



# carers news

Summer 2021

Carers Leeds  
Advice Line  
**0113 380 4300**

Useful news, information, and events for carers in Leeds.  
A carer is someone who looks after a friend or relative living with an illness, disability, dementia, mental health problems or substance misuse.

## Val Hewison, Carers Leeds CEO, Retires...



...I am at once happy and sad to be announcing my retirement and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your trust and confidence in me over the last 15 years that I have been at Carers Leeds... the last 10 as the CEO.

Read more on pages 4 & 5



**Carers  
Leeds**

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# Boats of Hope

## Finding connection through imagination and creativity.

Over the last couple of months Carers Leeds has delivered "Boats of Hope". The project aimed to reduce social isolation for carers who are 60+. Participants were invited to go on an imaginary journey around the world, building imaginary boats and having experiences such as jumping into the ocean and finding treasure at the bottom of the sea. We started each session by sharing stories about objects around our homes. We then did a guided creative visualisation accompanied by a piece of creative writing in response

to the imagined journey. We would then learn a creative process each session that would tie in with the content from the visualisation exercise. Activities included origami, foil embossing and postcard stitching. We did three postal exchanges over the six weeks where participants got to exchange crafts and postcards between each other. The final element was an optional meet up at Roundhay lake. Here participants released the origami boats they had made into the lake, with hopes for the coming year written inside.



## The project was facilitated by Kerri Butterworth a mental health support worker for Carers Leeds. This is what she had to say about the project:

"The idea for the project came about after our CEO Val Hewison said "we are all in the same storm, just on different boats" during a Carers Leeds meeting. At new year I had also gone for a walk with a friend to a lake where we made little origami boats with all our hopes for the year written inside.

The project was a joy to work on. The group are so warm and friendly and really engaged in the ideas and processes. The sharing was really powerful, to hear so much

about peoples lives through their belongings, stories of love and loss and memories. To share our imagined adventures was wonderful, I was always so delighted at the great detail and feeling that came from these imagined adventures. I found myself really looking forward to hearing about where people's journeys took them next. The project enabled me to work in new ways, combining some of the tools I've learnt since my new role in mental health support and my previous work in community arts.

It was the first time I had used creative visualisation in this way. Part of the objective was to try and journey without actually needing to go anywhere. After over a year of isolation I think the chance to travel around the world was very much appreciated, even if it was in our imaginations. There are also studies that suggest that the same parts of the brain can be activated when we imagine doing something as activate when we actually do it, this fascinates me."

"Getting back on the boat we sail to a perfect little bay. The sea is blue and clear and as we jump off the edge of the boat, I can feel the lovely salty water enveloping me and I start to swim. The fish are swimming close. The colours are dazzling. There are tiny sea urchins and little crabs holding onto the rocks."

*Creative writing from a participant*

"It's given a structure to the week, Wednesday afternoon I know what I'm doing. Whereas lately the days all seem to merge a bit. It's a lovely group and we've done all sorts of things. I felt as though I'd lost my creativity a little bit and I wanted to tap back into it, which I have done."

*Feedback from a participant*

**Are you craving connection and creativity? Here are some places you can find courses both online and face to face:**

[space2.org.uk/whats-on/programme](https://space2.org.uk/whats-on/programme)  
[swarthmore.org.uk/course-finder](https://swarthmore.org.uk/course-finder)

**The Arts & Minds Network brings together people in Leeds who believe creativity can promote mental well being:**

[artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk](https://artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk)

**Kerri also runs "Frame of Mind" a monthly creative wellbeing session for carers (see link for more info):**

[carersleeds.org.uk/event/frame-of-mind/all](https://carersleeds.org.uk/event/frame-of-mind/all)





**On behalf of myself, the Board of Trustees, the staff team and the thousands of carers across Leeds whose lives Val has helped improve – here's to Val and wishing her the happiest and lengthiest of retirements – Andrew Rawnsley**

It is difficult to put into words just what an impact Val has had for me, Carers Leeds and most importantly unpaid carers across Leeds.

In a city where many good people do good things each and every day to enhance the lives of people in their communities – Val stands out. Val is a hugely inspirational figure in the world of health and social care in Leeds and has single-handedly done more than anyone I know for unpaid carers in the city. Building on her early years as a paid carer running services for children with learning disabilities and their families, through her own personal caring responsibilities for her beautiful daughter, to her tireless support of her own parents – Val has championed the needs of family carers both personally and professionally with dignity and authenticity.

Most people know her as the bright, endearing Geordie who took Leeds to her heart when she settled here nearly 50 years ago. I had the good fortune to be managed by Val in my first job in that kids home in the mid-1980s. It was her inspirational leadership that has shaped most of my adult life – along with the countless other people she has led over the years.

It has been a joy to witness Carers Leeds flourish under Val's leadership – and even more so to see at first hand the impact she has had on the lives of thousands of unpaid carers across our city. Val embodies everything that is great about Leeds, though she could do with losing that accent after all this time!

On behalf of the myself, the Board of Trustees, the staff team and the thousands of carers across Leeds whose lives Val has helped improve – here's to Val and wishing her the happiest and lengthiest of retirements.

Whilst Val will leave both metaphorical and physical big shoes to fill, I am really pleased to let you know that we have appointed Claire Turner as our new CEO. Claire joins us from her role at the Centre for Ageing Better and is joining to help steer Carers Leeds as we transition out of, what is hopefully the worst, of the pandemic. Apart from her undoubted skills and experience, Claire's kindness and compassion shone through in her recruitment process and will be amongst the many qualities she will put to good use as we continue to both champion the role of unpaid carers and do whatever we can to support unpaid carers across all communities across the city.

So, as the song (almost) goes, we are waving goodbye to Val and saying hello to Claire, who will guide us through the next phases of our journey to make Leeds the best city in the UK for unpaid carers.

## Carers Leeds Emergency Card

**Free peace-of-mind  
for unpaid carers.**

Many carers worry about what would happen to the person they care for if they were to have an accident themselves or were suddenly taken ill and as a result, were temporarily unable to carry out their caring role.

The Carers Leeds Emergency Card is free of charge and is designed to be kept with you at all times, for example in a purse, bag, wallet, phone case or on a key ring. In an emergency you can show someone the card so that they will know that someone else relies on you. The card will include contact details of someone that you have spoken to and who has agreed to step in and take over caring for the person you care for. This will usually be family or friends.

Please do not put Carers Leeds contact details on the card and please do not contact Carers Leeds in the event of an emergency.

You can request a Carers Leeds Emergency Card by visiting: **[www.carersleeds.org.uk/carers-leeds-emergency-card](http://www.carersleeds.org.uk/carers-leeds-emergency-card)** or by contacting our Advice Line on **0113 380 4300** between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday.



# "Retiring... in my head I keep thinking that cannot be me!"

## It feels like only yesterday I thought I was the coolest 21-year-old ever dancing to David Bowie at the Mayfair in Newcastle"

**(I was so not cool at all by the way!) so it came as a shock when I realised, I am 66 and for me it is the right time to pass the baton on. However, it still feels like it is happening to someone else.**

But it is not and now I turn my thoughts to how I leave a job that has been such a huge part of my life.

Most of my adult life has been a life of caring responsibilities - the highs and the lows of my experiences I hope gave me the informal qualification to do the job I have done. I have certainly walked the walk. You trusted me to talk the talk. I thank you.

I know no two caring roles are ever the same, everyone's caring roles are managed against a backdrop of their own life experiences, but there is much I have found we as carers have in common too. And if empathy, understanding and respect for each other has been those shared qualities, then I hope I have been able to lead an organisation where these qualities have been the cornerstone of our work.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to work with excellent people... I know how lucky I have been... colleagues both locally and nationally, a wonderful supportive team of staff and without doubt those of you

who have been the reason I have done the job... carers. The people who have inspired, educated, encouraged and been the reason to get up each day and work towards being the change I wanted to see in the world.

A world where unpaid carers are recognised and valued, respected, and supported for the contribution they make to our society. Never forgetting one of the greatest strengths we have in our communities is the strength of unpaid carers... but I ask, please do not take that strength for granted.

**A world where every workplace has visible and workable carers policies, and every employer, every manager understands who their working carers are and why it is crucial to support those people to remain at work should they wish.**

Where every school and college understand the needs and then supports young carers and young adult carers and where every agency supporting people with addiction knows there will more than likely be a concerned other person shoring life up for those dealing with the



addiction. And let those people know, there is help available for those providing that safety net. You are important.

A world where every parent carer knows that every part of society will value their sons and daughters and support families to get the very best for their kids. Just like everyone wants, including them and treating them with the kindness and respect they deserve as well as being given what they need to be successful based on their unique abilities.

Where every person who cares for someone who has dementia is listened to, and we really hear what their needs are to help them continue to care safely for their loved ones... and if those families are unable to continue to care for whatever reason, we do not judge and we make sure those families are surrounded with help and kindness to find alternative care. Knowing those families will always be critical to the wellbeing of their loved ones.

Where people caring for someone who has mental health problems knows where to find help and assistance for themselves and that support will be there. Straight away. There is no worse feeling than being a carer and feeling alone and scared because you do not know where to turn.





A world where carers who are bereaved have someone to 'hear their story'. It will be unique and if you listen, you will hear so much about the emptiness that loss after caring brings.

To live in a world where we promote diversity not just to tolerate but to be truly inclusive of carers from different backgrounds, where we honour cultural diversity, our LGBTQ carers, our carers from the Gypsy and Traveller communities. And we truly respect and value what all our wonderful cultures and diverse groups bring to the carer's table.

Where every GP surgery knows who their carers are... and ask the question of those carers, 'how are you? Are you managing? Can we help you too?' That every hospital includes family and friends and sees them and respects them as the experts in the care of their patients.

Where we never forget the worth of volunteers who bring so much love, passion, and genuine dedication to, in our case, supporting carers (many of them bringing their own unique experience of being a carer themselves).

A world that sees social care getting the investment into services so vital to help people live the best lives they can. Where they want to live. Supported to do so. And is seen as the essential part of our society helping people feel valued.

Where we work to make sure the injustices of things like Carers Allowance are never off political agendas and we the fortunate ones continue to speak truth to power and follow our own moral compass to be inclusive in our practices and never stop doing our best to create those inclusive cultures in all we do, at work and out of work.

Where towns and cities follow the lead of Team Leeds and 'get' the worth of the Third Sector and our brilliant third sector organisations who know their communities better than anyone and become true equal partners. Never underestimate the strength of community. But invest and make the work in those communities' core business. Where we recognise the impact of loneliness. I have been there. Maybe you have. And we keep a focus on social connection and a strength-based community approach.

And to my second home, Leeds... I honestly love you and I thank you for working so hard, together, to work as one system, to address all the above. I hope we will all keep on working together with compassion and actively

listening to carers and not take our eye off the ball.

Retirement or not... I will never stop working towards a better life for carers... and that is not to say my life wasn't anything but fantastic as a carer.

If I could have taken the pain away from those I cared for I would have done in a heartbeat, but throughout it all I know I was the lucky one.

I loved and was loved - and despite many tears and frustrations, sadness, blunt talking, anger but wrapped in moments of pure joy and happiness and so much laughter (my days... I have laughed!) ... at home and at work... I loved and was loved!

I wish that for all of you. Keep on keeping on. Val xx

# Let's get Digital!

It can sometimes feel the world is going breakneck speed into a new digital era and you may feel you are being left behind and/or are missing out on things.

**It's safe to say that the digital world is going to shape our future. It does not have to be a scary future, as you can dip into it as little or as much as you like. The key is to go with what is important for you and at a speed that is right for you. Carers Leeds can help you take that first step if that is what you want, it's not all about Twitter and Facebook and filling in complicated forms. Here are some examples of what people have asked about;**

- Seeing family and friends in 'real time' even though they may live miles away
- Doing online shopping, saves queuing and do it at a time that's good for you
- Keeping your precious photos safe and sharing them with friends and relatives
- Sending a text message to someone you have not heard from for a while
- Coming to a virtual Carers Leeds group without leaving your front room

## Café dates:

Tuesday 31 August, 11am — 1pm

**The Arch Café, Leeds, LS2 8JA - Open session**

Tuesday 7 September, 9am — 4pm

**1-to-1 45 minute support sessions, pre-booking essential - Email: [holly.wilkins@carersleeds.org.uk](mailto:holly.wilkins@carersleeds.org.uk)**

Tuesday 21 September, 11am — 1pm

**The Arch Café, Leeds, LS2 8JA - Open session**



The list is endless really but it's always best to start small and get confidence and see where it takes you.

Since the beginning of the year Carers Leeds has had over 400 conversations with carers about digital support and we have supported over 100 carers to get online, stay online and achieve what's important to them.

Are you interested in how we can help you? Give us a call on 0113 3804300 and we can arrange for one of our workers to have a chat about what we offer and how we can help you, it's all free and definitely no contract!!

If the digital world is not for you, don't worry Carers Leeds will still be offering support in traditional ways. We don't want anyone feeling left behind.

Are you interested in receiving some digital support face to face?

We are also running some exciting new digital cafés and 1:1 support sessions based at the Arch Café in Leeds City Centre where you can bring any questions you have about IT, receive support from us about your device, or learn a new skill (i.e. how to join a Zoom call!)



**If this is something you might be interested in, please contact Holly, our Digital Inclusion Co-ordinator to pre-book on 07494 272 022 / [holly.wilkins@carersleeds.org.uk](mailto:holly.wilkins@carersleeds.org.uk)**



# Age Proud Festival - Wonderful wellbeing walk



**This year to celebrate Leeds Age Proud Festival, we are running a mindful wellbeing walk for carers age 50+. Join us at Roundhay Park on the 8th September at 11am!**

If you like, bring along your phones and we can take photos and identify different plants, wildlife, and bird songs, or just come along for a relaxing walk to take notice of the wonderful nature around us. This is a great opportunity to get your body moving whilst getting connected with other carers! **Please contact Aidan on 07940 720 474 to book as places are limited.**

**Age Proud Leeds Festival aims to promote and apply the following five ways to wellbeing:**

1. Connect - supporting people to make and sustain connections with others
2. Be active - body and mind are linked - activities that get people moving, even if just a little!
3. Keep learning - new skills or rediscovering old ones - be curious!
4. Take notice - appreciating where we are, the moment and the environment
5. Giving - helping others, volunteering, simple acts of kindness

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**The festival is part of Age Proud Leeds which is a campaign to change negative attitudes towards older people and ageing. One of the key campaign messages is that it is 'time to feel good about ageing'**



## Dementia coffee catch up

**September 10 @ 11 – 11.30am**

Join us and other carers for our weekly catch up, where we meet for an informal chat over Zoom. Find out more about our Dementia Hub and the support we provide to people who are looking after a person with memory difficulties or a diagnosis of dementia.

If you want to know about the support that is available to you and to meet some of the team, then grab a cuppa and come along on and join us.

**To book a place call us on 0113 380 4300 or e-mail: dawn.perkins@carersleeds.org.uk**

## Explore Golden Acre Park

**September 30 @ 10.15am – 12pm**

Join Carers Leeds to stretch your legs as we explore beautiful parks together in Leeds. We welcome carers to join us to promote your health and well being. No equipment needed, just get on your comfy shoes and enjoy a stroll and a chat together.

**We'll meet in Golden Acre Park at the bottom of the café steps. To book a place call 0113 380 4300 or e-mail: nikki.grace@carersleeds.org.uk**

## Carers together (women's group)

**October 7 @ 10.30am – 12.30pm**

Do you look after someone who can't manage without your help because of illness, frailty, disability or drug/alcohol problem? You are welcome to join us at this online group for female carers to share experiences of caring and access free information, advice and support.

This event is accessed over the internet via Zoom. To take part you will need access to a computer, smart phone or tablet.

**To book your place visit: [www.carersleeds.org.uk/event/female-carers/2021-10-07](http://www.carersleeds.org.uk/event/female-carers/2021-10-07)**

**For more information e-mail: [jo.jenner@carersleeds.org.uk](mailto:jo.jenner@carersleeds.org.uk)**

## Stay in touch

Make sure you're signed up to receive our new exciting monthly e-bulletin.

Every month we'll pop into your inbox packed with up to date, useful info. Subscribe on our website or call 0113 380 4300.

## Re-use!

There are 75,000 people in Leeds who look after a friend or relative who relies on their support due to illness, disability, dementia, mental health problems or substance misuse. And we are here to support them!

If you have a friend or neighbour who looks after someone, please pass them this newsletter when you've read it.

## PPE for unpaid family carers

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, hand sanitizer, aprons and face coverings are available free of charge to unpaid family carers in Leeds.

**To access your free PPE, you will need to complete an order form on our website [www.carersleeds.org.uk/covid-and-caring/ppe-for-unpaid-carers](http://www.carersleeds.org.uk/covid-and-caring/ppe-for-unpaid-carers)**

This information is sent directly to Leeds City Council. Once the order form has been received, you may be contacted to discuss your order. Delivery will then be within 72 hours.

Not online? Simply contact the Carers Leeds Advice Line to find out more 0113 380 4300.

## Useful contacts

**Carers Advice Line**  
0113 380 4300

**Adult Social Care**  
0113 222 4401

**Children's Social Care**  
0113 222 4403

**COVID-19 Helpline**  
0113 378 1877

**NHS Non Emergency**  
111

**Domestic Violence Helpline**  
0113 246 0401

**Bereavement Support**  
0808 196 3833

**NHS 24 Hour Mental Health Helpline**  
0800 183 0558

**Leeds Directory**  
0113 378 4610

**Welfare Rights Advice**  
0113 376 0452

**Citizens Advice Bureau**  
0113 223 4400

**Silverline**  
0800 470 8090