

Devon Carers

You Care, We Care
Autumn 2023

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Save Paper, Save the Environment

Receive your copy of the magazine by email: contact **03456 434 435** also available online www.devoncarers.org.uk

www.devoncarers.org.uk
03456 434 435



Welcome to the Devon Carers magazine!

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

Our free support services for adults caring for people 18 years plus include:

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

Webchat: with our Helpline during our opening hours by clicking on the 'ask' button on **www.devoncarers.org.uk** Outside of these hours, automated answers will appear, which may answer your question, if not leave your email address and our Helpline will answer your query during opening hours.

The Helpline is not able to offer medical advice. For the latest NHS information and advice visit: **www.nhs.uk**

If you become unwell and are worried about looking after the person you care for, contact Care Direct **0345 1551 007**.

Website: with up to date information and guidance for unpaid carers: **www.devoncarers.org.uk**

Peer Support: If you haven't already accessed our Peer Support, now is the time to contact us, visit: **https://devoncarers.org.uk/support/peer-support/** or call our Helpline **03456 434 435**.

Carers Skills Workshops: We offer online and face-to-face sessions, view them in this magazine or visit:

Online workshops: **https://devoncarers.org.uk/support/training/online-training/**

Face-to-face workshops: **https://devoncarers.org.uk/support/training/face-to-face-training/**

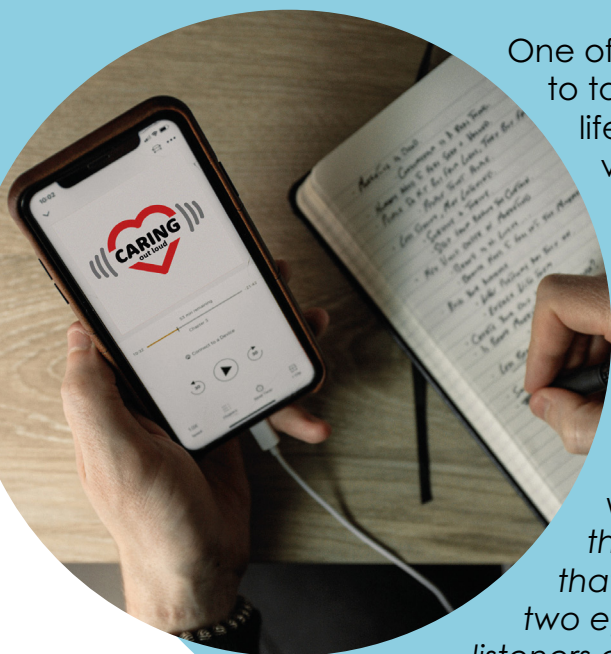
Health and Wellbeing Checks/Reviews (Carers Assessments): will be carried out over the telephone where possible. We will only make home visits where this is essential, AND an individual risk assessment shows this is safe for carers and staff to do so. During any essential visits, we will observe social distancing, face-covering and hand sanitising rules.

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. All information correct at time of going to press.

We would love your thoughts on our new-look magazine!
Email us at: **online@devoncarers.org.uk**

New carers podcast launched!



One of the most common concerns we hear is that you struggle to take time away from your caring role. We know how busy life as a carer can be and just taking a short break can be very beneficial. But we are aware it's not always that easy! Andy Hood, Head of Carers Services chats to us about the launch of the new podcast, Caring Out Loud.

He commented "We want to help address the issue of carers finding it difficult to take a break, so we have created a new podcast series, to enable you to enjoy time out, even if it's even just for a few moments."

He continued "Caring Out Loud is a short podcast, that we hope you will find entertaining and helpful. We want this to be like listening to your favourite radio show, except that it's all relatable to you as a carer. So far we have posted two episodes with another being released shortly, with over 100 listeners and have received really good feedback."

"We have some great new episodes coming up where we will be discussing topics like Peer Support (what it is, and how to access it) and how to take a break without leaving home. We would love to hear any other ideas or topics you would like discussed, ones which would be of real interest to you, so please do email us!"

To listen to the podcast visit: <https://podfollow.com/caring-out-loud> If you would like to send us any feedback or requests, please email caringoutloud@westbank.org.uk

Another fantastic year at the Young Carers Festival!

The Young Carers Festival is organised jointly by The Children's Society and YMCA and held at their headquarters in Southampton providing a unique experience for young carers from across the country. The festival is the biggest gathering of young carers in the world and despite COVID-19 interruption has returned with the same enthusiasm and excitement by our young carers from Devon.

The best description of the festival comes from the young carers themselves and can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ2dFCt1zgY>

This year Devon Young Carers took 16 young carers to the festival. Kaytie summed up the event by commenting "It's my time to have fun, make people aware we are here, we are proud, we will have fun despite the challenges we face and we will do it with a smile on our face and with our friends."



The festival gives young carers a break from their caring role, a chance to make new friends as well as the opportunity to try activities such as kayaking, climbing, fairground rides, silent disco, crafts or just to enjoy some quiet space. The festival also hosts the Voice Zone where young carers can have their say on issues affecting them and the chance to directly influence national policy, to shape Young Carers Action Day next year amongst other opportunities.

For more information on Devon Young Carers and their services visit:

<https://www.westbank.org.uk/Pages/Category/young-carers>

A look back at Carers Week 5th-11th June

The theme of this year's Carers Week was 'Recognising and supporting carers in the community' and with the help of local carer-friendly organisations, we were able to incorporate this across our events throughout the week!

Carers Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, highlight the challenges unpaid carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK.

Our wide range of events included seven National Trust Estates; Killerton House, Parke, Knightshayes, Castle Drogo, Lydford Gorge, A La Ronde and Arlington Court, where carers registered with us were able to visit for free, thanks to the very kind generosity of the Trust.

These public events enabled us to speak with people who didn't necessarily recognise themselves as having caring responsibilities. By chatting about our free services, they were able to identify as carers and register with us to gain much-needed support early on in their caring journey.

One of those we spoke to, included a carer who we met at A La Ronde, commented "I've been wanting to come here for years. After chatting to Devon Carers these tears are ones of relief that someone understands what it's like to be a carer."

We were also pleased to see so many of our current carers making the trip to see us. John commented "We popped out to Killerton to take a breather from our caring responsibilities and we were welcomed by Devon Carers and they even arranged the fabulous sunny weather! We enjoyed a cup of tea and a wander around the Estate, it was very much needed, thank you!"

Paula Clarke - National Trust Volunteering & Community Manager - Dartmoor, commented "It was such a pleasure to welcome Devon Carers to National Trust sites during Carers Week. Providing a safe space for carers to visit, meet and find respite and advice is a small way in which we can show our support and gratitude for the amazing work unpaid carers carry out. Our partnership with Devon Carers enables our teams of staff and volunteers to better support each other, with an increased awareness of the needs that unpaid carers might have."

Our Mile With A Smile campaign returned this year with great success. We asked people to walk, roll or stroll a mile with everyone contributing to our target of 350 miles, the total perimeter of Devon! With people taking a photo of themselves smiling on their mile and sharing across social media, enabled us to raise awareness of the invaluable role that carers undertake.

Carer Linda Shannon commented

“ **My walking is a life saver being a carer - I treat it as my mindfulness moment, so I'm very happy to support the Mile With A Smile campaign!** ”



Another one of our carers Jo Earlam also encouraged John her husband, who she cares for, to join in too.

She commented "Thank you for this fabulous initiative for Carers Week, we have enjoyed taking part. We've had so many messages of encouragement and support since sharing our Mile With A Smile walks on social media. It has really lifted John's spirits and made such a positive difference to us both!"



We were also very pleased to be joined by new local organisations supporting the campaign. Wild East Devon who maintain Seaton Wetlands even created some carer-friendly walks through their stunning wildlife reserve for Carers Week and was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone who visited!

Other Carer Friendly Devon organisations who enabled us to speak directly to the local community included Libraries Unlimited, a charity which runs the public library service across Devon and Torbay.

Janet, who attended our Sidmouth Library pop-up event said "I saw that Devon Carers were holding an information stand at the library, so I popped down to find out about the services I can access, they were really helpful and able to register me for support there and then!"

She continued "I loved that there was a specific book collection focusing on carers, it really made me feel recognised in my caring role, what a fantastic idea, I look forward to reading them!"

We were also supported by many wonderful local businesses including Seaton Tramway.

Nicola Stone Director, Learning, Activity and Interpretation Manager commented "As a Carer Friendly Devon supporter we were delighted to take part in Carers Week by offering free travel for carers. On presentation of their Devon Carers ID Card they were able to travel all day, with or without the person they care for. It was a great success, with many so carers taking advantage of the offer. We are looking forward to our next Carers Day event on Friday 22nd September, where we hope to welcome even more carers to our wonderful heritage tramway."

We were also very pleased to receive support from Trago Mills, Newton Abbott, John Lewis, Exeter, North Devon District Hospital and the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital, who all enabled us to chat directly with carers by allowing us to hold our informations stands with them throughout the week.

We look forward to next year's Carers Week! For more information on Carers Week and our Mile With A Smile campaign visit: www.devoncarers.org.uk/community/carers-week/



Tips to help look after your own wellbeing

Caring for someone can be rewarding but it can also put a lot of demands on you physically and emotionally. When you are supporting the needs of others, it's easy to put your own health to one side.

Here are some tips to help you look after your own wellbeing.



Do you suffer from disturbed sleep? Supporting someone in the night or being awake worrying about them, can have detrimental effects on your health. Why not book on our Sleep Carers Skills Workshop? Online on Zoom Wednesday 6th September 10.30am-12.30pm for better sleep techniques. For more info see p8.



Niggling health worries? Delaying booking GP appointments when we are too busy caring isn't helpful if it leaves us too ill to care in the long term. Book an NHS Health Check for 40-74 year-olds, to detect problems before they become serious issues. Contact your GP surgery or participating pharmacy to book. Visit: www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-health-check/



Prepare for emergencies: Give yourself peace of mind by putting plans in place if you are unable to care due to an emergency or unexpected hospital visit. Download our Emergency Plan to instruct others what actions should be taken: www.devoncarers.org.uk/support/emergency-planning/ Also apply for our Alert Card to notify others that the person you care for may need assistance, if something happens to you, visit: www.devoncarers.org.uk/support/emergency-planning/alert-card



Chat to like-minded carers: Sharing experiences and not having to explain yourself to others who don't understand what you are coping with is a fabulous release! Turn to the back of this magazine for our face-to-face and online Peer Support Groups and how to register for the service.



Practice Mindfulness: Reduce stress by learning techniques to relax your body and mind by living in the moment. Book yourself on our Relaxation in nature, with mindfulness practices Carers Skills Workshop, look in the middle of the magazine for more info!



Stop press!

The Carers Break Fund (on average £172) is available again to adult carers of people 18+ who haven't already received one in the last two years.

Need a break? Apply for the fund to help pay towards contributing to a night away, a hobby or exercise class. Contact us to apply or for more info:

<https://devoncarers.org.uk/information-and-advice/looking-after-me/carers-break-fund/>

Carers stories

Working out a way of caring that works for us both

Jo Earlam is one of our amazing volunteers who uses her fantastic expertise to interview and bring our Carers Stories to life! We first printed her story in our summer 2020 issue. We catch up with her to find out how she is progressing on her carer journey.

Jo writes: "I've been supporting my husband John for 10 years, since his health declined following a stroke in 2013, when he was aged 68, and still working."

"After a marked change in his abilities, things settled down and I was coping OK. But in spring 2017, our world came crashing down when my lovely mum died unexpectedly and a few weeks later John was diagnosed with mixed dementia."

"The difficult circumstances of her death led to me suffering severe panic attacks. I needed someone to look after me, just as John needed more looking after himself."

"We arranged for carers to help and they became a safety net, giving me space to grieve and access specialist help and supporting John. At this time, I first contacted Devon Carers. They guided me through applying for Attendance Allowance and Carers' Allowance and helped me recognise that John's needs were such that I was now his full-time carer."

"Life remained challenging, and it was difficult for me as I felt so broken, but we muddled through. I began to feel better just as Covid lockdown plunged us into isolation and new stress. A support call from Devon Carers came at just the right time, helping me to see the difficulties I'd been through and how I was doing my best for John."

"A few months later we faced a health decline in our 17-year-old terrier Archie. I was managing John's frailty and Archie's in tandem, and when the inevitable happened and Archie was put to sleep, my panic attacks returned. They were so severe that I needed to talk to someone who would understand, so I phoned the Devon Carers helpline. They were so kind and got me through the stressful period, following up with a full carer review where they suggested I needed to reclaim some time for myself."

"So I arranged for John to have extra support at home, giving me time away for a few hours without worrying how he was. I also tried to take him on more outings with family and friends, which he previously would have said no to, but was more accepting."

"His mobility is very poor and he can only walk with a frame, which compromised our trips out. On a much-enjoyed family holiday, we hired a mobility scooter and suddenly John's world was transformed as he had his own set of wheels again."

"I decided it was worth the investment to buy one for him to use at home and it's enabled us to go out on trips that haven't been possible in years. So lovely to see John happy and to feel happy caring for him. It's pointless to wish I'd done this before, but I'm glad I've done it now."



“Caring is a journey and you have to work out what works best at each stage and knowing Devon Carers are always there is a huge help.”

Carers Skills Workshops



Carers have told us that training is very beneficial to supporting them in their caring role. We have devised a series of online, real-time and face-to-face Carers Skills Workshops, where you can learn in the comfort of your own home, or in a Covid-secure venue.

It is essential to book your place. No booking is guaranteed until you have received confirmation from our training team.

To find out more about the workshop content, please visit: For live, online sessions: <https://www.devoncarers.org.uk/support/training/online-training/> For face-to-face sessions: <https://www.devoncarers.org.uk/support/training/face-to-face-training/>

To book your place or if you have any queries about our workshops email: training@devoncarers.org.uk with the workshop name, date, your name and date of birth. Please do not contact the venue.

KEY:



Live, online
Zoom
workshops



Face-to-face
workshops at
a venue

Sleep workshop

Do you have trouble sleeping? This workshop will enable you look at improving the quality of your sleep patterns to chat through related issues with other carers.

In this live, real-time Zoom session we will:

- Encourage informal discussions to identify sleep problems
- Find solutions that carers need to get a good night's sleep

September 6th September

10.30am to 12.30pm

Online on Zoom



Dementia & effective communication

Caring for people with dementia can be difficult as we see them struggle with everyday tasks. But to communicate with the person you care for more effectively, we need to improve our own interpersonal skills.

In this live, real-time Zoom session we will:

- Look at five different types of dementia
- Discuss problems with communication and how to avoid miscommunication issues
- Chat about problems experienced by asking questions

Monday 11th September

10.30am to 12.00pm

Online on Zoom



Managing stress

Caring can be rewarding but also stressful at the same time. We will look at stress, its causes, symptoms, and a variety of ways of limiting its effect. We will use techniques to find methods that work for you. In this live, real-time Zoom session we will:

- Discuss stress, its symptoms and how it affects us
- Develop an understanding of mindfulness and resilience
- Equip you with coping strategies to help you manage stress
- Identify the point when further assistance may be needed
- Discuss what further support and advice is available if you are feeling overly stressed

Tuesday 12th September	10.30pm to 12.30pm	Online on Zoom
Wednesday 1st November		

Dementia & sleep

Does the person you care for have trouble sleeping?

In this live, real-time Zoom session we will:

- Discuss the importance of sleep and what happens to sleep patterns for someone with dementia
- Look at how sleep varies when we age
- Chat about which food and drink can affect our sleep
- Offer strategies to help improve sleep patterns

Monday 18th September	1.30pm to 3.00pm	Online on Zoom
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How to use your I.T devices

Do you have a tablet or laptop that you would like to use, but lack the confidence to do so? In this small group workshop you will receive individual tutored support, to help you use your device more confidently. In this face-to-face session we will:

- Allow you to bring your own IT device and discover how to use it to communicate with friends and family (through email or video call) or to search the internet
- Explore the topic that you want to be able to master, for example; online shopping

Tuesday 19th September	10.00am to 12.00pm	Exeter CoLab, Wat Tyler House, 3 King William St, Exeter, EX4 6PD
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Assertiveness

Would you like to become more assertive in how you communicate with people?

This workshop will give you practical skills and tools to help you become more assertive.

In this live, real-time Zoom session we will:

- Help you understand why we communicate the way we do
- Eliminate resentment in your communication
- Give you practical skills to speak out
- Talk about how to deal with confrontational people
- Help you to eliminate the need for others' approval
- Discuss how to take control of your life and your choices
- Set boundaries without confrontation or guilt

Wednesday 20th September	10.30am to 12.30pm	Online on Zoom
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Relaxation in nature with mindfulness practices



Would you like to enjoy the beauty of nature whilst learning relaxation and mindfulness techniques?

In this face-to-face session we will:

- Include a guided meditation
- Give you strategies to help you let go of your worries and find peace and joy in the moment
- Offer you time to reflect and share your experience with others

Monday 25th September

2.00pm to 4.00pm

Bakers Park, Newton Abbot, TQ12 1YP

Looking at the challenges of caring for a parent who has dementia



Are you an unpaid carer of a parent that has dementia, and are you experiencing particular difficulties and problems? In this live real-time Zoom session we will:

- Give you time to identify the issues you are personally facing as a carer of a parent with dementia
- Allow time to come up with strategies and solutions with other carers in the group; that might be of benefit to help resolve the difficulties within your caring role

Wednesday 27th September

10.30am to 12.30pm

Online on Zoom



Managing challenging behaviour for carers dealing with mood disorders

For many carers dealing with the mental and emotional changes in their cared for can be the most challenging aspect of their caring.

In this live, real-time Zoom session we will:

- Give you the opportunity to meet with others experiencing similar issues
- Discuss ways of coping
- Look at how your own wellbeing can be supported or improved

Tuesday 3rd October

2.00pm to 4.00pm

Online on Zoom



Looking after you; looking after your relationship

Are you getting your relationship 5-a-day? This two-part workshop will explore the changing nature of carers' relationships; with the cared for, family and friends.

In this live, real-time Zoom session we will:

- Look at relationships over time - an ever-changing situation
- Discuss communication vs connection – mistakes we make
- Chat about your family history and how you relate
- Manage conflict, crisis and change
- Discuss forgiveness with family and friends
- Look at loneliness within a relationship
- Plan for an uncertain future and going forward
- This workshop will be informative and fun, with no requirement to share personal stories, in a safe and supportive environment

Tuesday 10th October (Part 1)

10.00am to 12.00pm

Online on Zoom

Tuesday 24th October (Part 2)

“ Attending the Carers Skills Workshops has made me feel more confident and I've met some wonderful carers in the same position as me. It's good to know I'm not on my own! ”



Thoughts, feelings and challenges

Have you ever given yourself the time to sit and think about your thoughts and feelings on being a carer?

In this live, real-time Zoom session we will:

- Give you space to talk about your thoughts and feelings on being a carer
- Allow you to explore the challenges you face and look at strategies to help you manage those challenges

Wednesday 11th October

2.00pm to 4.00pm

Online on Zoom



Dementia and the environment

People living with dementia can be affected by environmental factors.

In this live, real-time Zoom session we will:

- Look at the environmental factors that affect people with dementia
- Discuss problems with depth perspective e.g. why they can't see the food on their plate or see patterned carpets
- Talk about stored and working memory
- Discuss the importance of routine and sleep

Monday 16th October

10.30am to 12.00pm

Online on Zoom



Basic first aid skills

Caring for someone can be a worry if the person you care for suddenly becomes ill or has an accident. This practical and interactive session will focus on life threatening conditions.

In this face-to-face session we will:

- Inform you of how to safely approach a scene
- Complete a casualty assessment, place someone in the recovery position and understand why we do it
- Perform CPR and treat a choking casualty safely and effectively
- Discuss common injuries; bleeds, fractures and burns
- Give you time to ask Q&A's

Wednesday 18th October

10.00am to 12.30pm

Exeter CoLab, Wat Tyler House, 3 King William St, Exeter, EX4 6PD



How to cope as a carer

Would you like to learn some hints, tips and strategies on how to cope as a carer?

In this live, two part real-time Zoom session we will:

- Part 1 – Look at self-care which will cover eating, exercise, sleep, alcohol and smoking
- Advice on being organised, rewarding yourself, taking time for yourself (and why not to feel guilty about it)
- Advice about getting the best out of the NHS and other sources of practical help
- Part 2 Coping mentally and emotionally looking at feelings of guilt, resentment, anger, negativity, loneliness, loss (of the person they were before and the future you thought you were going to have)
- Looking at help, accepting help (not just saying "I am fine!") and advice on managing unhelpful suggestions, from other people when you are busy contending with a caring role

Friday 3rd November (Part 1)

10.30am to 12.00pm

Online on Zoom

Friday 10th November (Part 2)

News and info

Charity's respite is a 'lifeline' to Devon unpaid carer

Breaks organised by Devon charity Shared Lives South West (SLSW) has been described as a 'godsend' by one carer who uses their services. SLSW, which has been established for almost 20 years, matches the person in need of support with a host family, who opens their own home up to provide respite breaks.

Julie, who cares for her mum Maureen living with dementia, said the regular breaks with Shared Lives host Sue Henson are an opportunity for her to 'recharge'.

She commented "Sue is fantastic! The little break in Sue's home is like a holiday for Mum. It enables me time to myself to catch up with things I'm not able to do while caring for mum and I feel so much better afterwards when I pick her up."

She continued "As Mum is becoming progressively worse it can be tiring, so this is a godsend for us and I don't have to worry as I know Mum is happy and feels safe with Sue."

Sue, who has been a Shared Lives host for many years, added: "I enjoy supporting Maureen and she enjoys her stays with me. She loves the garden especially as it backs onto the Grand Western Canal. She enjoys watching the comings and goings on the towpath and waves to the people on the horse-drawn barge as it passes by. Those who stay with us enjoy lovely day trips out to the beach, the farm shop or we pop into town. Recently we took Maureen to Dawlish where she grew up, she really looks forward to her time with us."

SLSW hosts open their own home to people with a variety of needs including learning disabilities, mental health issues, autism and other concerns, either for a short break or for more long-term stays. If you are looking to take a break from your caring role, why not contact them to see how they can support you?

They are also looking for host families to support people within their own home and as a carer or past carer you could have the right skills to help others. Being an SLSW host family has so many benefits. It's a rewarding role where you can work from home, whilst being supported throughout with ongoing training from the SLSW team.

For more information about the availability of host families or how to become an SLSW host visit: www.sharedlivesw.org.uk or call 01626 360170.



Are you struggling with your water bill?

Whether it's you, or someone you know who might need support with their bill, South West Water can help. They have one of the easiest services to use - it takes less than two minutes to find out what you are eligible for.

So how does it work?

By simply giving them a call, their WaterCare+ team will:

1. Check you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to

By taking you through a series of simple questions, they can double check you are receiving all the support you can.

2. Put you on the best tariff for you

After checking your eligibility, including whether you are on a meter, the team will offer you the best tariff for your situation. On top of that, their different payment plans could be just what you're looking for to help spread the cost.

3. Arrange a home-audit of ways you can save on energy and water

When on a meter, saving water means you pay less. These helpful home visits can highlight the ordinary steps you can take to make an extraordinary difference to your bill.

4. Install water-saving devices

Where possible, they will install water-saving shower heads, tap inserts, and cistern bags to help reduce water use in your home. These cut costs and help the environment.

Visit their website for more information, or apply online at:

www.southwestwater.co.uk/bills/need-help-paying-bill/single-application



Carers Support Group 'Walk and Chat' outings

With the help of funding from the Devon County Council Connecting You transport initiatives programme, Honiton Carers Support Group has been able to enjoy day trips for local unpaid carers and ex-carers to help prevent loneliness.

Carers often spend significant time supporting others without time for themselves. But Connecting You has enabled the day trips to be fully funded, allowing carers to simply enjoy making connections and some new friendships during their journeys.

Honiton Carers have supported the group by taking trips to Exeter, Sherbourne, Newton Abbot and Axminster. Each trip involved a train journey from Honiton train station to each of the various locations, with an opportunity to explore the local area and enjoy the company of their peers.

Winnie Cameron, Chair of Honiton Carers Support Group said: "The trips have been fantastic. Members of the group have really benefitted from them, discovering the ease of train travel and the wonderful locations they can give them access to!"

She continued "We have around 25 people join us on each trip and they have really helped the members gain confidence using these services, as well as enjoy the trips themselves."



Health and wellbeing

Keeping warm safely this Autumn

There are many products advertised as cost-effective heating methods to keep warm in the cooler months. Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service want to tell you about the potential fire risks of using mini heaters and some important safety advice if you or the person you care for are using them.

Illegal and dangerous plug-in mini heaters (pictured) have recently come onto online marketplaces. Some of these models are using counterfeit fuses that could cause a fire risk. Please be extremely careful when buying any electrical item over the internet. We recommend not to buy them.

Safety tips

- Be aware of counterfeit and poor-quality products online.
- Always buy products with a British Standard and CE Mark.
- Do not put bags or shopping near heaters.
- Be mindful of which socket you plug heaters into (not too close to soft furnishings).
- Position them high up (away from pets and children).
- Do not leave unattended and always switch off at night.



Do you know about their free home fire safety visit service?

They offer free home fire safety visits to help make everyone safer. A friendly home fire safety advisor can give you fire safety advice and provide fire safety equipment (free of charge).

To request a visit, call **0800 05 02 999** or visit **www.dsfire.gov.uk/homesafety**

When contacting them for a free home fire safety visit please quote the code for Devon Carers - **035**.

Devon County Council seeks carers views

Joint Carers Lead, for Devon County Council, Sue Younger-Ross is asking for your thoughts on the most effective way to reduce loneliness and your views on the decrease in reported unpaid carers in the current population.

Sue Younger-Ross commented "In past issues, I have raised questions with readers, and many of you have responded with very helpful views and information. This time I have two questions on which I would like your help."

One of our key priorities is reducing carer social isolation and loneliness. The Biennial Carer Survey showed us this is a pressing issue in Devon. But what do we mean by these terms? By using the

World Health Organisation definition, it states:

- Social isolation - the objective state of having a small network of kin and non-kin relationships and thus few or infrequent interactions with others.
- Loneliness - the pain we feel when our social connections do not meet our needs.

Our working group involving Carer Ambassadors are looking at the evidence from research on this, and carers experiences of social isolation and loneliness in Devon.

To help us, we would like you to tell us:

1. What action could we take to help reduce social isolation and loneliness with regards to you and your caring role?

Your answer:

Our second question concerns the Census 2021 which surprised people by showing a significantly lower number of carers than expected - a 13% reduction to around 10% of the population.

This is in contrary to other sources of evidence. For example, the survey of patients registered with GP Practices showed an increase from 17% in 2020 (where it had been stable for a while) to 19% in 2022.

Various explanations of the Census results have been put forward. The Census also showed fewer people in the population reporting poor health - so maybe less people are needing support from unpaid carers?

Alternatively, because of the Covid-19 restrictions, caring may have become more concentrated in the hands of a single carer, with fewer people being able to help them. Another view is that the way the question was asked in the Census (which was changed as it was felt the previous question risked confusion with ordinary parenting), and the support for the NHS, which people showed by 'clapping for carers', may have caused a lack of understanding over the role of actual unpaid carers.

2. What do you think? Are you getting help from fewer family members or friends now than before Covid-19? What do you think the explanation might be?

Your answer:

Please return your answers to the above questions to Devon County Council via the Devon Carers Freepost address:

Freepost RRYT-SASA-HZXZ (DCC Questions)
Devon Carers Second Class Post
Westbank HLC
Exminster
Exeter, EX6 8AT

Or alternatively let us know your answers by filling in this online form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/tv89BfnPhW>

All forms to be returned to us by Monday 31st August 23.

Are you looking to meet and chat with other carers?

Why not join one of our friendly Peer Support groups (online and face-to-face) where carers mutually support each other practically and emotionally by sharing knowledge and experiences. To express your interest to attend any of these groups call our Helpline on **03456 434 435** who will refer you to our Peer Support team. For any queries once you have registered for the service, please email: **peer.support@devoncarers.org.uk**. All places need to be booked in advance with our Peer Support team. We are constantly adding new locations and dates, so please look out for our latest updates on social media, email and letters in the post.

Face-to-face Peer Support Groups

Please find below towns where the groups take place to see which is most convenient to you. Once you have spoken to the Peer Support team, they will send you updates on dates, times and venue addresses.

August: Bideford / Tavistock / Teignmouth / Tiverton / Torrington / Totnes

September: Barnstaple / Crediton / Dawlish / Exeter / Exeter (morning) / Neurodivergent Carers (Exeter) / Exmouth / Ivybridge / Newton Abbot / Okehampton / Ottery St Mary / Totnes

October: Bideford / Crediton / Cullompton / Newton Abbot / Exeter / South Molton / Tavistock / Teignmouth / Totnes

November: Barnstaple / Crediton / Exeter / Ivybridge / Sidmouth

Online Zoom Peer Support Groups

Please find below dates and times when these online groups take place to see which is most convenient to you. Once you have spoken to the Peer Support team, they will send you updates on availability.

Games Night	Tuesday	01/08, 15/08, 05/09, 19/09, 03/10, 17/10, 07/11, 21/11	7.30pm - 9.00pm
Autism Group	Wednesday	02/08, 06/09, 04/10, 01/11	10.30am - 12.00pm
Dementia Group	Monday	07/08, 11/09, 09/10, 13/11	10.30am - 12.00pm
Mental Health Group	Wednesday	23/08, 27/09, 25/10, 22/11	12.00pm - 1.00pm
Male Carers	Wednesday	09/08, 13/09, 11/10, 08/11	2.00pm - 3.00pm
Craft Group	Thursday	10/08, 14/09, 12/10, 09/11	11.00am - 12.00pm
	Tuesday	22/08, 26/09, 24/10, 28/11	7.30pm - 9.00pm
Parent with Dementia Group	Thursday	17/08, 21/09, 19/10, 16/11	7.30pm - 9.00pm
Open Group	Thursday	24/08, 28/09, 26/10, 23/11	10.30am - 12.00pm
Living Room Disco	Thursday	03/08, 07/09, 05/10, 02/11	7.30pm - 9.00pm
LGBTQ+	Monday	30/10	10.30am - 11.30am
Mental Health (evening group)	Tuesday	08/08, 12/09, 10/10, 14/11	7.30pm - 9.00pm

www.devoncarers.org.uk | 03456 434 435

Please call **t: 03456 434 435** or **e: info@devoncarers.org.uk** for more information or if you would like to contribute to a future magazine. This magazine is made from FSC certified paper and printed using vegetable inks. Published by Westbank Community Health and Care: Registered Charity No 1119541 Company limited by guarantee Registered in England No 6243811. Devon Carers, Westbank, Farm House Rise, Exminster, Exeter, EX6 8AT.