
Bethany



Claire



Claire



Claire



## Cara's story

**The most important part of the photography project was that it provided me with friendship and a support group.**

Both of my parents had been keen photographers and I remember them developing photos at home whilst I was growing up. I'd never attended a photography workshop myself before and valued that Care for the Carers had paired us with professional photographer John Cole.

The opportunity meant I took far more pictures of my mum in her final year than

I would otherwise have done. I took pictures that focused on light and composition.

The picture of mum stroking the cat was taken the week before her stroke. She loved cats and I had taken her to the Barby Keel Sanctuary.

I also took photographs of the Gratitude Jar into which Mum had put the daily statements of thanks she had written. It was some time before I read these, but she was 'grateful for eating so much produce from the garden' and 'thanks to Cara who looks after her and feeds me'.

Left: photograph by Cara



Cara



Cara



Cara



Cara

*“The opportunity meant I took far more pictures of my mum in her final year than I would otherwise have done. I took pictures that focused on light and the composition..”*

**Cara**

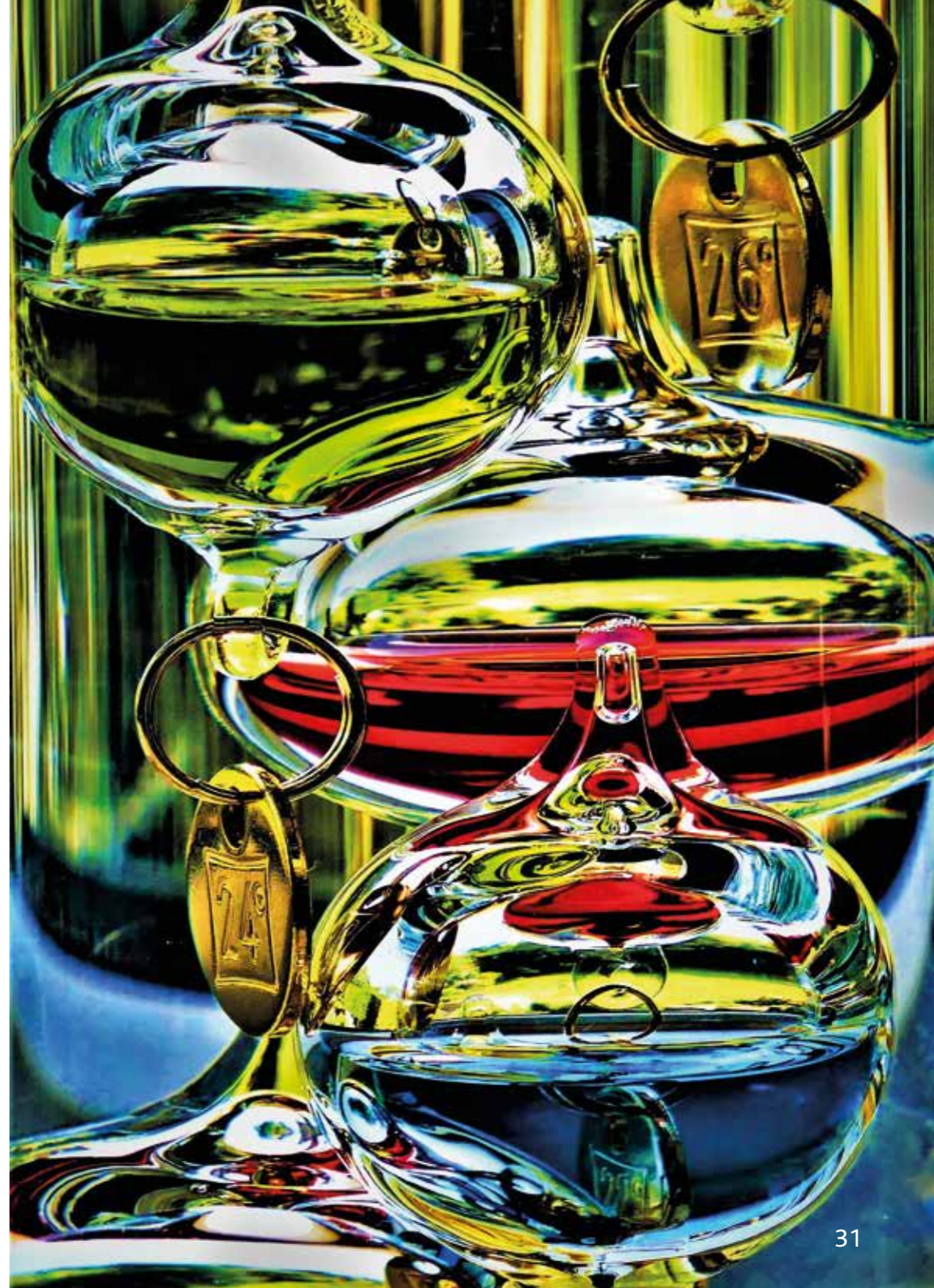
Cara







Daryl



Frank



Heather



Helen

*"I found it very interesting and would like to learn more."*

**Feedback from course participant**



Helen

Helen



*“What did I enjoy most? – having a go at something that I’ve enjoyed as a hobby and learning so much in a short time so that I can improve my pictures.”*

**Feedback from  
course participant**

Jane



Jane



Jane



Jane



Jane



Jane



Jane



Opposite page and above: Jennifer





Mandy



Mandy



Mandy



Mandy



Mandy



Maureen



*“What did I enjoy most? – getting out there with the camera and sharing with like-minded people.”*

**Feedback from course participant**



Sue



Sue



*“What did I enjoy? –  
The laid back atmosphere  
and small group.  
There was lots of  
information to take in  
but it was given in an  
easy manner.”*

**Feedback from  
course participant**



Suzun



Suzun



Suzun



Tina





Tina



Tina

*“What did I enjoy most?  
– the lecturer John.  
He came out with good  
tips on how to take  
pictures and a good  
practical session learning  
about light.”*

**Feedback from  
course participant**





# About the project

By John Cole

**I have been teaching photography workshops with Care for the Carers for over three years, and it's been a true delight from day one. The students' enthusiasm, energy and creative exuberance has always made my teaching so enjoyable.**

When I was first invited to work with Care for the Carers, I really wasn't quite sure what to expect. Would I be teaching hospital nurses or NHS carers or other professionals in the health care industry? I soon learned that I would be working with the front line, non-professional carers who looked after someone, day in and day out.

In many of the workshops, I would ask the students to share their recent experiences of caring so that they, as well as the other students, might get inspiration for what to

photograph when they returned home. It was a real eye opener for me. The stories they told were of the physical as well as emotional demands of caring, the moments of sadness, as well as the moments of affection, warmth and laughter. I felt truly privileged to hear their stories.

Although I certainly didn't intend it, I sometimes felt that sharing these stories was a genuine catharsis for the carers, a chance for them to unload their feelings in a safe environment. It gave me a real insight and understanding of what it's like to be a carer.

One of the great joys of teaching is that the more I teach, the more I learn and I always get back much more than I've put in. And this has certainly been the case working with Care for the Carers.

Left: photograph of carer Tina and her mother, Doris, by John Cole



John Cole



John Cole

## Last words: what did you enjoy most about the photography classes?

*'Sharing the experience with others.'*

*'Meeting John and the rest of the class and the lesson.'*

*'Lots of tips for taking photos, colour red etc.'*

*'Fun and very informative.'*

*'The whole workshop was fun.'*

*'Going out to photograph people in Hailsham.'*

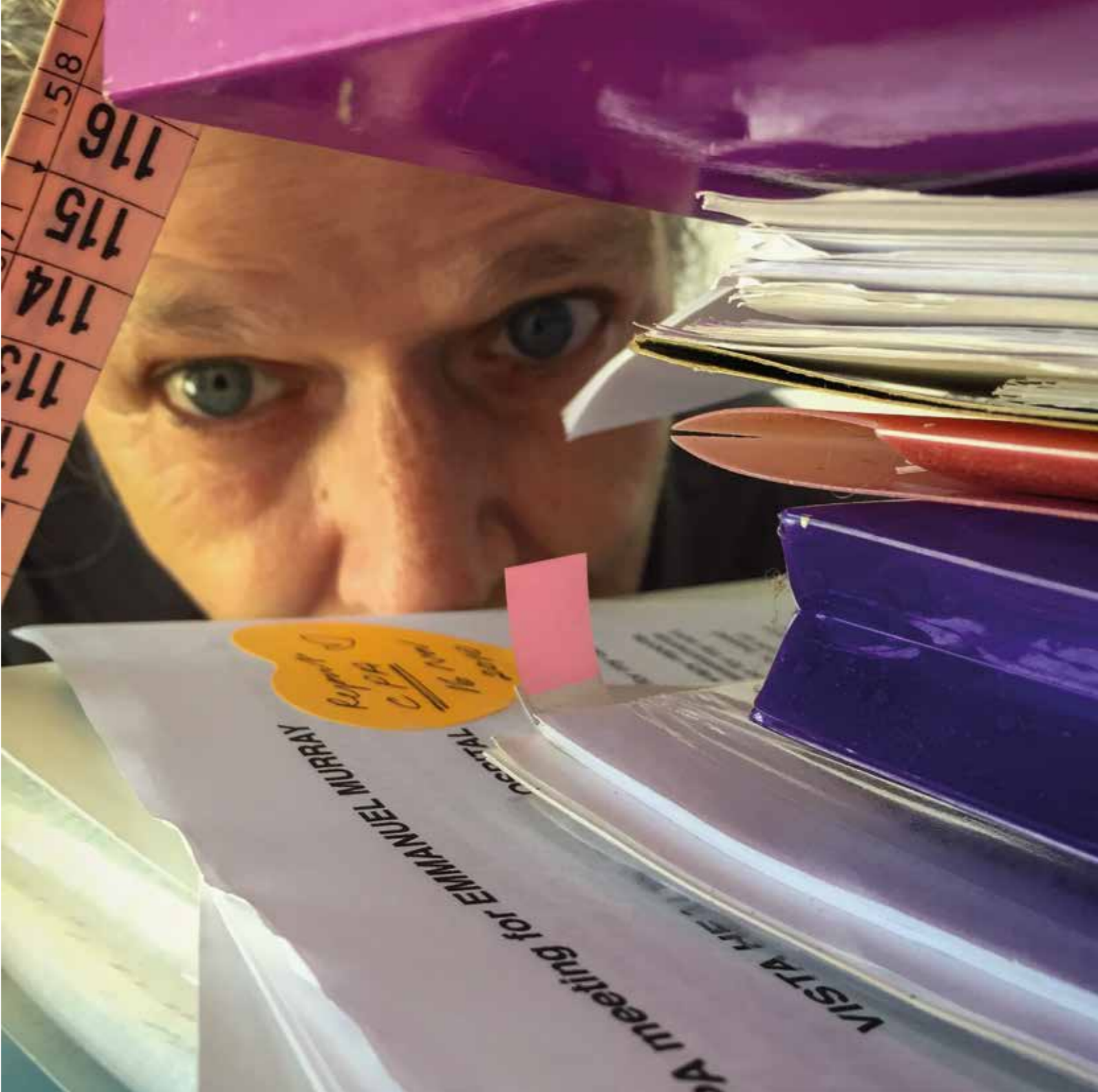
*'Learning new skills.'*



Tina

Every effort has been made to gain the relevant permissions to include the photographs in this not-for-profit publication.

Inside cover: Helen



This book is the result of Care for the Carers' Photographer in Residence project that used photography to help carers explore their caring role and share their experiences of caring with the wider public. Hastings-based photographer, John Cole, was invited by project managers, 18 Hours Ltd, to run a series of accessible, fun, practical workshops around the central theme of 'caring'.

The Covid-19 pandemic created unexpected opportunities to run more workshops, and in particular, to run workshops online during the first lockdown – a very isolating and difficult experience for many, and especially for carers. The impact of the lockdown and the virus was substantial for carers, and it was important to find a way to continue to deliver the project; using creativity to enhance mental health and wellbeing, and to provide an uplifting break from caring responsibilities. Fifteen sessions reached 84 carers.

We want to thank the following funders for their generous support, without whom this project would not have been possible:

Sussex Community Foundation

National Lottery Awards for All

UK Youth

The Chapman Charitable Trust

The Ernest Hecht Charitable Trust

The Ian Askew Charitable Trust



ADRIAN



SUE



HELEN

