



Welcome to the June edition of Volunteers News

# Thank you

## TO OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS



### Happy Volunteers Week 2020

### ... For all you do at Carers Leeds

Answering phone calls, meeting & greeting visitors, befriending carers, registering GP referrals, filling 1000's of envelopes with carers news, updating our Advice Line database, playing Bat & Chat, organising Book groups, helping carers to be creative, supporting carers groups, making KIT calls & welfare calls to carers.

### INVESTING IN VOLUNTEERS SUCCESS: PAGE 3



compact for leeds  
public and third sector  
working together for the people of leeds





Volunteers

Kind

Caring

Helpful

Friendly

Generous

Devoted

Passionate

Amazing

Involved

Skilled

Giving

Positive

Fun



Hello everyone,

## Happy Volunteers Week 1-7 June

Allow me to start by saying how much we miss seeing you all.

Like all of you, we've had to adapt to lockdown life and social distancing! Since, 23 March the staff team has been working from home. We had to quickly adapt to new ways of working and communicating. This has involved working remotely and virtually which has been challenging at times.

After 10 weeks of lockdown, we are starting to talk about getting back to a 'new normal'. The managers have started to think about what the options are for reopening our office.

"The overriding concern of the managers is balancing the needs of carers, Carers Leeds, the staff and volunteers, alongside the need to deliver a contract and complying with government regulations on social distancing. "

Val Hewison, CEO

At this stage, we don't know what the 'new normal' will be for our service and our volunteer programme. Whatever it looks like, the future of volunteering at Carers Leeds holds both new challenges and new opportunities. Going forward, rest assured that we will communicate with all our volunteers.

We hope you enjoy this Volunteers Week newsletter.

**Keeping in touch**—During Volunteers Week a member of our staff team will be in touch with you by post, phone or email to say 'Hello' and to say thank you for being a Carers Leeds volunteer.

We will be celebrating Volunteers Week on twitter

[@CarersLeedsVols](https://twitter.com/CarersLeedsVols) [@CarersBefreinds](https://twitter.com/CarersBefreinds) [@CarersLeeds](https://twitter.com/CarersLeeds)

Warm wishes.

Valerie, Volunteer Coordinator



**liV Steering Group**—staff Valerie, Tom, Nikki & volunteer Catherine

## Success! Carers Leeds is part of the liV Achievers Club

High five, we did it again! In January 2020 we renewed and achieved our Investing in Volunteers (liV) award. We are delighted to achieve this accreditation and our certificate is now proudly displayed in our Reception waiting area back at the office.

liV is a standard focusing on four areas – planning for involvement, recruitment, selecting and matching people and supporting and retaining volunteers.

Our liV journey gave us an opportunity to recognise all the developments we continued to make since first achieving the award in 2015. It also gave a selection of our volunteers, staff and managers the chance to give us feedback. This helped us to listen and learn.

Here's some extracts from our final assessment report written by Dane Gould, liV Assessor.

*All staff members interviewed emphasised the passion, enthusiasm and commitment volunteers bring and the new perspectives they offer, comments included, "Everything we learn at Carers Leeds we learn from carers, from volunteers, they [volunteers] have great knowledge - they teach us."*

*Volunteers spoke very positively about their contribution to Carers Leeds and expressed how volunteering has huge benefits for the organisation, for themselves and for service users, and comments included, "It's the first time I have done something unpaid, it's an enriching experience that's showing me different aspects of other people's lives", "It's been a lifeline for me. My husband died which left a big gap."*

**Going forward, it's important for us to continue to challenge ourselves as an organisation to do the very best for our amazing volunteers. We will continue to do this by listening, involving, recognising and supporting our volunteers and staff.**

**A big THANK YOU to the volunteers, staff , managers and the Chair of Trutees who took part in our liV Assessment journey and all our volunteers who continue to support Carers Leeds.**





## Here's how our staff team have continued to support carers across the city from their home!

**Advice Line** –Open Monday to Friday from 9am-5pm providing advice by telephone.

**Bereavement** – One to One support by telephone, information packs and signposting. The Support After Loss Group soon to become a Zoom group.

**Carers Assessment** – Social Work team completing carers assessments by telephone.

**Concerned Other** – One to One support by telephone. All support groups online.

**Connections & Befriending update**—Read pages 6 and 7 of this newsletter for an update.

**Dementia** – One to One support by telephone, Zoom, WhatsApp and FaceTime. The team are exploring new ways to keep in touch with carers that attend dementia carer groups.

**Hospital Service** - Phoning carers of people with Dementia who are in hospital to check everything is OK.

**Mental Health & Learning disability** – One to One support by telephone and support groups are taking place online for MH carers and for carers of people with Autism.

**Parent Carer** – One to One support by telephone for: DLA/PIP forms completed over the phone, emotional support, general advice, signposting to over services. The service now has a new Facebook page.

**Physical Health** – One to One support by telephone. The monthly Carers Clinic at Crossley Street is running via telephone appointments.

**Peer Support Groups**—Keeping in touch with carers who attend groups by telephone and Zoom.

**Young Adult Carers**—Young adult carers are being supported by telephone and Zoom video calls. Offering a Zoom social group every Thursday. WhatsApp group set up to offer peer support. E-newsletter.



### Turn your online shopping into a donation

When you shop online, please consider doing so through this link: <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/carersleeds>

A percentage of what you spend will then be sent to Carers Leeds as a donation with no additional cost to you. You have to sign up for an account but this is quick and easy to do.

Retailers include: Amazon, Argos, Boots, Debenhams, ebay, John Lewis, M&S, Tesco, Sainsbury



**Volunteers Week** is an annual celebration of the contribution of millions of people who make across the UK through volunteering. This year, it's going to be different.

Over recent weeks, thousands more people have turned to volunteering who wouldn't normally participate to care for people during the COVID-19 outbreak. More than 170,000 people signed up for the NHS volunteer scheme and over 7,600 people signed up to the Community Care Volunteering programme in Leeds. There's also been a rise in 'spontaneous volunteering' that includes people helping out their neighbours and mutual aid groups.

On the flip side, many organisations have decided to pause volunteer activity and recruitment in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also people who usually volunteer have been unable to volunteer because of shielding, caring responsibilities and anxiety.

As you know, we sadly closed our office on 23 March to protect staff, volunteers and carers. This has had an impact on our volunteer programme – 42 of our 63 volunteers have been unable to volunteer. We miss our Admin, Database, Envelope, Event, Reception, Support Group and Welfare Caller volunteers. However, our volunteer Befrienders have taken on brand new 'keeping in touch' calls to make sure carers have someone to talk to (as well as their existing befriending calls).

Our celebrations this year will not be normal however we can still celebrate. We will say **THANK YOU** for volunteer contributions for the past year and to our Befrienders for their fantastic contributions during this challenging time. We will do this from a social distance – by phone, post, email, online and on social media. It is important to us that all our volunteers continue to feel part of our team at Carers Leeds.



**#VolunteersWeek**  
On Thursday 4 June we will post our 'Thumbs Up' for volunteers staff photo on social media to say Thank You & to support the #WaveForVolunteers campaign.



Dianne celebrating VE Day

*"I still enjoy being able to 'give back' to the organisation, after the support I received myself, when I was caring for my Mum."*

Dianne has volunteered for 14 years, in a variety of different roles. More recently (the last 5-6 years) as a telephone/face to face befriender. Dianne fits this in around working full time, volunteering for the RSPB, and being an active member of her local Church.

Recently, Nikki had chance to ask her a couple of questions:

### **What is it that keeps you volunteering at Carers Leeds after 14 years?**

"I still enjoy being able to 'give back' to the organisation, after the support I received myself, when I was caring for my Mum.

I get a real 'buzz' out of supporting the carers I'm matched with; and it does me good too!

I currently support two carers. Although they are very different to each other, I enjoy talking to both of them. It's nice to hear that they look forward to my calls.

I would also say I could not carry out the role without the excellent training, and full support that I get from Carers Leeds."

### **What's the most difficult thing about being a befriender?**

"Listening to a carer who is having a difficult time, and not being able to do more than listen."

### **"Listening is one of the loudest forms of kindness" Anonymous**

Sometimes we might feel inadequate in our ability to offer comfort and support and this is understandable. However, when we are deeply listening it is a conscious effort that requires empathy, effort and attention. Being listened to increases people's ability to rally their own coping skills and at the same time provides comfort in times of greatest need. Listening is generous, empathetic, supportive, trusting and accepting.



# Carers Befriending

## Befriending volunteers update

The fantastic befriending volunteers have changed the way they offer support, introducing a new weekly Keeping in Touch (KIT) befriending call which will be on offer until the end of lockdown.

34 carers are using this service and the feedback has been great!

'It's a lifeline'

'It's reassuring to know I'm not forgotten'

Although we don't know when the face to face befriending sessions can re-start, it is wonderful that carers can still receive this much appreciated service.

### A Poem for Befrienders by Nikki Pattinson

Although you can't meet face to face,  
You still offer support with kindness and grace,  
A listening ear, A bit of cheer,  
In these uncertain times.

You pick up the phone,  
From your own home,  
A weekly chatter, A bit of a natter,  
Don't underestimate how much this means.

When this has passed and a new normal is here,  
When there is a lessening of this fear,  
You'll be meeting with your carers then  
Your cuppas and cakes can start again,  
Until that time, Thank You.

# Meet the team—Carers Connections Project



*Hí! Aidan here.*

I work on the Carers Connections Project. We work alongside socially isolated carers who are over 50, to help them build their confidence and reconnect with their local community. A lot of our work over the last 18 months has been finding local community and interest groups and going along with carers to introduce them and help them to connect.

We have been working a little differently in the last 2 months due to covid-19. We are no longer attending social groups with carers or having connections meals for obvious reasons! Instead, we have decided to empower and enable carers to connect digitally using phones, tablets and laptops to join video meetings. We have helped set up 11 online carers meetings to allow carers to stay connected online and share their lockdown experiences together.

We are also supporting carers to connect with friends/family. For those who don't have experience with, or access to technology we have provided 1-1 training and access to our tablet lending scheme. We have helped carers stay in touch with loved ones who live in care homes, enabled carers to video chat with elderly parents and given out devices so carers can order food online or research the best time for the most vulnerable to visit supermarkets for their essentials.

Working from home has been a big challenge and we miss meeting our carers and volunteers face to face but we are so grateful that we can keep some level of connection through technology and look forward to when we can all meet again in person.



**Age UK Leeds have been approached by Business in the Community to be an organisation that can refer older people to their new Clicksilver Connections digital mentoring programme.**

**If you, or someone you know, needs a hand with technology and are feeling isolated from connecting with others online, the Clicksilver Connections team are there to help.**

**They have some wonderful mentors who are waiting to get to know you and help you over the phone with four (4) weeks of FREE one to one support.**

**To find out more and register your interest call 07725 638 007 or 07921 494 069**



Last year, we conducted a survey to explore the impact of volunteering on volunteers at Carers Leeds. Sixty-three questionnaires were distributed and thirty-four questionnaires were returned. Thank you to everyone who took part in the survey. Here are some volunteer comments taken from the survey; a full report will be published later this year.

### **The main benefits and effects of volunteering at Carers Leeds**

- \* Meeting people and friendship, a sense of belonging and being valued.
- \* Having a break, chat, away from caring.
- \* Gives me a sense of purpose and gets me out and about in different company.
- \* Feeling of being worth by helping others, especially carers but also fellow volunteers.
- \* The feedback I have from befriendees has been great for myself esteem and has also helped me gain valuable practical experience, during my training for a professional qualification.
- \* Increased social integration with locals, access to local culture in homely environment.
- \* I feel welcome and useful.
- \* I am a more confident person who has learnt new skills in my role which has enhanced my own hobbies and the things I do to relax.
- \* I feel less isolated and feel my self-worth has improved.
- \* Improved self confidence. Better mental health. Increased knowledge/skills. Helped with my career. Makes me feel good.
- \* Meeting and friendship, a sense of belonging and being valued.
- \* Being part of and contributing in something that is of great value.
- \* Working with other people, learning about all the facilities that are available to people who come to us for help and advice.

**Volunteers who took part in the survey were given the opportunity to enter a prize draw. The winners: £20 shopping voucher— Abigail-Befriender  
Massage-Janet-Receptionist Box of chocolates-Colleen-Welfare Caller**



**Carers Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring,** highlighting the challenges unpaid carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK. It also helps people who don't think of themselves as having caring responsibilities to identify as carers and access much-needed support.

**Carers Week 8-14 June** This Carers Week, we're recognising that now, more than ever before, it's time for us to come together to help **Make Caring Visible.**

We know that many carers are currently dealing with more challenges than ever, with the additional worry of how to keep themselves and the person they care for safe during the coronavirus outbreak. Carers Week is an opportunity for Leeds to recognise the contribution carers make to keeping family and friends safe and well.

We've all been behind closed doors so Carers Leeds is going to play its part during this week in making sure carers are seen, heard, and understood; and helping them to get the support they need to care.

This year, we are going to make caring visible to by sharing carers stories, films, pictures and poems with the city via our [website](#) and on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

## Contact Details

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