



You Care, We Care  
Summer 2020



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- Carers stories
- News and info
- Health and wellbeing

Save Paper, Save the Environment

Receive your copy of the magazine by email: contact **03456 434 435** also available online [www.devoncarers.org.uk](http://www.devoncarers.org.uk)

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**03456 434 435**



# WELCOME

## Welcome to the Devon Carers magazine!

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected everyone and understandably increased the concerns of carers. We know this is a worrying time for everyone, and we have adapted our services to continue to support you in your caring role.

For those of you new to Devon Carers, we support unpaid carers to maintain their own health, wellbeing, and independence, by providing the information and advice they need in their caring role.

Our services may look a little different over the next few months as we work to keep carers and our staff safe:

**Helpline:** open 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm Saturday where you can talk to our advisors  
**03456 434 435**

**Webchat:** chat online with our Helpline team during our opening hours by clicking on the 'Ask' button on **[www.devoncarers.org.uk](http://www.devoncarers.org.uk)**. Outside of these hours post your question and automated answers will appear, which may answer your question, we will answer your query during opening hours.

We do not offer medical advice. If your query is concerning a medical matter, please follow the latest NHS information and advice:

**<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>**

Further information is available from the government:

**<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>**

If you become unwell and are worried about looking after the person you care for, please contact:

**Care Direct 0345 1551 007.**

**Website:** is kept up to date with information including our new Help during Coronavirus section visit:

**<https://devoncarers.org.uk/help-during-coronavirus-covid-19/>**

**Peer Support:** our face to face peer support groups have been cancelled at this time. We continue to support you online and through telephone conversations. If you haven't already accessed our Peer Support, now is the time to contact us, visit:

**<https://devoncarers.org.uk/peer-support-during-social-isolation/>** or contact our Helpline.

**Training:** our face to face training courses have been cancelled until further notice. For our online courses visit:

<https://devoncarers.org.uk/information-and-advice/self-help/on-line-training/free-on-line-course>

**Health and Wellbeing Checks (Carers Assessments) and reviews:** will be carried out over the telephone where possible. We will only make home visits where this is essential, AND an individual risk assessment shows this is safe for carers and staff to do so.

**Please note:** Services are provided on behalf of Devon County Council, if you do not want your information recorded on their systems, please inform our Helpline **03456 434 435**.

We apologise if you have recently informed us of no longer being a carer and have still received this magazine. We are in the process of working through our deletions and appreciate your patience at this unprecedented time.

# Celebrating Volunteers

Since the start of lockdown, our wonderful team of volunteers have given their time to support carers. They have been involved with us for a long time, but with many of our services changing, they've very quickly had to adapt to working differently.

- Our team of motivated and kind-hearted volunteers have made phone calls to carers who might otherwise have had no outside contact.
- They have provided companionship to those carers who are struggling with isolation, by listening to their concerns and helping them to find practical solutions to a multitude of problems.
- They also contributed to our online Carers Week activities by sharing Facebook and Twitter posts to ensure they reached as many new and existing carers as possible.



We would like to thank our brilliant team of volunteers in supporting carers and staff alike; we are very lucky to have you all as part our team!

If you are interested in joining our fantastic volunteers, please contact us by emailing [volunteering@devoncarers.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@devoncarers.org.uk)

# carers week 2020

## Carers Week brought to you this year online!

This year Carers Week, was held from 8th to 14th June. The aim was to raise awareness of caring, highlight 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 support. The campaign is brought to life by thousands of individuals and organisations who come together to organise activities and events across the country.

The national theme for 2020 was, **Make Caring Visible**. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all activities had to be delivered online instead of face-to-face, in order to comply with government guidance. This enabled carers to join in with activities without having to leave their homes.

Our committed Devon Carers team, including Carer Ambassadors and volunteers, suggested a vast number of imaginative



“ Such a fantastic idea to do this online as I wouldn't normally be able to attend these sort of things. ”



## Wonderful time and I feel so relaxed and de-stressed tonight.



activities. These were condensed into a varied programme for the week. Carers were able to view some activities on our website throughout the week, while other activities were broadcast as live online events. Carers, the Devon Carers team and respective friends and families all contributed greatly in making the events happen.

- The fabulous late spring/early summer weather really brought gardens to life. Our Virtual Garden Tour enabled everyone to immerse themselves in the beauty of gardens across Devon, including formal gardens. Powderham Castle treated us to a film created specifically for us which generated a joyous and emotional response.
- The recipes in our Carers' Cook Book proved popular, with many of us enjoying the end results (some of us too much!).
- The anthology of poems linked to the theme 'This is Me', provoked contemplation, reflection and warmth in their readers.
- Inspired by 'The Great Outdoors', the Carers' Art Gallery was a joy to behold, representing the immense creativity within our communities.



# carers week 2020

“ It’s been so nice meeting different people online and has pushed me to try something new. ”

Practitioners and professionals from all corners of the county worked with us to provide an assortment of interactive online sessions.

These included a Sports Quiz, Yoga, ‘Cuppa with a Copper’ (Police advice and discussions on keeping safe), Pins and Needles (gatherings to share fabric and wool hobbies), Wellbeing and Relaxation, Creative Carers’ Craft Workshops and, Mindfulness (virtual forest therapy walks).



Keyworkers came together to provide the most important message of the week to carers with an online ‘Thank You’ gallery.

To complete Carers Week, we finished with A Mile with a Smile, where carers, friends, families, neighbours and the Devon Carers team county-wide collectively walked 350 miles (the distance of the Devon perimeter). It was fantastic to see the number of people who completed the walk, with a marvellous collage of photographs

showing the smiles and the locations walked. Every carer who entered their miles was put into a draw with a chance to win a luxury hamper. The winner was Elaine Stevens from Barnstaple, congratulations to you!

Carers who participated in activities really enjoyed time for themselves and provided valuable feedback which we will use to inform future events.

Through the involvement of other organisations, we have set the foundations for future working relationships with both Powderham Castle and Devon & Cornwall Police. We thank everyone who was involved in facilitating our activities and all those carers who took part. Such collaborative work will certainly enhance the further development of making caring visible.

“ **The Police reassured me I was doing the right thing when safely leaving my husband at home.** ”

## HRH The Princess Royal shares her support during Carers Week

During Carers Week as President of Carers Trust, The HRH The Princess Royal shared her message of thanks and support to unpaid carers who play such an indispensable role. She acknowledged the sacrifices they make and the difficulties they face “all too often go unnoticed”. She also observed “just how easy it is for family carers to become isolated from friends and wider family because they need to stay inside and care”.

With this in mind, The Princess Royal observed that the theme for this year's Carers Week, Making Caring Visible, “has never been more important. Especially because Coronavirus has made all the challenges you were already facing even more daunting.”

This reminds us of her visit to Devon Carers at Westbank in 2018, where she spent a considerable amount of time talking to our adult and young carers in recognition of all they work they do for their loved ones. Watch her message online here <http://ow.ly/35kJ50AcbLE>

## Top tips for exercising during COVID-19

Lockdown has reduced our options for healthy exercise but remaining active is beneficial for our physical and mental wellbeing, which is more important now than ever.

It can be harder to be active and support those we care for when you can't do your normal activities. Try our helpful exercising tips below:



**Exercising at home:** Any household activity is exercise: cleaning, gardening, dancing, walking up and down the stairs, putting out the washing, stretching in your chair, so if you are already doing any of these you have made a good start!



**Set the pace:** start exercising at a level you are happy with and gradually build up to a longer duration, don't try to run before you can walk, literally!



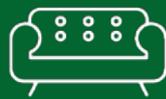
**Warm-up to prevent injuries:** make sure you warm-up and down properly to prevent injury.



**Stay safe while exercising:** clear clutter away from where you are exercising, wear well-fitted clothes and sturdy shoes so you can move freely and drink water to keep you hydrated.



**'Book' a time for yourself:** life as a carer can be demanding, so plan your day and book in some 'you' time, where everyone knows you need to exercise to keep yourself as healthy as you can, to allow you to continue looking after your loved ones.



**You don't need gym equipment at home!:** From sofa workouts to online group classes you can follow step-by-step exercises, videos or live online classes on apps such as Zoom.



**Westbank online exercise classes:** the Westbank Fitness Team are delivering a variety of online exercise classes, aimed at all abilities, book a place at <https://www.westbank.org.uk/Pages/Events/Category/whats-on-online-classes>

Active Devon have a helpful website which gives brings together links to handy exercises and movement ideas for improving strength, balance and flexibility visit: <https://www.activedevon.org/how-to-get-and-stay-active-while-youre-at-home/>

Public Health England has published a booklet called Active At Home which has lots of good advice and step by step illustrative guided sitting and standing exercises for you to try at home, which can be downloaded online: <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/resources/campaigns/50-resource-ordering/resources/5118> Not online? Phone us for a paper copy to be posted to you.

# Take your exercise outside



As we ease out of lockdown carers have told us about the GetOutside website which they have found really helpful in bringing together current advice from the government and outdoor organisations, to help you decide where to go and what to do to get exercise outside. <https://getoutside.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/covid/>

Carers have also recommended that before travelling you check your route and destination and that their facilities are open to visitors (including car parks, toilets etc). Make an alternative plan if their car parks are full. Take plenty of drinks and snacks to stay hydrated and energised. Take hand sanitiser in case handwashing facilities are not available and respect signage for restrictions and social distancing. Only do activities which you are safe to do so or have safely done before. Most of all enjoy outside exercise but stay safe!

## Praise for Devon Carers Hospital Services

One carer explains how his family found our Hospital Services team to be a vital and supportive part of his Grandad's discharge from the hospital.

There was a lot of confusion over my Grandad's discharge from the hospital. As Grandad was going to be discharged with no equipment and only two continence pads, despite being incontinent, we contacted Devon Carers for help. Thanks to the Hospital Services team Mum and Dad were informed of the order number and address of where to collect the equipment and continence pads.

Without the help of Devon Carers we would have been in quite a pickle, the stress and strain for my parents as carers was profound before Hospital Services took control of the situation.

Hospital Services were able to remove all emotion and coordinate a smooth discharge. They made sure Grandad had what was required to be supported at home and ensured that my parents were put on the Devon Carers database as carers, so they can receive help and guidance as they need it. In such difficult and ever-changing circumstances, this support was vital, so thank you to the Hospital Services team.

## Caring about someone is different from being a carer for someone



Carer Jo Earlam can't pinpoint when she first defined herself as a carer for her husband John – the moment got lost somewhere between him handing her a glass of wine after a busy day at work and her handing him an array of tablets every morning.

Jo told us, we've both been through challenging times, and despite a 20-year age difference formed a bond of support and understanding, caring about each other from the start, leading to us getting married in 1997. John was active, healthy, and ran his own business as a chartered surveyor until a stroke was diagnosed when he was 69. We were independent but a good team, John liked a routine, with me flitting about doing many different activities. The affect of John's declining health was subtle at first, but in 2017 he was assessed with early-stage dementia and the balance in our relationship irrevocably changed.

John made wonderful meals, but he lost interest and ability and no longer takes part in food preparation, or other minutiae of domestic life. All previously shared responsibility fell to me, from managing finances and decision making to putting out the recycling.

I've tried to adapt and manage, but it's not been easy. I lost my parents within two years, and have a background of mental health struggles, anxiety, and panic attacks. I have concerns about my skillset as a carer, the responsibility, the expectation, the trying to remember everything, do everything, be everything, especially since coronavirus lockdown without friends and family being able to visit to assist, nor me visit them in the same way.

I initially said that I could cope on my own, but then realised this wasn't the case. It's hard to admit you can't look after your husband, but better to recognise that than to see an accelerated decline. In making my role as a carer visible, saying I'm here and I'm struggling, I'm trying to do my best for both of us. This was brought home to me when John had a fall recently. I called the paramedics, which also resulted in being assisted by the Community Matron, Admiral Nurse, and Occupational Therapists with mobility equipment.

Devon Carers have been hugely supportive and helpful, listening and giving advice in a series of phone calls. I now feel much more optimistic about John's continued wellbeing. It's taken a while to understand what being a carer really means, that caring about someone is a totally different set of dynamics to caring for someone and to recognise that just as I did not seek to be a carer, John did not seek to be cared for.

**NB: This is a short story I wrote about caring on my blog:**

**<https://joearlam.wordpress.com/2020/06/06/the-rock-and-the-kite/>**

# Devon County Council's latest guidance on access to personal protective equipment (PPE).

PPE provides some measure of protection against infection, injury, or risks to health and safety but cannot completely eliminate risk.

In health and social care, PPE will most commonly be things like gloves, aprons, and facemasks. More specialist PPE is used in situations of particularly high risk, for example, in a hospital setting. This is in comparison to care workers, where it is more likely that only aprons, gloves and facemask will be needed.

The supply of PPE that the Council and NHS have access to is limited and not guaranteed. This is because other groups of people may need to be given priority access to PPE to minimise their risk and the risk they pose to others. At present, Devon County Council is only able to make available limited amounts of PPE at a time.

The following types of carers will be able to access the supply of PPE subject to availability:

- Carers who provide personal care (including washing, dressing, feeding, medication) and live separately from the cared-for person.
- Carers who provide personal care to more than two people where at least one cared-for person lives separately from the carer.
- Carers who provide personal care to a cared-for person who may be living with the carer and who is also providing childcare (sometimes known as sandwich carers).

This may also include where a carer must touch their cared-for person for reassurance or guidance in cases where the cared-for person has dementia or another cognitive impairment.

To read more about how to access PPE from Devon County Council please visit:

[www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-for-carers](http://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/document/personal-protective-equipment-ppe-for-carers)

## Stay updated on social media!



Look out for our regular posts on Facebook and Twitter to keep you up to date with the latest news!

# Devon Carers reflects on COVID-19

Firstly a heartfelt thank you to all carers, colleagues, Carer Ambassadors, volunteers, individuals and community organisations who have taken, and continue to take any part in caring for someone else during COVID-19.

Our carers have been affected by isolation, stress and exhaustion in even higher than normal levels. Social distancing has been very difficult especially for those caring for loved ones with dementia and learning disabilities, who have difficulties understanding the current situation.

We quickly responded to the impact of the lockdown, and since the beginning of March:

## March

- Prioritised homeworking, and moved staff where more support was needed e.g. Helpline and Hospital Services.
- Reviews and assessments were undertaken by phone.
- Carers were given the option to postpone an assessment or review.
- Peer Support Officers and volunteers made additional support calls to carers.
- A 'Help during coronavirus' page was set up on our website including essential information and guidance.
- A COVID-19 bulletin for carers was sent out by email and post.
- The 'What If' Emergency Plan was launched.

## April

- Hospital Service expanded to a 7 day, 8am to 8pm service, receiving 193 referrals in 11 days.
- Colleagues in health and social care were issued with information outlining the support available to carers and asked to Think Carer.
- BBC Radio Devon invited us to share what support was available to carers.
- Devon and Cornwall Police confirmed the Alert Card would be recognised for carers being able to travel outside of their home.
- Offered IT support to carers using their own devices to stay in contact with family and friends.

## May

- Supported Devon County Council with the process for carers who needed to access Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

We understand the impact for carers from COVID-19 will last far beyond the lifting of restrictions, and we will continue to develop services and support when assessing individual experiences of caring.

In March, when the lockdown started, there was a big impact on health and social care services in a number of ways. Some services had to change the way they work, and others had no choice but to close.

Some families cancelled planned services as they feared visits from care workers might expose their vulnerable family members to risk. Meanwhile, hospitals freed up beds to receive coronavirus patients, so some operations and treatments were postponed, and arrangements were made to provide some treatments at home. At the same time, some home-visits were replaced by telephone calls.

Families have not been able to visit relatives in care homes and hospitals, and some carers have not been able to have a break as the services they relied on for this could not operate safely.

Against this backdrop, Devon Carers Hospital Services dealt with over 700 referrals between April and May. The help that could be given was a bit different from before the pandemic, but many carers were helped, and feedback from carers was very positive.

You are probably aware that Devon did not have the same level of infection as some other parts of the country. Observing the lockdown rules has been important in this, and we know that this has not been easy for many carers. We must be aware that as the lockdown is lifted, and people travel more, there may be a second peak, so we have to be careful.

We also need to see if there are opportunities to provide support differently if that is better. We have learned a lot about working in different ways during the lockdown, and we shouldn't miss the opportunity to do things better where we can. In any case, it may be some time before services can operate in ways that were familiar to us before the pandemic, and just as people are thinking ahead to a new normal, so services may also have a new normal.

NHS Services are working on how to deal with their waiting lists while being prepared in case there is a second peak. Devon County Council and independent service managers are studying Government guidance on how services can safely operate, and decisions will be based on the guidance and on individual service user and carer risk assessments. In each locality, staff will be in touch with people using their services to discuss their needs and the best way to meet them in future. If the person you care for uses social care services, and you depend on this to have a break, make sure you take part in that discussion when it is offered contact Care Direct for more information **0345 155 007**.



## Worried about what might happen if you are suddenly taken ill or need to go to hospital?

Keep our **Alert Card** with you to enable emergency services to see you are caring for someone who can't be left at home alone.

Ask for an application form by phoning: **03456 434 435** or download the application form online <https://devoncarers.org.uk/information-and-advice/support-for-me/emergency-planning/alert-card/>

## Gardening offers a welcome break



With the recent lockdown, many of our carers have found pleasure by enjoying stay at home activities which have included bike maintenance, jigsaws, stitchwork such as embroidery and card making.

Iris Snell's love of gardening has been very beneficial, as it has not only been therapeutic but has also enabled her to take a break from her caring role.

Iris' love for gardening began at a very young age when she grew up on her families farm growing daffodils and soft fruits. While she found schooling rather difficult, she always found that learning skills

which involved using her hands came naturally. Iris' gardening skills came to the forefront when she moved to her current house, with her husband in 1959, where she brought the garden (showing previous signs of war damage) to life.

*She explained, "I've worked on the garden for years, and even though I now need the assistance of a gardener to come in to support me, it's like having a day out and gives me a regular break from caring for John. My garden is a place of freedom and gives me time to myself."*

Iris proudly opened-up her garden to benefit a charity, so others may enjoy it. She has regularly donated dried flowers for the famous Christmas garland at Cotehele House. She hopes that her story will inspire others caring for loved ones to enjoy gardening and advised:

**“ Just pick a plant you like and watch it grow. Enjoy it and take time out to have some pleasure for yourself. ”**

## Have you delayed your Carers Assessment due to COVID-19?

Life as a carer can be stressful, tiring and incredibly lonely at the best of times, and more than ever in these unprecedented times.

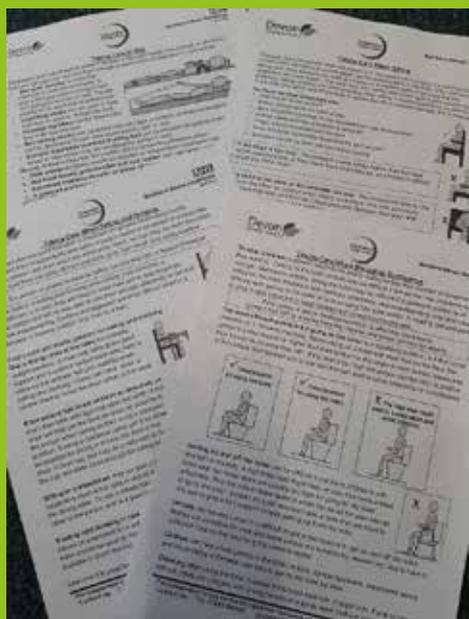
We have found that carers are choosing to delay or cancel their assessment (also known as Carers Initial Conversation/Health and Wellbeing Check) thinking it better to leave it until after the COVID-19 situation eases. Whilst we clearly understand and empathise with this, we are here to support you in your caring role, especially when it is most needed.

Every carers role is different and the most effective way for us to establish what support is appropriate for you is to have an in-depth carer's conversation.

As you will have read in this magazine, we have been quick to adapt our services and we would invite you to consider having a carers assessment over the phone or using video conferencing technology, and getting some support for you.

Please remember that any carer can click on our 'ask' button on our website homepage to chat online with our advisors or call us on **03456 434 435** about what support options are available to you.

## The Devon Independent Living Centre launches new website and carers 'Taking Care' packs



The Devon Independent Living Centre has launched their new website, and it offers a practical guide offering equipment solutions for staying safe and independent when caring for your loved one at home and while you are out and about. It features advice from their Occupational Therapists on the latest equipment innovations, buying guides and supplier lists. They have also included their new step by step Taking Care Guides with the best practice for looking after people while they are seated, in bed, eating and drinking and managing continence. For more information **01392 380181**, [ilc-exeter@devon.gov.uk](mailto:ilc-exeter@devon.gov.uk) or visit <https://www.independentlivingcentre.org.uk>

## Sign up to receive coronavirus updates from Devon County Council straight to your inbox!

Devon County Council is working hard to keep you informed about the Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation on their website which is updated with all the latest information from the government, the NHS and from our community. You can also sign up to their helpful regular emails which provide the latest updates straight to your inbox by registering at <http://soc.devon.cc/hofCq>

They have also launched a helpline for people who have received an NHS Extremely Vulnerable letter. If you have received one of these letters, registered for support on the government website but have not received a food delivery, or you need other help because you are isolated, call: Devon Coronavirus Emergency Helpline **0345 155 1011**

# training courses

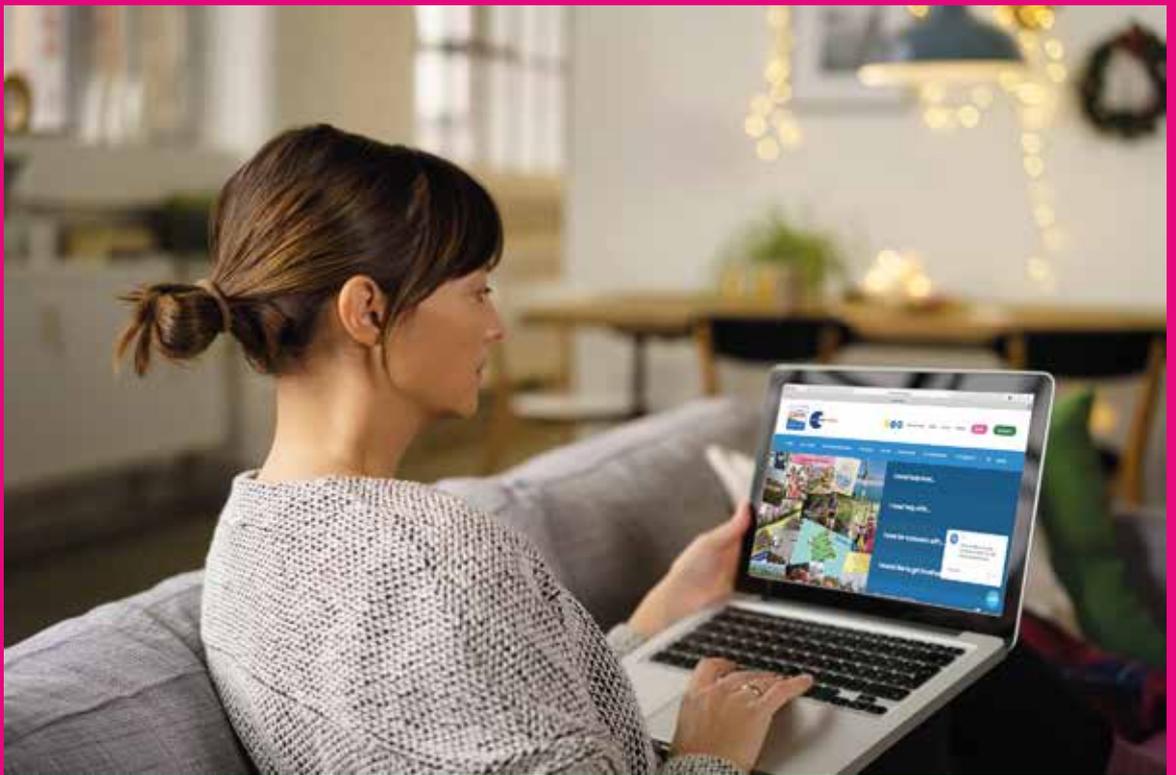
## Online training courses on Devon Carers website

Due to COVID-19 we have suspended our face to face training courses. We know that they have been very beneficial to our carers, so we are continually increasing our online training courses on our website. If you would like to learn about building resilience, good nutrition, how to maintain your mental, emotional health and wellbeing or to develop your skills as a carer in bite-sized learning and so much more visit: <https://devoncarers.org.uk/information-and-advice/self-help/on-line-training/>

### Now is the time to get online!

With limited chances to see our family and friends face to face at the moment, it has never been more important to get online.

There are many ways to keep in touch virtually on; social media, video calls and online groups - and if you are unsure of how to do this, then we can help you! Contact our Helpline for more information and to book a telephone appointment with our IT Support **03456 434 435**.



[www.devoncarers.org.uk](http://www.devoncarers.org.uk) | **03456 434 435**

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