

Maidstone & Malling Carers Project

Issue 30 February 2011

Spring Newsletter

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

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2011, we do hope you will find something in it to interest you. As always we welcome contributions from you for future copies, please let us know if you would like to do a 'Carers Diary' [we can disguise any identifying features].

Thank you to everyone who attended our last Forum and expressed views about what services are important in supporting you in your caring role. As you may be aware our grant funding from KCC was only until end of March 2011, this has now been extended until October 2011 by which time decisions will have been made about what services will be re-commissioned. We will keep you informed about the eventual outcome.

Finally, if you would like to find out more about any of our activities, please don't hesitate to ask. Also do remember we are here to help, no query is too small or too big, and if we can't help we can usually find someone who can!

Best wishes to one and all.

Barbara

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



Maidstone & Malling Carers Project
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Phone: 01622 685276
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Voicing your concerns re cuts and changes

This is an unprecedented time of Government cuts and proposed changes to welfare benefits and services. So much is happening that it is hard to keep informed about what is being proposed and how it may affect your lives, let alone find the time and energy to voice your views!



We regularly take part in consultations based on our 18 years experience of working closely with carers and the people they care for. We also receive regular campaigning emails which enable individuals to sign up to register their views about specific issues e.g. removal of mobility component of Disability Living Allowance from people living in residential care.

If you have an email address and would be interested in receiving such emails [to respond to, if it is an issue you are concerned about] please do let us know at carers@vam-online.org.uk and we will add you to our email mailing list.

If you do not have access to the internet and would like to be informed about specific issues that you would like to campaign on also let us know and we will do our best to keep you up to date with other action you can take.

The State of Caring

Carers UK are undertaking a major new research survey which will look at the financial impact of caring, how carers' careers are affected and what a toll caring takes on carers' health. They are also looking at the importance of technology in carers' lives, their experience of hospital discharge and how carers contribute to the design and delivery of local services.

Carers UK say they are hearing daily from carers who are having a tough time due to cuts to benefits and services and it is time that everyone else heard about it too!

To make headlines and make sure the media and politicians listen, as many carers as possible are being asked to take part. You can complete the survey online [it takes about 20 minutes] or ring us if you would like to be sent a copy in the post. The survey closes in March. www.surveymonkey.com/stateofcaring

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.



Ring Jane Thomas on 01622 685276

Caring Confidently

The next set of 3-weekly free sessions in Maidstone for carers starts on Thursday 24 February. Please let us know if you would like to take part in future sessions, our next course is likely to be in Lenham. If you are interested but would need alternative care to attend – do let us know as we may be able to find some funds to cover this. The sessions start at 10am and finish at 1pm. The sessions cover;

Week one

- Introduction to programme aims
- Identifying concerns and needs
- Dealing with emergencies
- Looking after your back
- Medication issues
- Resources and benefits

Week two

- Coping with stress
- Healthy eating
- Looking after you

Week three

- Communication and dealing with professionals
- Creating a balanced life
- Planning a life of your own
- Addressing your concerns and needs

01622 685276

Kent Autistic Trust Support Groups -

The Kent Autistic Trust hold 3 different regular support groups for carers in Maidstone; One is for parents/carers of children and young people and another is for carers of adults with autistic spectrum diagnosis, both of these groups meet during the daytime. The third group meets in the evenings and is specifically for fathers [and grandfathers].

Disability Sport Sessions for Adults in Maidstone

The YMCA have opened a new sports hall in Melrose Close, Loose, ME15 6BD. They will be holding weekly sessions for adults with special needs – e.g. indoor cricket, trampolining, football, netball and disco dancing! For further information contact:

Della on 07834 417482

Disability Living Allowance Reforms – Public consultation

Under government plans Disability Living Allowance will be scrapped and replaced by a benefit with tighter eligibility criteria. This will be introduced in 2013/14. The replacement benefit will be called **Personal Independence Payment**. This will still be a non-means-tested and non-taxable benefit, available to those in and out of work.

The reforms will tighten the eligibility criteria in several ways, the main points are as follows:

Claimants will have to have had an impairment or health condition for six months, not three, as at present.

A wider range of aids and adaptations will be taken into account in the assessment process. This could result in wheelchair users being ineligible for the mobility component as they could be considered able to get around as well as an able bodied person.

There will be no automatic entitlements for people with specific health conditions, although the special rules will still apply to claimants suffering from a terminal illness ensuring their claims are fast tracked.

All claimants will be assessed by a healthcare professional approved by the Department for Work and Pensions. There will no longer be a carer's statement on the new claim form enabling carers to state the difficulties the person they care for has.

The changes are designed to reduce expenditure and the number of claimants by 20%

Maidstone and Malling Carers Project on behalf of carers has submitted a full response to the Department for Work and Pensions public consultation regarding the proposed reforms. Our response can be viewed on our website or if you would like to see a hard copy please contact Jane Thomas on **01622 685276** or by email jane.thomas@vam-online.org.uk

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 now hold a Support Group for people who are affected by someone else's drug or alcohol misuse. The group meets twice a month and provides support, guidance and information with input from professionals who work with people who misuse substances.

The support group is confidential and held at Maidstone Community Support Centre, 39-48 Marsham St, 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 for further details.

TOPAZ COMMUNITY PRESENT RED NOSE DAY 18TH MARCH AT LIQUID AND ENVY NIGHTCLUB



Topaz Community in partnership with Liquid and Envy Nightclubs at Lock Meadow, Maidstone Kent are presenting a fun event to raise money for Red Nose Day. We will be at the Liquid and Envy Nightclubs from 1pm to 7.30pm on Friday 18th March .

We are looking for organisations and individuals to come along and help on the day - Topaz Community provides social events for people who have been disadvantaged by health and social issues (people with Learning Disabilities, Mental Health Issues and their families are especially welcome to come along and join in the fun) The day will have a Circus Theme.

If you are interested in helping please contact Sarah Neill and Karla Cushion on topaz@topazcommunity.co.uk or call 01622 609284

Time is short so do please get in touch as soon as possible – lets make this a day to remember where we all have a lot of fun and make lots of money for Red Nose Day.

COME ALONG ON THE 18TH MARCH AND HAVE FUN

Subsidised Food and Parking for Carers at Maidstone Hospital

Following on from last year's Carers Forum held at the Grangemoor in March there were a number of comments concerning carers when they are supporting the person they care for on the wards. For example:

"The carers in hospital for a long, continuous time get very thirsty and hungry and need sustenance to keep alert etc. wouldn't mind paying for food etc."

After being on the wards and spoken to many carers this was a recurrent theme. Now I am a member of the Patient Experience Committee I thought this the ideal place to raise the issue. So the outcome has been that if you, as a carer, are spending a lot of time on a ward and it is of benefit to the patient, you should be offered a meal in the Restaurant at the subsidised rate. This is made at the discretion of the Nurse in charge.



Make sure, if you feel you are entitled to the subsidy, you ASK if you are not offered, all staff should be aware of the subsidy. You will then be given a slip of paper from the nurse in charge to take to the Restaurant to present at the till to entitle you to a meal at a subsidised rate.

And also to remind you that if the person you care for is in hospital for longer than 10 consecutive days then you may apply for a temporary parking permit. You can get the application form from the Hospital Services office, which is then signed by the Nurse in Charge of the ward and then taken to the Car Park Attendant to be issued with the permit.

Jane Pantony

Walking Group

Would you like to take some gentle exercise, blow away the cobwebs of winter and meet friendly people? Would you like to 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. Our last walk was around the beautiful village of Loose and attracted a lively bunch of 12 carers. 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 for further information, I will be very pleased to hear from you. I am happy to offer anyone a lift to the walks from the office at Marsham Street.

Join us for our **NEW 'Zumba Dancing'** to lift the winter blues!

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!

Linda, our trainer, is a superb dancer and a pleasure to watch. Don't worry about a few stiff joints, just come along for the company, some fun and do what you can. Every Thursday afternoon from 3-4pm. call **Christine 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. After a workout or a swim, relax in the steam room, sauna or jacuzzi and finish off with a chat over coffee in the hotel lounge. We are pleased and relieved to know that, after the sad loss of her husband Mike, Hilary has agreed to stay on as a volunteer to organise the swimming group rota. Many thanks Hilary you are greatly appreciated! Ring Christine if you would like to join this friendly and supportive group.

The Book Club This group meets once a month at Maidstone Community Support Centre from 10 - 11.30am and would welcome new members. Check out their extensive book list on our website www.vam-online.org.uk/carersproject.asp
Next meeting: **08 March**

Card Making Group – another 4-week session with Janet begins on Thursday 05 May from 10 - 12.30. If you are interested in signing up for this very popular group please let Christine know straight away as places are in great demand!

Floristry Class - a 4-week session with florist Jackie in association with Leisure Learning at the Maidstone Community Support Centre begins on Friday 18 March from 10 –12. The emphasis will be on making the most of seasonal flowers and foliage from the garden. Again let Christine know straight away if you would like a place.

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 to the next session on 07 March ring Christine on 01622 685276.

Indian Head Massage

Marie has again offered to come along to groups to give carers an Indian head massage. Let us know if you would like us to arrange it.

Proposed Knitting Group

One carer has suggested that a monthly knitting group could meet in the same way as the art group. If you are interested please let Christine know

Carers Week picnic at the seaside



We are planning to join carer support groups in East Kent this year on a carers picnic to Walmer on Saturday 18 June. Let us know if you would be interested and we will add you to our mailing list for more details.

01622 685276 or email us carers@vam-online.org.uk

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.

Donations to the activities fund should be made to:
Voluntary Action Maidstone marked Maidstone & Malling Carers Project (Registered Charity No.1066911)

Our very special thanks to Hilary Alabaster for the donation in memory of Mike who sadly passed away on Christmas Eve



Please consider making a donation instead of funeral flowers to help us to continue to offer carers respite activities.

Thank you Marks and Spencers

We are absolutely delighted to report that thanks to the generosity of both the staff and customers of Maidstone M & S we have already received £1,398 as a result of being their 'charity of the year'. This support for our work is invaluable, especially in these difficult times.

Help us raise funds for our carers

Maidstone
& Malling
Carers Project

Simply by visiting

easyfundraising

.org.uk /causes/carersproject

FIRST— before buying goods, booking a holiday, doing your on-line supermarket shopping or ordering your Wiltshire Farm foods. You can even bid on Ebay and earn us money without it costing you a penny. Over 2000 retailers listed

Sign up at: www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/carersproject

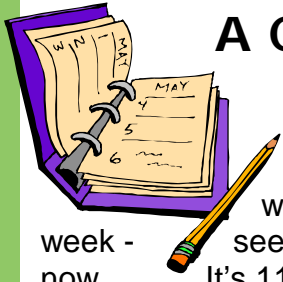
And start making a difference..simply by shopping!

You can also raise money for us while you search the internet

Change your home page or search the internet using: carersproject.easysearch.org.uk and we will earn money every time you use it and start making a difference..

simply by shopping!

Remember: every penny raised will go towards supporting carers



A Carer's Diary

Sunday

Returned from my only week's break of the year last week - seems a long long time ago now..... It's 11.30pm and I look in on mum as her light is on in the bedroom - I find her on the floor!! Ever tried to get a 12st dead weight up? Can't do it! Luckily my partner Steve is staying over so I say I'll have to wake him up to help. Mum says "no!" Answer "Ambulance or him?" 1½ hours later we finally get mum back into bed. Then I can't sleep because I'm listening out in case she tries to get up again.

Monday

Mum seems ok this morning and can even laugh about the incident now. Hope it doesn't happen again. Start worrying that if it had happened whilst I was away she could have been there all the week. Will have to sort out lifeline and key safe. I make sure mum is ok and go out to pay bills and do some shopping and can't wait 'till bedtime - hope I sleep tonight.

Tuesday

Hurrah! Slept a bit better last night so not too exhausted but not very enthusiastic about life either. Feel very depressed today, seems like a lifetime ago I was away and only struggle with caring for mum and trying to have a bit of life for myself to look forward to. Stressed and anxious but having to think about what needs doing in the days ahead. Am I the only person who feels like this? Oh well hope it's a better day tomorrow.

Wednesday



Up early 9.30am appointment at hospital for mum. She's not used to getting up early but I know the traffic will be bad and need to get a taxi there so will have to leave at 8.10am and wait around up there.

Get mum up, tablets to be taken, breakfast and dressed.. Taxi arrives - hardly any traffic this time of day so arrive at hospital just after 8.30am - 1 hour to wait. At least it's quiet - mum can't wait to get home!! See consultant -

more tablets!! Writes prescription - make next appointment for consultant just over a month away and I work this out carefully as we already have a hospital appointment for mum to have a 48hr ECG monitor fitted which I will then need to get back to the hospital - not easy when relying on public transport. Know I'm going to be extra busy for the next month.

Thursday

Woke up with the knowledge that I have to get mum up early for the Warfarin nurse's visit for checking levels. Well I assume she's coming as she wasn't here yesterday.... If I knew exactly what day they are coming it would be easier.... Their excuse is they have lots to do and it takes them 2 days - well yes, but why can't they just tell all these people it's going to be on this day or that day? Is that too sensible? Why should I have to get my mum up early on 2 days just in case? The early mornings are the only little bit of space I get to have some peace - the time between me getting up, usually around 7.00ish and me calling mum at 9.00am. Because the nurse didn't come yesterday this has caused just a bit more stress for today. Still its my afternoon



for some dance and exercise - The Carers Project arrange it and it's the one afternoon I look forward to.

Some time to myself, seeing some other carers and enjoying myself. Makes me feel a lot better. Finish my Thursday afternoon in the town and meet Steve for a drink - great to relax for once.... Then my phone rings, mum has just dropped

a glass bottle full of juice which has smashed over the kitchen floor. I tell her to leave it, don't bend down - don't want her on the floor again and I'll do it when I get home. I stay for another drink, return home and clean up a very sticky floor before grabbing a sandwich and coffee and going to bed. I can't wait for next week's class!!



Friday

Main shopping day today - trying to decide what food mum might like as if I take her with

.....Friday Cont'd

me I would need to get a taxi, get her in the wheelchair and get totally stressed out making sure she was ok, doing the shopping and then have to get a taxi back. As I'm alone I can do the shopping relatively stress free and bus back. Think I'll be naughty tonight and go back into town - meet Steve, we'll have a drink and get fish & chips - not very healthy but no cooking and no washing up as we'll eat out of paper plates! All three of us enjoy it for a treat, watch TV and actually feel quite relaxed.

Saturday

Get mum up ready for her weekly phone call to her sister at 11am. I'm off out to do a bit of shopping as one of my brothers, Andy and his partner Sarah, are coming to see mum. Put meat in the oven before I go out. Come home

and prepare the dinner.

Andy & Sarah arrive around midday - dinner at 3pm.

Everything goes ok and all are chatting. Later Sarah said I looked tired - I said I don't know why as I had not really done anything. She replies, well you've been to town, cooked dinner, done drinks etc and looked after us all. My reply - well no change there then as I haven't really done anything more than usual! Andy & Sarah return home and we won't see them for another few months. Maybe they'll come for Mother's Day - maybe they won't! Back to normal or normal as can be while looking after mum. Wonder what's going to happen next week....



Vicky - a carer

Maidstone & Malling Carers Forum Summary of notes from Wed 13 October 2010

Topic: The future of Carer Support Services - what's important for you?

Attended by: 41 carers, 3 Maidstone and Malling Carers Project staff, and 4 Panel members

Panel:

Jackie Dabbin – Co-ordination Team Manager Malling – KASS

Helen Gillivan – Area Management Support Team West Kent

Carers Lead – KASS

Naomi Hill – Policy Lead for Carers – KCC

Navdeep Mandair – Project Manager Voluntary Sector West Kent -
KASS

All of the Panel Members were undertaking a review of Carer Support Services and looking to establish what needed to be commissioned in the future. KCC were expecting to have to make savings of between 20 – 45% and support for carers would be affected. M & M Carers Project has been funded by KCC largely via the Government Carers Grant which was likely to be scrapped plus KCC would have to make further savings.

Carers were given questions that had been submitted by the Panel. These were discussed by carers before the Panel arrived and carers had written their individual responses on post it notes which were collated [and subsequently put into a report]. *The report has been sent to all the panel members to consider when making their decisions. It is 8 pages long and includes all comments carers made, if you would like a copy please let us know. It can also be viewed on our website.*

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Forum Notes Cont'd

When the Panel arrived a lively discussion took place with carers taking the opportunity to not only state what services they most valued and required, but also to explain some of the difficulties they encounter in their caring role and when trying to access support.

Many carers spoke of how much they valued the support of the project [MMCP] and particularly highlighted the following;

- Emotional support face to face and in groups also telephone contact scheme
- Information in response to specific issues but all the signposting information in the booklets 'which are brilliant'
- Home visits and help to claim benefits, fill in forms etc
- Carer support groups and the wide range of activity groups which give a much needed break supported by other carers
- Emergency Card

Respite services were also highlighted as crucial and those mentioned specifically included;

- Crossroads
- Goodman Dementia Centre [Age Concern]
- Hedgerows
- Dorothy Lucy Centre

Other services considered really important;

- Admiral Nurses, Bay Tree House [dementia], Voluntary Action Maidstone, Rapid Response Team, OT provision of aids/adaptations, Supported Living for people with a learning disability, Care/Case managers

When asked what could be done more cost effectively carers said;

- Meetings/Conferences/Interviews should be held in KCC premises and not at hotels/ conference centres
- Stop keep changing the system
- Public should be consulted on bonuses paid to top KCC staff
- Tighter monitoring of care agencies to ensure they deliver what is paid for
- More regular contact with Case Managers would help avoid more expensive crisis resolution

When asked what can be stopped or done differently carers said;

- Cutting support for carers would be a false economy – if carers are unsupported and become worn out it will cost much more to sort out
- No more glossy publications
- Sample the services being provided to determine waste and best service

The above are just a flavour of the comments made.

The next Forum: Wed 16 March 2011

Topic: *Short Term Breaks [formerly known as 'respite care']*

Venue Grange Moor Hotel , St Michael's Road — 10am–12.30pm

Diary Dates

Check on our website for future dates
www.vam-online.org.uk/carersproject.asp

Mondays	Maidstone District Partnership POP-IN - for people with a learning disability and carers - Tel: Jenny 07732 609 540	1 - 4
Mondays (fortnightly)	Support Group for carers effected by people misusing alcohol or drugs. Meet alternate mornings & evenings - Tel: Jane 01622 685276	10-12 or 6-8
Tuesdays	Swimming Group for Carers at the Living Well Fitness Centre Tel: Christine 01622 685276	10.30 -
Thursdays	Barbara (Carers Project) in Maidstone Gateway	10 - 2
Thursdays	ZUMBA Dancing for Carers - (a fusion of Latin American dance and exercise) Tel: Christine 01622 685276	3 - 4
Mon 07 Mar	Support Group for carers affected by people misusing alcohol or drugs. Fortnightly (alternate mornings & evenings) Jane 685276	10-12
Mon 07 Mar	Carers Art Group meet on 1st Monday of each month - Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: Christine 01622 685276	1.30-3.30
Tue 08 Mar	Carers Book Group meet on 2nd Tue of each month - Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: Christine 01622 685276 / 230728	10-11.30
Wed 16 Mar	Maidstone & Malling Carers Forum - Topic: Short Breaks Grange Moor Hotel, Maidstone Tel: Barbara 01622 685276	10-12.30
Wed 16 Mar	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
Fri 18 Mar	Start of a 4-week carers Floristry Class - Tel: Christine 01622 685276	10-12
Fri 18 Mar	Topaz Community present a Red Nose Day fun event at Liquid and Envi nightclub - Sarah or Karla 01622 609284	1-7.30
Mon 21 Mar	Carers Support Group - all carers at Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: Barbara 01622 685276	1-2.30
Mon 28 Mar	Carers Walking Group - (transport from Maidstone available) Tel Jane 01622 685276 for details.	11.30 - 1
Tue 29 Mar	Mental Health Carers Support Group - Kingswood Centre, 180-186 Union Street Tel: Maureen 01622 685276	11-12.30
Wed 30 Mar	Family Carer Network (attached to Butterfly Club) Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: Jenny 01622 609284	7.30-8.30
Wed 30 Mar	Learning Disability Carers Group - Maidstone Community Support Centre Tel: Barbara 01622 685276	1.30 - 3

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