

Volunteers News

December 2020



Carers Leeds

Working together to support carers

Welcome to the December edition of Volunteers News



Remembering Christmas Past

And we danced, and we laughed and had a really good time. And we will again in Christmas Future.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO EVERYONE: Page 7



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





Message from Val Hewison, CEO

Hello and how are you our fab bunch of volunteers.....my goodness I have missed you! I have missed seeing you, missed the banter, the laughs, the serious conversations, the cuppas you made me, the words of encouragement (and warnings too) the envelope fillers, everyone on our volunteer team, the support, the fun....

I was looking through photos yesterday and there was the 100th birthday party we threw for one of our volunteers in December 2019. Lots of photos of us all huddled together and I thought...no....no.... we are not socially distancing! People are too close together! And no masks! And not an anti-bacterial wipe in sight. See what a difference a year can bring in our thinking and behaviour

But what a year...a year that has uniquely tested our ability to adapt to new ways of working and delivering our service to carers which I must tell you is more needed than ever.

Its been a year that has seen so many changes in the way we have worked, how we have lived our lives, how we have interacted with friends and families, how we have had to adapt and since the start of the pandemic our overarching goal at Carers Leeds has been to continue delivering our support to carers and I hope we have done just that. 2021 will see us reviewing our existing work plans for providing essential services and will aim to do some of this from an office base (The Headrow), some working from home by the extensive use of digital technology and by delivering our service in communities across this fabulous city of ours ,where we have seen the absolute best of people working together to help each other. Its what we call a blended approach.

But I now live by the adage...'the best laid plans'...and I also know things change in a blink of an eye...we have learned to think on our feet and be ready to adapt accordingly. We have and always will assess our decisions based on the wellbeing of our carers, our staff and volunteers and your families, but we are ready and planning.

I thank you all, every volunteer, for your hard work and your commitment to Carers Leeds throughout this year. I never imagined anything less from such a great team of volunteers. One thing I have felt so much this turbulent year is pride. Pride in every carer who has worked tirelessly to keep the person they care for safe from Covid, whilst trying to reduce their own risk too and pride in all our volunteers who have continued to be available to volunteer their services to ensure our organisation was always supported.



My thoughts are with every one of you as I wish you a safe and happy festive period and I send you love and good wishes that you and your loved ones have good health and strength in the year ahead.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Valerie Banks for her total commitment to her role as Volunteer Coordinator.

So, whilst for the sake of your health and wellbeing, we will follow all government guidelines I have a fervent wish we will be seeing you all face to face again soon. What will never change at Carers Leeds is our friendliness and fun. Our gratitude and values, compassion, and careand this will **never** change... not on my watch.



Senior Management Team



A big thank you to our volunteers from our **Senior Management Team (SMT)**. We are continually impressed with the energy and commitment volunteers have shown and continue to show, even during these lockdown months. We hope you are keeping well and are able to keep in contact. Let's hope the promise of a vaccine can bring us back together again soon.

By way of introduction, we are the Senior Management Team, this is often shortened to SMT in our correspondence but essentially, as the senior managers, we are responsible for the direction Carers Leeds takes in terms of what and how we support carers. We are responsible for making sure that we do this in budget, we don't overspend the money we are given. We are responsible to seeing future opportunities to develop and improve our service. We know that we can't do this on our own, so we make connections with other organisations, locally and nationally to make sure that carers voices and support are in everyone's thoughts.

At the moment we, the SMT meet weekly, these are busy meetings as there is so much happening. Because we are currently not working from our Headrow office at the moment we have to do things differently, these need new skills, knowledge and resources to do these 'new ways of working'. In short, everything that happens at Carers Leeds will go through our managers to make sure that our staff and carers feel safe and supported.

So, it's a role with a lot of responsibility which we don't take lightly, however it is made easier having such a good workforce around us, including our volunteers who give up their time to help make things better for people. So we will finish as we started this piece – a big Thank You.

Who we are

Val Hewsion – Chief Executive

Sian Cartwright - Development Manager

Beth Massey – Finance Manager

Andrew Walsh – Project and HR Manager

Stephen Taylor – Head of Operations





Nikki



Kim



Clare



Tom

Rachel



Lisa

In Focus: Operational Management Team

The new OMT (**Operational Management Team**) at Carers Leeds was established at the beginning of April just as we were going into lockdown back in March/April! It consists of five team leaders who each manage a number of staff in their roles supporting carers, plus a Communications Manager. The OMT are responsible for the day to day issues related to staff, procedures and supporting the SMT (Senior Management Team). OMT are also responsible for leading on developing and implementing new ideas and changes to the service we offer. This is to ensure our service is constantly evolving and responding to circumstances - such as Covid19 which has led to some changes in the way we are working. It is also about improving and developing the service we are offering to carers going forward. This covers a whole range of things – the list of which is too long to mention here! Here's an introduction to each member of the team.

Rachel Moore manages the Advice Service and also currently manages the Admin team.

Lisa McAvan manages the Dementia team, includes support groups and dementia training offered to carers.

Clare McNeil manages the Mental Health team, the Concerned Others team and Live Well Leeds.

Nikki Pattinson manages several smaller projects - Befriending, Young Adult Carers, Carers Connections, Carers Good Health, Carers groups. She leads on issues and developments related to carer engagement and also leads on managing the database.

Tom Harris manages several smaller projects – Physical Health, Parent Carer, Working Carers, Bereavement and Carers Assessment team. He leads on issues and developments related to Evaluation and Training.

Kim Goulden Communications Manager and Executive Assistant to CEO (Val). Working across the organisation on all aspects of communication, including promoting the service in different ways and producing Carers News. Also provides support to the Board of Trustees.

As you can imagine it has been a baptism of fire taking on new roles whilst working from home, but it has also been a great learning curve with all kinds of unforeseen issues being presented to us! In many ways it has made us pull together and makes us more ready for the challenges ahead. We are all hugely grateful for the vital contributions you our volunteers make to Carers Leeds, and as an OMT we look forward to working with you wherever our paths cross.



Hi Everyone, Meet Constance

Constance has been volunteering for two years as a befriender at Carers Leeds. She became involved after receiving counselling support. She enjoys meeting people and having a change of scenery. She has benefited a lot from her role as a befriender. It has led to her getting involved in more groups and making new friends.

Volunteer Story by Catherine, Carers Leeds Volunteer Reporter

Constance was born in Salford. She left home at the age of 18 to study in Leeds and gain her diploma in Institutional Management

While dancing at the Mecca Dance Hall, she met her husband and settled in Leeds. They were married in 1970, and they had two sons. She loves Jazz and enjoyed ballroom and line dancing with her husband. Sadly, she lost her husband in 2018.

She is a primary carer for one of her sons who now lives in a care home. When her son went to school, Constance often helped out. One day the Head Teacher said, "Why don't you go to college to do nursery nursing. You will be doing what you are doing now and you will get paid for it." Constance replied, "I'm too old". She was in her late 20's! Two years later, Constance passed her nursery nurse training and never looked back. She thoroughly enjoyed working with children.

When she retired, the school arranged a leaving party. They surprised Constance with a video of her dancing in fancy dress at various school discos to the ABBA favourite Dancing Queen. She knows how to move on the dance floor.

Creative Constance loves sewing and knitting. During the lockdown, she made scrub bags and mask extenders for the NHS. For the Big Issue sellers, 50 masks. She uses her creative skills to raise money for various charities, including Macmillan. At Easter, she made chickens and rabbits and for Halloween witches, cats and pumpkins. Drum roll ... raising £250! For Christmas, Constance looks forward to making Santas, reindeers and felt stockings for charities. She is currently knitting a nativity set for herself.

Oh yes, you can if your Constance. She has taken part in a few church pantomimes and sung in the choir. These include Cinderella, Aladdin and Puss in Boots. The most memorable was Cinderella, playing both the parts of the Good Fairy and the Fairy Godmother. She fondly remembers singing "Nobody Loves a Fairy When She's 40."

“What is this world if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare” - W H Davies. Constance fully embraces this quote, keeping herself busy and creative, so she rarely gets bored. She remembers fondly that it was her dad's favourite quote.

Many people pick up on Constance being a good sport and having a good sense of humour. She was once approached by a man while enjoying a cuppa with a few friends in a shopping centre. He wanted Constance to try their virtual reality simulator ride for free. Constance thoroughly enjoyed the virtual experience and had a good laugh.

So, if anyone needs a seamstress, costume maker, knitter, dancer or Fairy godmother ... Who you gonna call.... call Constance!

We love volunteer stories and we randomly select volunteers to interview by picking names out of a hat. Catherine is excited to see who is going to be next.

“A big **THANK YOU** to **The Groupies** - volunteers Christine, Karen, Linda, Liz and Margaret O. who have continued to support our group work on Zoom. And Margaret B. who makes keeping in touch calls to the Wetherby carers group.” *Angie x*



Interview by Catherine, Carers Leeds Volunteer Reporter

What is your role at Carers Leeds? Angie's role is Carers Group Coordinator. She initially set up ten support groups: generic and specific groups such as Parent Carers, Asperger's, Alzheimer, Drug and Alcohol. To do this job, Ange listens to feedback, invites interesting speakers to groups, offers activities and helps carers apply for grants.

What challenges have you faced whilst working during the pandemic?

Before lockdown, Angie ran 14 groups a month. However, trying to get groups up and running on Zoom has been challenging, but seven are now running weekly. For carers who are unable to attend groups online she has been keeping in touch with a regular phone call. Although, she has not been able to connect with as many carers during this time. "I feel less able to help people because I can't say, let's meet for coffee and talk".

Why did you get involved at Carers Leeds? Angie believed that carers needed a voice and opportunities to have a break, so she applied for the job. In the past, she cared for her Grandma, and like many carers she was not aware of Carers Leeds and just got on with it. After 11 years, five months, Angie is still committed to supporting carers.

What do you like most about your job? Angie likes how every day is different—the challenge of not knowing what may arise, and she loves listening and talking to people.

What is it like working with volunteers? It's valuable on so many levels having volunteers giving their support at the groups. They bring practical skills, a different perspective, help with food, drinks, shopping and talking to carers. Talking through ideas with volunteers also helps. Angie says, "I'll never expect volunteers to do things that I wouldn't do. I see volunteers as equals".

Most memorable moment? Angie said there were too many to count at her age but they include her daughter and grandson being born and getting her job at Carers Leeds.

What are your hobbies and interests? Angie is currently doing a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) diploma and loving it. She passed her first assessment with a distinction. WELL DONE! She has also set herself a challenge to walk/run 10,000 steps a day. Angie also has a drum kit in her shed, which she is learning to play. When she has time, she enjoys reading.

Angie is looking forward to walking 10,000 miles or 10,000 steps back to the Carers Leeds office on The Headrow.



* Happy Holidays To Everyone *

Life would be pretty boring without diversity. With so many cultures living together in Leeds, it is not surprising that our volunteers, staff and carers celebrate different festivals – religious, secular and cultural. This time of year is an excellent opportunity to learn about some of the many festivals that aren't Christmas. After all there are many ways to live and celebrate life. Happy Holidays and Christmas to everyone.

Diwali or the Festival of Lights, is a five-day long Hindu holiday celebrating life and the victory of good over evil. Taking place in October or November, each day of Diwali has a different legend it celebrates, but the holiday is filled with fireworks, feasts and family. The date of Diwali is determined based on the Hindu lunisolar calendar.

Bodhi Day, 8 December, Buddhists take the time to praise the principles of kindness, compassion, and wisdom—the three main features of the Buddhist teachings. This holiday symbolises the anniversary of Siddhartha Gautama becoming The Buddha, also known as the Awakened One.

Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday that's celebrated for eight days and nights, beginning on the 25th day of the Jewish month of Kislev. The Jewish calendar is based on the lunar cycle, so Hanukkah can fall anywhere from November 28th to December 26th. "This holiday commemorates the rededication of the holy Temple in Jerusalem following the Jewish victory over the Syrian-Greeks in 165 B.C.E." People celebrate Hanukkah by lighting their menorahs, spinning dreidels and eating delicious foods!

Winter Solstice for Pagans, December means the holiday of Yule is coming! It falls on December 21st, which marks the winter solstice; which is the shortest day and longest night of the year. The winter solstice celebrates the rebirth of the sun, because days get longer from then on out.

Hogmanay is a celebration widely observed throughout the UK, and especially in Scotland, where bagpipes, haggis and first footing are widespread. Clearing one's debts, cleaning the house, welcoming guests and strangers and a host of other traditions feature at this time.

Chinese New Year is celebrated for 15 days, beginning on the first day of the lunar new year. The 15th day of the new year is the Lantern Festival, which is celebrated at night with a parade. The Chinese New Year marks the end of winter, the beginning of Spring. A time to be spent with family and loved ones, eating and enjoying time together.

Whatever festival you celebrate, may you be well, may you be happy, may you be peaceful and may you be loved





IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE GOOD NEWS!

We are pleased to announce that we have received some short-term funding to develop our Carers digital offer. We have recruited a Carers Digital Inclusion Coordinator to set up a project to get carers online to alleviate loneliness and isolation through the winter. The coordinator will also be recruiting Digital Champion volunteers. Stay tuned for future news. To access digital support carers can phone our Carers Advice Line on 0113 380 4300.

Building on the success of our carer training courses and wellbeing events, we have received funding to work in partnership with Leeds Recovery College. The college offers free educational courses that focus on keeping people mentally and physically well. We are excited about this partnership opportunity to support carers wellbeing.

Leeds University RAG (Raise and Give), the official fundraising society of Leeds University, has chosen to support Carers Leeds in 2021. As a student-led society, they run fundraising activities all year. It will be interesting to learn about their fundraising ideas and activities in the year ahead.

We are so lucky to have continued support from the Market Insurance Team. This year they have made a generous donation so that Carers Leeds can buy gifts to give to carers. Our hard-working staff team is working quickly to purchase and deliver gifts before Christmas.

Moving back to The Headrow office is planned to take place from 1st July 2021. The staff team will continue to work from home with the option of working from our Northgate office until the end of June. More information will follow as we progress with the move.

Getting back to offering friendly face-to-face carer support is a priority for Carers Leeds. We have started work on contacting community venues across the city so that our support workers can meet carers in person. The venues we choose will be COVID safe. If you would like to suggest a venue in your local area, please contact Nikki Pattinson, Team Leader, Carers Engagement on 07508 885 898 or email nikki.pattinson@carersleeds.org.uk.

And finally, Leeds City Council is taking part in a two month pilot with the Department of Health and Social Care to provide unpaid carers with free PPE. For more information, contact our Carers Advice Line 0113 380 4300.

Contact Details

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Carers Leeds supports unpaid carers.

Carers Advice Line: **0113 380 4300**

Carers Advice Email: advice@carersleeds.org.uk

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