



Tel: 01622 685276

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If you can help us cut costs by having your newsletter sent by email please let us know @ ...

carers@vam-online.org.uk

Dear Carer

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of our newsletter, welcome to newcomers and regular readers alike.

I am using this editorial space to ask for your assistance. Please help us raise funds to update our ever popular booklets by voting for us. Nat West Community Force is giving us the chance to win £6,000. If successful, this funding would enable us to update, reprint and widely distribute 10,000 copies of our 5 different and widely acclaimed information booklets, which provide carers with vital signposting information.

**To win we must get lots of votes.** Public voting starts on **26 September**, is open for 4 weeks and closes on 23 October 2011. Those of you with access to the internet please vote by going to <http://communityforce.natwest.com/project/1628>. If you are unable to do this please ring **0800 2100 246** to find out how to submit a postal vote. **We would be so grateful if you can help us to continue helping you and other carers by voting.**

Best wishes to one and all.

Barbara



Barbara Hagan : Jane Thomas : Maureen Belcher : Elayne Oxley : Jane Pantony



This issue of our newsletter has been funded by an award from the Sir Jules Thorn Charitable Trust. Their kind support is greatly appreciated.

Maidstone & Malling Carers Project  
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39-48 Marsham Street  
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## A tearful farewell

After moving to Herne Bay last July and becoming 60 last November it was a question of when was the right time to retire, particularly when that would mean giving up daily contact with so many wonderful people. Needless to say it was an extremely difficult decision to make but in the end the warm sunshine was too hard to resist and, selfishly, I left at the end of July to enjoy what remained of the summer.

I have to say I have never been so spoiled in my life as I was in the last couple of weeks at MMCP! My office was awash with cards and carers kept popping in with gifts for me, not least ,a case of delicious home-made wine left in reception (many thanks Reg - it 's going down very well!). I went through endless tissues as the time came for my last calls to carers on the Keeping in Touch list and the last activity groups I was to attend. A group of carers joined Barbara and me on the Allington Belle for a mini cruise when I was presented me with more wonderful gifts, cards and flowers. I was totally overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity of you all, it was totally unexpected and my eyes are now brimming up again remembering that day!

Retirement takes a bit of getting used to (particularly staying in bed for a cup of tea while Ken gets ready for work) but I'm keeping busy with the work still to do on the house and garden and looking after my grandchildren from time to time. I've joined the local leisure centre and go to Pilates and Zumba classes. I miss you all and of course my work colleagues very much but I keep in regular contact with the project so I'm still thinking of you and wish you all good health and happiness for the future. Thank you for making my working life so enjoyable.

*Christine*

## Forgetmenot Singing

A new community singing group welcoming older people, people with mental health problems, disabilities, those with dementia and their carers has started meeting every fortnight at the Blackthorn Trust, Garden Room, 10.30 – 12 noon. Sessions cost £2.50 per person and begin with refreshments and a social time, chair based movement and vocal warm up, prior to community singing. Upcoming dates are 03, 17 and 31October. To find out more call **0758 2451470**.



## Kent Carers Emergency Card

If you have changed address, phone number or your nominated emergency contacts need to be changed please let Jane know straight away just in case that emergency actually happens!

If you haven't joined the emergency card scheme yet, ring Jane for a form or to find out more. It's easy to do and will give you peace of mind that should anything happen to you while you are away from the person you care for, that a pre-arranged emergency plan can be put into action.





## FREE Carers Support Programme

**Confidently Caring** - A three hour session held one day a week for three weeks helping carers take better care of themselves and those they care for. WHY? because "CARERS MATTER".

We will explore the role of the carer, and the issues that are causing the greatest concern. Also looking at how to cope with emergency situations, like medication, when to call the professionals for help, and looking after our backs to prevent injury. We move onto the resources available for carers and share experiences and knowledge with each other.

The focus is really on you the carer and your wellbeing. We will be looking at stress, understanding why we become stressed and sharing techniques of how to manage this. Understanding the importance of taking care of yourself, from healthy eating to exercise, sharing top tips for coping and learning to breathe and relax effectively. Ultimately, to help you to plan "Having a Life of Your Own".

**When:** 16, 23 and 30 November 2011–10am-1pm

**Where:** Maidstone Community Support Centre  
39-48 Marsham Street, Maidstone

To find out more and to book a place please contact  
Maidstone and Malling Carers Project **01622 685276**

or contact us direct on **T: 01474 - 535457**

E: [info@carersmattercic.org](mailto:info@carersmattercic.org)



in Partnership with



## **The Low Review: Personal Mobility in State-Funded Residential Care** *[review closes Monday 10 October]*

*In the 2010 Spending Review the Government announced its intention to remove the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance, soon to become Personal Independence Payment, from people living in state-funded residential care.*

*There has been much concern about this amongst disabled people and carers with many people writing letters to the press and their MP. It appears that the Government considers that people no longer need this benefit when they live in a care home. However many people rely on this payment, for example; One man living in a care home saves this money to spend on a taxi to fortnightly visit his elderly mother who lives 70 miles away and is ill and unable to leave her bed. His weekly personal allowance of £22.60 [which has to cover all his personal expenses apart from, board, lodging and care would not cover this] and the home would not supply this transport.*

*Lord Low is leading an independent review into how the mobility needs of people living in residential care are met and funded. They will be presenting their findings to government including key recommendations on how the mobility needs of people living in residential care should be met.*

The review would welcome your thoughts and be happy to answer any questions you may have. Please contact the Low Review in one of the following ways:

**Phone: 0203 242 0373**

**Email: [info@lowreview.org.uk](mailto:info@lowreview.org.uk)**

**Write to:  
The Low Review**

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### **Message from Carers UK**

As part of our early planning ideas for Carers Week 2012 (June 18-24) we're researching all things Olympics. We're keen to find out about carers and/or their families in the UK who had/have an Olympic link of any kind?

Were you an Olympic contender? Or did you travel with the GB team? Did you see Olga Korbut close up? Does the Olympics mean something special for you as a carer? Whatever your role or link we'd be really keen to hear from you asap.

[This information is just for research purposes at this moment in time].

Please send your details to the new Carers Week Media Officer, Rebecca Couper, at [Rebecca.Couper@carersuk.org](mailto:Rebecca.Couper@carersuk.org)

**CARERS UK**  
the voice of carers

### **Carers Rights Day—02 December**

This year we will be working in partnership with Maidstone Gateway to raise awareness of Carers Rights



Maidstone Special Needs Support Service

Calling all Maidstone families with a child between 0 and 19 with disabilities or special needs! M4S (Maidstone Special NeedS Support Service) are a recently formed parent-led charity who want to support families by speaking up for what families want from services, offering information and support to help families access services as well as offering fun activities for the whole family. Families tell us they feel isolated and want to meet with other families who understand some of the challenges they face. We are busy planning family activities and outings to take place between now and Christmas, from bowling in October to a sports night, disco and an outing to the pantomime in December. Why not join us and meet other families? Become a member and tell us what things you would like us to offer. If you would like to know more about us or to book a place at an event call Ailsa on 01622 764566. Or visit our website [www.m4s.org.uk](http://www.m4s.org.uk) or email us on [info@m4s.org.uk](mailto:info@m4s.org.uk)

### **A letter from Mike, a carer**

*My name is Mike and I am a carer for my wife Doreen, we are both 78 and apart from my wife's condition both of us are in reasonably good health. Doreen has Dementia caused by brain damage during a series of operations some 3 years ago. Relatives and friends live some way away so getting together occurs infrequently.*

*I am writing to outline my idea that perhaps there are couples in the same position as myself who seek the opportunity to meet on occasions in our homes for a cup of tea and a piece of cake and a friendly chat. This doesn't have to be overly frequent say 2-3 times a month in the evenings or at the weekends to help break up those lonely nights during the winter months. If this has some appeal to you perhaps we could talk about this and say set up some kind of club for those who would be interested.*

*I live in the Larkfield area — my phone number is 01732 845405  
My email address is [midechany@talktalk.net](mailto:midechany@talktalk.net)*

*Looking forward to hearing from anyone who would find this interesting  
My kind regards*

Mike



### **Final 'thank you' to M & S**

We were extremely fortunate to have been nominated as the chosen charity of the Maidstone Branch of Marks and Spencer during the past year. We have now received our final cheque, and as a result of both the fund raising efforts of staff members, and the generosity of customers at the till points, our Carers Activity fund has benefited from the grand total of..



**£2,673.03**

**Many thanks to M & S staff and customers**

## Walking Group

Would you like to take some exercise, meet friendly people and see more of the countryside? Have a picnic, lunch in a pub or café and a chat and some laughter.

If so then come and join Maidstone and Malling Carers Project Walking Group. The group meets on the last Monday of the month in the morning and goes on different walks around the countryside of Maidstone, after the walk there is the opportunity to have a picnic together if the weather is fine or lunch in a pub or café. This year so far we have walked around Loose, Vinters Valley Nature Reserve, Mote Park, Hadlow Gardens, Yalding Organic Gardens and Leybourne Lakes. Please don't worry if you don't know anybody else you will be made very welcome.

Please contact Jane Thomas on 01622 685276 or by email at [jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk) for further information, I will be very pleased to hear from you.

**'Zumba Dancing'** Zumba incorporates various Latin American dances with additional exercise movements. It's fast, it's fun and will tone up those muscles as well as lifting the spirits!

Zumba classes are opening up everywhere at present and very popular. Your very own class is *free* and there is plenty of room for however many carers that want to come along. Every Thursday afternoon at the Envi/Liquid nightclub in Lockmeadow from 3-4pm. Call **Barbara on 01622 685276**



## Swimming Group at the Living Well Fitness Centre

The group meets on Tuesday mornings from 10.20 at The Hilton Hotel in Maidstone for a workout in the gym, swim, relax in the steam room, sauna or jacuzzi and finish off with a chat over coffee in the hotel lounge. Membership is limited and there is a waiting list at present but please let us know if you would like to join this friendly and supportive group and we will add your name to the reserve list.

**Card Making Group** – another 4-week ly session with Janet begins on Thursday 06 Oct from 10.30 - 12.30. If you are interested in signing up for this very popular group please ring the office straight away as places are in great demand! If you are too late to join in this class you can add your name to the mailing list for next time.

## Art Group

The carers art group meets on the first Monday of the month from 1.30-3.30. Bring along your own materials and anything you want to work on. Set aside a couple of hours for yourself each month to have peace and quiet and to be 'creative'. If you would like to come along the next session will be on 03 October .

## Knit & Stitch Group

This carers group meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month .Bring along any kind of sewing or knitting you are currently doing, exchange ideas and enjoy some good company. As with the art group, you don't have to be good at it, just enjoy doing it!



## The Book Club

The book group meets on 2nd Tuesday of every month at Maidstone Community Support Centre from 10 - 11.30am and welcomes new members. Check out their extensive and varied book list and watch their video on our website [www.vam-online.org.uk/activities.asp](http://www.vam-online.org.uk/activities.asp)

Next meeting: **08 November**

### This months review:

#### Feedback on *A World on Fire* by Amanda Foreman

##### 1 Did you enjoy a *World on Fire*

Taking an average for the group – 7

##### 2 Could you tell us a bit about why you did or did not enjoy the book?

We praised the presentation with regular breaks for photos and pictures. We liked the generous quantity of explanatory lists, maps and introductions. We were impressed by the thoroughness of the research and the attention to detail. We admired the drawing of character. We felt the book was easy to read. We found the book too long and too challenging to read in a month. We would have liked longer. We found the print much too small and the book too heavy for comfort. Most of us chose to dip in to the book rather than read it cover to cover like a story.

##### 3 What elements of the book did you cover in your discussion?

Print, layout, illustrations, reference sources, style, character drawing, what we learnt about that period of history which surprised us, celebrity spotting (Louise M Alcott, Stanley), Barack Obama's admiration for Lincoln's coalition politics, the cotton trade, the make-up of the "United States", the invisibility of the needs of the indigenous population, the French connection, its size, weight and the difficulties of writing such a huge book with so many children!

##### 4 What did you think about the writing style

We thought it flowed – more so than we would have expected with a history tome.

##### 5 What qualities, if any, does the book share with fiction?

The easy flowing style and the good drawing of character

##### 6 Would you recommend this book to a friend

We will be passing on our gift copies to people with a real interest in the history of that period. But, we thought it unsuitable for a book group and better suited to a history study group.

Our ages vary from 50+ to 80+. The thing we have in common is that we are carers or ex-carers. Females are more numerous in our group than males.

On average I would say we are not big buyers of paperbacks or hardbacks. One of our most prolific readers buys from charity shops. Our local bookshop is a Waterstones.

BCO

13 Sep 2011

#### ALL THE ABOVE ACTIVITY GROUPS ARE FREE TO CARERS

WE CAN ONLY FUND THEM THANKS TO DONATIONS RECEIVED FROM TRUSTS, CARERS, AND FUNDRAISING EFFORTS FROM GROUPS, CLUBS AND BUSINESSES. OUR MOST GRATEFUL THANKS TO ALL THOSE THAT HAVE SUPPORTED US THIS YEAR.



## Support Group for Carers/Significant others of people who misuse Drugs and Alcohol

Is someone else's Drug or Alcohol use affecting your life?

Would you like some support?

Maidstone and Malling Carers Project hold a support group for people who are affected by someone else's drug or alcohol misuse. The group meets twice a month and is facilitated by Maidstone and Malling Carers Project in partnership with a professional from Kenward Choices, Kca or Turning Point who work with people who misuse substances. The group aims to provide support, guidance and information in a relaxed and confidential environment.

The support group is held at Maidstone Community Support Centre, 39-48 Marsham Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1HH.

Please contact Jane Thomas at Maidstone and Malling Carers Project on **01622 685276** or by email [jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk](mailto:jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk) for further details.

## What you told us – outcome of Maidstone and Malling Carers Forum Evaluation

Evaluation forms were handed out at the last Carers Forum. Of 58 given out, 37 were returned which is an excellent completion rate of 64%. Many thanks to all of the carers who took the time to let us know what you think about attending the Forum. 23 respondents regularly attended, 5 had done so occasionally and 9 had attended for the first time. The feedback overwhelmingly confirmed that carers;

**'think the venue is good' - 'feel better informed after attending' - 'find the summary of Forum notes in the newsletter useful' - 'think speaking directly to the Planners and Managers of Health and Social Services is an important part of the meeting' – 'value being a member of a Forum with other carers'**

There were numerous suggestions and comments made which we will incorporate into our future planning as much as possible. Some people felt we sometimes try to cover too many issues under each theme or topic. We do acknowledge that this can be the case, as we always struggle to get a good balance between providing enough in depth coverage, along with widest possible interest to potential attendees.

The most common critical comment was regarding the difficulty sometimes in being able to hear speakers clearly along with the suggestion that this could be improved by use of a microphone/PA system. We will be looking into this before the next Forum and hopefully resolve this difficulty.

If you would be interested in seeing the full report based on aggregated responses received we would be very happy to share this with you. Thank you once again for your time.

Barbara Hagan

# Maidstone & Malling Carers Forum

## Summary of notes from Wed 17 June 2011



### Topic: Finances

**Attended by** 58 carers, 4 Maidstone and Malling Carers Project staff, and 2 Panel members

Panel:

Sue Harrison – Care Partnership Manager, Jobcentre Plus

Glen Miles – Partner and Solicitor, ASB Law

The Forum looked at 3 specific areas of financial concern to carers;

1. Money Saving
2. Move from Incapacity Benefit/ Income Support to Employment Support Allowance
3. Legal issues in Managing Money when someone has care needs

The first part of the Forum was used to gather together money saving tips and ideas from carers attending. These have been added to a paper already compiled by MMCP staff which can be viewed and downloaded from our website

[www.vam-online.org.uk/cplatestnews.asp](http://www.vam-online.org.uk/cplatestnews.asp). If you do not have access to the internet please give us a call and we can print and post a copy to you. [Any additional ideas are welcome for inclusion].

**Sue Harrison** introduced herself and explained that the transition from Income Support to Employment Support Allowance [ESA] would continue until 2014. The process starts with a letter being sent, followed up by a phone call to confirm receipt. A 'Limited capability for work questionnaire' [Form ESA50] needs to be completed and then this may be followed up by a request to attend a medical assessment. A decision is then made as to whether someone has limited capacity to work or can remain on ESA. Sue stressed the importance of using a 'worse case scenario' when answering the questions i.e. not what someone can do on a good day with support and encouragement but what they are like at other times and without support. Carers were very anxious about these assessments and had lots of questions for Sue.

If the person you care for is sent a questionnaire it is vital that as much relevant information as possible is included in the response. There is an excellent guide available to help people complete the ESA 50 which is downloadable from our website [or available on request]

[www.vam-online.org.uk/cplatestnews.asp](http://www.vam-online.org.uk/cplatestnews.asp). If you would welcome someone to help you with completing this please ring us at MMCP and ask for Jane Thomas.

### **Glen Miles – ASB Law**

Glen gave a presentation dealing with legal issues about managing money, issues around Power of Attorney, The Court of Protection, Trusts and legitimate practical ways to avoid savings being swallowed up by care home fees.

Glen outlined the options for managing the affairs of those cared for.

Cont'd page 10

## Forum Notes Cont'd

**Lasting Power of Attorney** – an individual who was deemed to have capacity could sign an LPA to enable their carer to manage financial and/ or health/welfare matters on their behalf. If there was no capacity then a formal application would need to be made to the Court of Protection who would then appoint a deputy. Glen explained he was one of three deputies in ASB Law who step in when someone has no family or friends to manage their affairs.

**Trusts and Wills** – Glen pointed out that leaving or making a gift to a person should be carefully considered as the impact of that gift could affect their state funded care, benefits and care home fees.

A Discretionary Trust can be set up during a lifetime and allows family members or/ and friends to utilize one Trust. They have greater flexibility for tax purposes, care fees, divorce and bankruptcy. Mencap operate a Discretionary Trust Scheme.

Dangers of not using Trusts –

- Trusts are the only method to designate funds for a particular person without placing the assets in their hands
- Absolute gifts run the risk of abuse, loss of benefits and need administration by recipient. Gifts to family or friends for the benefit of another can be the victim of divorce, bankruptcy and litigation, death, tax or a disagreement.

*Q Can I put my house into trust so that my children receive the assets?*

A Generally no, under the deprivation of assets rules. What you can do is you sever the ownership to 'tenants in common' where you each own a divisible half share as couples don't normally go into care at the same time. So you preserve half the value of the estate held in Trust. Your wife would benefit from the interest in the property but would be held in Trust for the children. You can deprive yourself of assets but there are inherent risks in doing so. One example might be that your property was held in trust for your son and then he divorced or died – his wife could then remarry and own half or all of your property. If you give assets away to someone who then dies it goes to the named person in their **will**.

Glen handed out information packs to carers attending the Forum and lots of carers stayed at the end to talk to both Panel Members individually.

***Please note we are not holding a Forum during October as planned due to circumstances beyond our control***

***Next planned Forum – 22 February 2012 – topic to be advised***

## New Group in East Peckham



A new Carers' Support Group has started meeting at East Peckham Sports Hall, Pippin Road. The group is held on the first Thursday of every month between 11.30 and 1pm and welcomes all Carers. To find out more contact Marion Sorfleet on **01622 871831** [on a Monday or Wednesday evening between 6 and 8pm only please

## Struggling with Debt? Worried about paying your bills?

Christians Against Poverty is a debt counselling service for anyone, regardless of their religious beliefs. The service is free and they provide a home visiting service.

They have helped thousands of families to be released from the pressure of debt through a combination of advice, financial education, budgeting and insolvency services.

After you contact C.A.P. you will be visited at home by a Support Worker. A realistic budget is then worked out at CAP HQ which prioritises your essential bills, negotiating affordable payments with each creditor and stopping unfair interest and charges where possible. The local Support Worker will then visit you again to explain it all. An account is then set up for you with CAP and it acts like a simple bank account. You will need to make one weekly or monthly payment into the account to cover the bills you are struggling with and your debts. CAP will then distribute this on your behalf.

If you are in severe debt then CAP can walk you through the different solutions, like bankruptcy, or debt relief orders and help with the completion of the forms and even attend court with you. You will be fully supported by a team at CAP HQ until you are debt free.

Christians Against Poverty can be contacted on 0800 328006 and they are also available in Maidstone Gateway.

## Warning from Kent Trading Standards

Kent Trading Standards have been made aware of three men in a van currently operating in the Bearsted area of Maidstone offering block paving work on residents' driveways. They have been advised by Trading Standards regarding their paperwork which gives a false address. In another incident the group began work while the consumer was still considering their right to cancel.



Kent Trading Standards advise consumers to be wary when dealing with traders at their door. Consider carefully whether you do want the goods or services offered.

In most cases if you agree to buy anything costing over £35 from a trader at your door, the law gives you a 7 day "cooling off" period to change your mind. The trader must give you a written cancellation notice if you agree to have any work done. Failure to give this notice is a crime.

If you are considering work in or on your property it is always best to get at least a couple of quotes from traders. You can find reputable traders on the "Buy With Confidence" good trader scheme run by us. Our officers vet all traders on the scheme for trustworthiness and to ensure they comply with consumer protection laws. Or, ask for recommendations from friends or family.

To report any concerns you have or for details of Buy With Confidence traders call Trading Standards via Consumer Direct on 0808 156 2256. You can also visit [www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk](http://www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk) for a list of traders.

## Diary Dates

Check on our website for future dates  
[www.vam-online.org.uk/carersproject.asp](http://www.vam-online.org.uk/carersproject.asp)

Mondays	Maidstone District Partnership POP-IN - for people with a learning disability and carers - Tel: 07732 609 540	1 - 4
Mondays (fortnightly)	Support Group for carers effected by people misusing alcohol or drugs. - Tel: Jane 01622 685276	6-8pm
Tuesdays	Swimming Group for Carers at the Living Well Fitness Centre Tel: 01622 685276	10.30 -
Thursdays	ZUMBA for Carers - (a fusion of Latin American dance and exercise) Tel: Barbara 01622 685276	3 - 4
Mon 03 Oct	Support Group for carers affected by people misusing alcohol or drugs - as above	6-8pm
Mon 03 Oct	Carers Art Group meet on 1st Monday of each month - Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: 01622 685276	1.30-3.30
Tue 11 Oct	Carers Book Group meet on 2nd Tue of each month - Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: 01622 685276	10-11.30
Tue 11 Oct	Carers Knit & Stitch Group also meet 2nd Tue of each month Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: 01622 685276	1.30-3
Mon 17 Oct	Carers Support Group - all carers at Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: Barbara 01622 685276	1-2.30
Mon 17 Oct	Support Group for carers affected by people misusing alcohol or drugs - as above	6-8pm
Wed 18 Oct	Alzheimers Society Carers Group - carers of people with dementia at 1 Dairy Court Fairview Farm, Linton Road, Loose. Tel: 01622 747181 before attending	2 - 4
Tue 25 Oct	Mental Health Carers Support Group - Kingswood Centre, 180-186 Union Street Tel: Maureen 01622 685276	11-12.30
Wed 26 Oct	Learning Disability Carers Group - Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: Barbara 01622 685276	1.30 - 3
Wed 26 Oct	Alzheimers Socieity 'Tea for Two' - for people with confusion/dementia and their carers Tel: 01622 749539	2-4
Wed 26 Oct	Family Carer Network (attached to Butterfly Club) Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: 01622 609284	7.30-8.30
Mon 31 Oct	Carers Walking Group - (transport from Maidstone may be available) Tel Jane 01622 685276 for details.	11.30 - 1