



20 years



20 years



Bridgend Carers Centre supporting unpaid carers across Bridgend County Borough for over Twenty Years.

# Impact Report

1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 | 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020

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ENDS (Quakers)  
MEETING HOUSE

Quaker Meeting House  
15 Gwdd, Gwmfyr

# Message from Bridgend Carers Centres Chairperson Simon Cash



Early in 2019 Bridgend Carers Centre lost its core funding and at the time we assumed that this would have a negative effect on the service. Thankfully we were wrong, in the past year due to the efforts of the Management team and all the staff at the Centre, Bridgend Carers Centre didn't just survive, it thrived. We explored new avenues of funding and increased the scale and scope of support for all our beneficiaries, including the creation of new innovative avenues - Veterans Carers Support Service who has forged great links with the Ex Service personnel in the Bridgend area, Then in 2020 along came the challenge of working under Coronavirus conditions, Home working for the staff and for the Board of Trustees meetings by Zoom. The Centre embraced those challenges using technology to not just keep in touch with the Borough carers but to coordinate events, including activities for young carers who were isolated due to the closure of the schools and social distancing and adult carers needing activities to improve wellbeing and avoid loneliness. Coronavirus has of course increased the number of carers in the area, at the last count staff have provided over 2000 telephone support calls during the pandemic. 2020 has seen the Welfare Benefits Support Worker

maximise disposable income by an accumulated financial gain of £1.754,806.00 in unclaimed benefits. He has managed to secure this extra income for local carers, money which has been circulated through the local economy giving it a much needed boost in these challenging times.

Of course it's not all about financial support, some things cannot be measured in terms of money, the support, the social networking and peer support between all carers whose support network was affected by social distancing, lockdown and school closures. Friendship groups between carers who met at the Centre and have continued to stay in touch with each other, have fed back to the staff, how the Centre has played an important part in building and maintaining those friendships.

We have faced challenging times at Bridgend Carers Centre and I'm proud to say everyone involved, the Staff, the Board of Trustees, the Volunteers and the Carers themselves have all risen to face those challenges.

Best Wishes for an even more successful 2020/21



# Impact Report

1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 | 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020



## Objectives and aims

The main objectives of the Bridgend Carers Centre are to provide information and support to people who care for the ill, frail, elderly, disabled including those with a physical or learning disability and those with mental health or substance misuse issues within the Bridgend County Borough. Bridgend Carers Centre support and provide services for all carers of all ages including young carers.

The support provided aims to alleviate stress and isolation for all carers by providing short breaks, information, advice and assistance including signposting to services, help to maximise benefits, legal advice, counselling and the promotion of carers' assessments. The charity works to raise the profile of the role and needs of carers through awareness raising, education and training of professionals and carers which results in the promotion and protection of carer's wellbeing. Bridgend Carers Centre raise awareness through diverse mediums, newsletters, leaflets, publicity, Bridgend Carers Centre website, social media and through physical promotion.

As a charity Bridgend Carers Centre has developed a three year Strategic plan with Business plan giving clear reference to the aims and objectives of the Charity plus

an Action Plan of the key priorities. The Board of Trustees review the progress made against the strategic plan every year but monitor actions every six weeks.

The Carers Centre will work to research future funding opportunities which will help to develop a way of improving the monitoring of outcomes for carers. We know we make a huge difference to carers' lives but are also aware that this needs to be better evidenced in a way that meets the high demands of funders. To improve these two areas the Carers Centre has appointed a Business Development worker and will install Charity log by July 2020.

## Volunteers

The inclusion of volunteer roles within the Centre is crucial especially at the Community Café and the charity hopes to increase the involvement of volunteers in its future development. The charity would like to say 'thank you' to the volunteers for their support and commitment. In addition we continue to be supported by volunteers of organisations and we thank Tesco Community Champions, Sainsbury's Community Champions and Halo Leisure Services. The Carers Centre benefits greatly by their charitable works, offering time to serve teas and coffees, donate produce and provide health checks.

# Highlights have included:

- Achieving an accumulated financial gain of **£1.754,806.00** in benefits for carers plus a further £30,539.90 from referrals to Macmillan Welfare Benefits Advisor and therefore boosting the local economy.
- Sustain and successfully develop further our core service.
- Sustaining and maintenance of the Macmillan Family Information and Support Worker role.
- Sustaining 6 roles based in the Centre in Princess of Wales Hospital and 3 Cluster Networks.
- Continue and develop the Young Carers Education and Employment Project through Big Lottery, Waterloo Foundation, Children in Need and ICF Funding including appointment of 2 new Young Carers and Young Adult Carers support roles to respond to the demands of the Project.
- Continue with distribution of the Book 'The Bear who struggled to Care' and purchased by Welsh Local Authorities and Young Carers Projects plus Projects overseas – sold almost 400 copies, raising £2000.
- Young Carers Education and Employment Project have four young carers who are part of the Welsh Young Carers council for Carers Trust who are involved in shaping national services and resources for young carers ensuring they have a voice. One of these young carers sits on the Welsh Youth Parliament where he feeds the views of the young carers into the Welsh Assembly.
- Achieved 2 separate Funding opportunities to deliver a Veteran Support Project for Carers who are Veterans and those Carers supporting Veterans a new
- Achieved funding through Triangle Trust to appoint a Business Development Officer and purchase a new database - Charity Log, which is a tool for third sector organisations to record all contacts via a contact recording system.



# Factors affecting future plans

Bridgend Carers Centre started April 2019 in a vulnerable position, having lost half its funding through the loss of the joint BCBC and Cwm Taf UHB Tender to Carers Trust Network Partner, Carers Trust South East Wales.

Changes to the Health Board Boundaries also meant that former supportive professional links through the Carers Partnership Board were also lost and new relationships needed to be strengthened through promotion of the value of the Carers Centre service and their place in Health and Social Care.

The Board of Trustees and staff had difficult decisions to make about the future of Bridgend Carers Centre but in the end it was wholeheartedly agreed that the Carers Centre would remain an independent, autonomous charity that was proud of its grass roots support of carers in the Borough. The TUPE of three staff to the new Carers Trust South East Wales, Bridgend Carers Wellbeing Service followed with two senior management remaining with seven staff.

At the start of this year of transition BCBC continued the Integrated Care and WG Funding to sustain the employment of six staff in crucial roles. This allowed the Carers Centre to achieve its objectives by providing Welfare Benefits Advice; a dedicated role at Princess of Wales Hospital; and a role undertaking Carers Assessments. It has further aided the Centre to continue the three Carers Link support roles, who were highly valued, based in the Network Hubs of North East and West Bridgend. These roles work with GP surgeries and district nurses in a fully integrated way in the Network hubs of BCBC, undertaking carers assessments and anticipatory care plans.

During this period the core work of the charity has been achieved through continual and ongoing consultation with carers resulting in greater choice and variety of activities offered by the Centre. Provision of information, home visits, emotional one to one support, training, consultation opportunities and short respite breaks have enabled carers in Bridgend area to sample a diverse range of support which suits their own individual needs. The short respite breaks have enabled carers and their families including bereaved carers to experience opportunities to avoid loneliness and isolation, maintain health and wellbeing and life of their own, whilst continuing to fulfil their caring responsibilities. During March 2020 this became more significant when Covid-19 struck and prevented any face to face contact with carers. Bridgend Carers Centre responded quickly by enabling 13 staff to work from home and continue to provide support through telephone, Bridgend Carers Centre website, text, email, Zoom, WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter and disseminate information throughout 19 information hubs.

**The Carers Centre has close links with statutory and third sector organisations to give valuable, effective and timely support and information to enable carers to continue in their caring role and avoid and prevent crisis situations. Together with staff and volunteers, the trustees have worked closely to implement and influence the provision of these activities. The Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2016 has strengthened this requirement and objective of the charity's role as a preventative service.**



# Young and Young Adult Carers

## One to one support

This year we have provided 343 one to one sessions to over 100 young and young adult carers in Bridgend. This took place in primary and secondary schools, colleges, home visits and in the community.

## Groups

We run a monthly group for young adult carers aged 16-25 and a Teen Group for young carers aged 13-17.

Some of the trips this year include: .

- Pizza making at Pizza Hut
- Go Karting
- Chessington World of Adventures
- Glee Club
- Bristol Aquarium

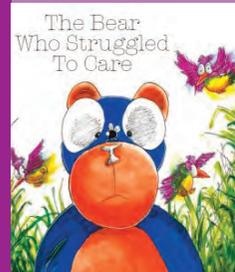
63 young carers access one to one or group support outside of school.

## Having a voice

- 4 young carers sit on the Carers Trust young carers council
- 1 young carer sit on the Welsh Youth Parliament
- 2 young carers sat on the panel at the UNCRC 30th Birthday celebration event

## Young Carers Education Project

- provided one to one support to young carers in all 9 comprehensive schools in Bridgend, 8 primary schools and Bridgend college.
- We delivered 10 raising awareness sessions on 2 PSE days where 37 pupils identified themselves as a young carer
- Delivered 5 x stress and anxiety management workshops to 39 young carers across 5 comprehensive schools
- Delivered 4 assemblies in 1 comprehensive
- Delivered training to Kenfig Hill Air Cadets
- Delivered a 'Young Carers Schools Conference' which welcomed Young Carers from all 9 Comprehensive Schools and primary schools in Bridgend. This was an opportunity for staff to share good practice.



## The Bear Who Struggled to Care

To date we have sold almost 400 copies of the book the young carers book the Bear Who Struggled to Care which has raised over **£2000** to raise awareness and support young carers in Bridgend.



Are you aged between 14-25?

Do you help to care for a parent, sibling, grandparent or other family member?

If you answered YES to the above questions you may be a young adult carer.

The R.O.O.T.S Project can support you in your education or employment through one to one and group support. We run a young adult carers group once a month where you can take part in trips and activities and meet other young people who have a caring role.



[www.bridgendcarers.co.uk](http://www.bridgendcarers.co.uk)

[rhian.watts@bridgendcarers.co.uk](mailto:rhian.watts@bridgendcarers.co.uk)

01656 658479/ 07384 813685



## Staff Roles

Staff Roles (as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020)

Manager	Helen Pitt
Administrator	Susan Evans
Business Development Officer	Janet Jordan
Macmillan Family Information & Support Worker	Davina Marsland
Young Carers Education & Employment Manager	Rhian Watts
Young Carers Education & Employment Support Worker	Jessie Haig
Young Adult Carers Support Worker	Alissa Bevan
Carers Link East	Karen Evans
Carers Link North	Sarah Jarvis
Carers Link West	Beverley Jones
POW Hospital Carers Integrated Support Worker	Rhiannon Frances
Welfare Benefits Advisor	Paul Daley
Veteran Carers and Cared For Project Worker	Alan Smiles

## Board of Trustees

(as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020)

Simon Cash	Chairperson
Menna Davies	Treasurer
Selwyn Lewis	Trustee
Colette Colman	Trustee
Jodie Williams	Trustee
Carys Clarke	Trustee
John Matthias	Co-opted Trustee

Bridgend Carers Centre would like to give thanks to former trustees who were members of the Board during this year namely Catherine Morgan, Allie Edmunds and Gary Owen who contributed to the continued success of Bridgend Carers Centre during such a critical year. In addition the staff who were in post during this year namely Paula Hall, Lindsey Woosnam, Laura Austin and Laura Evans who left for pastures new but who made a great impact on the lives of carers in Bridgend and still keep in touch with the Centre. Thank you!

All the activities have been monitored closely by the trustees and by the project's funders, including Cwm Taf University Health Board and Bridgend County Borough Council. Numbers of carers referring to the Carers Centre during this period have continued to increase.



There are **5,561** carers on our database, **211** former carers and **4191** care receivers.



**1059** carers have been identified this year and added to our database, representing a continual increase each year.



**544** home visits and **1096** appointments and one to one support held at the Centre. In addition there has been **2239** telephone support given by the team of which **285** have been 30 minutes plus.

# Carers Link Project

These three Carers Link roles are based in the East, West and North Networks and provide a strong link with GP surgeries and district nurses in those areas. Funded through Welsh Government which came to an end in March 2020, these posts have been successful in identifying unpaid carers when accessing the 19 GP surgeries across Bridgend. The roles provide carers assessments, anticipatory care plans, information, advice and assistance to families to ensure that they improve wellbeing, are heard and feel less isolated and alone.



"They are already proving invaluable – I'm sure they could do more, but our major fear at the moment is that they will be removed/unfunded resulting in a significant loss of provision for our carers" - GP West Network

"Carers Links have prompted us to want to do better and support our carers" - GP North Network

"We have taken steps to update our register and contact all patients who are carers and refer to Carers Links if necessary" - GP North Network

"Carers Links have aided in promotional material in waiting room, attended flu clinics as a visible presence, designed questionnaires for carers etc, provided feedback in MDT meetings. They have provided a valuable resource where we can signpost patients who are struggling, patients really benefitted also excellent to have a readily available and responsive contact for referrals and queries" - GP East Network

"I just wanted to feedback to you following a conversation with LW (son) this morning. I made a referral for Carer support after a duty call with LW and you met with him and the family last week"

LW said he was "very impressed" following your visit and "Bev put my mind at ease about a lot of things". Your visit sounded like a very positive experience for him so thank you". - Social Worker West Network

"I feel like you understand what I am going through and it is good to be able to talk to someone and come along somewhere just for me to have a break". Carer - North Network

"I really don't know how to thank you; you have been so kind to me. I had no idea how I was going to visit those homes and ask those difficult questions" I have been feeling so insecure and lonely since R has been in hospital".

"Thank you for providing me with all that information, I have put all of the leaflets in one place, so I know where I can find them, I have been a bit lost and didn't know where to turn".

"Can I contact you if I need support? I know I can speak to you and it's helped me so much knowing that you are aware of my own health and you understand me".

"I (SW) have spoken to her (Carer) this morning and she was thankful for your visit and is going to attend the Coffee morning later today. I wanted to feedback some praise as she said your role is very important to support carers and you specifically are the 'right person for the job'. She said you were understanding, kind and empathetic and were able to give her information and support she needs at this difficult time for her and her family".

# Integrated Carers Support Worker POW Hospital

## Aims

- To provide thorough information and support to carers at Princess of Wales Hospital.
- To facilitate safe, timely discharge of the cared for.
- To raise awareness of carers across Princess of Wales Hospital to nursing staff and promote carers issues.
- To carry out carers assessments, as delegated by the local authority, as required and as appropriate to promote positive wellbeing of carers.



"Help with understanding the process" April 2019

"I learned so much" April 2019

"It made a real difference to talk" May 2019

"Good to have someone outside the family" May 2019

"Lindsey provided an empathic ear and provided answers" June 2019

"Service is totally professional, caring with great information"

"Extremely grateful for this" June 2019

"Can't stress how important knowing that there is support from others available" July 2019

"It enabled me to access immediate help in caring for my 88 year old father" July 2019

"Knowing that there is someone I can contact at the hospital to support me as a carer has really helped" August 2019

## Outreach sessions

were held in other areas to reach hidden carers and support locally carers known to the Carers Centre. They include outreach Coity Clinic in partnership with Hafal, Wards and Clinics at Princess of Wales Hospital, Dementia Swimming, GPs, Pharmacies, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, Y Y bwthyn, Coffee and Chat in partnership with Maesteg Special Families, Bridgend Job Centre, Heronsbridge Family Information Day. In addition there are opportunities to have appointments at a mutually convenient venue and outside office hours for those who are working.



**The Carers Support Worker** identified 239 carers at Princess of Wales Hospital for information and signposting.

This figure is unrepresentative of previous years due to loss of staff member and gap in service provision.

# Macmillan Family Information & Support Worker

It's been a busy time for the Macmillan Family Information and Support Worker. Lots of her time has been taken up with supporting people living with cancer, and their Carers, through home visits, phone calls, emails, information stalls and applying for grants. In addition through the provision of a fortnightly presence at Y Bwythin Newydd which has increased identification of anyone affected by cancer.

Every September Bridgend Carers Centre hosts the popular Macmillan Coffee Morning to raise awareness and funds on behalf of Macmillan Cancer Care. This year was no exception. Lead by Macmillan Family Information and Support Worker it was a glowing success.

Signposting, and referring on to other organisations, is also an important part of the role and through referral to the Macmillan Benefits Worker it advised 19 people, living with cancer to have benefits checks resulting in a total financial gain of £30,539!



## Welfare Benefits Support

Paul Daley supports carers and families facing poverty and has had fantastic results in gaining and maximising income for households. This has not only been positive for the family but also the wider community that benefits by this boost to the Bridgend Economy. We were proud to announce that Paul managed to maximise income for carers to an **accumulated financial gain of £1.754,806.00.**

Paul advises on Attendance Allowance, Carers Allowance, DLA, PIP, Mandatory considerations and prepares and empowers carers for tribunals and appeals.



"TD has now been awarded high rate care and mobility DLA for an indefinite period. There has been a backdate of £799.85 from 31st Jan to 1st May. Many thanks" - Alzheimer's Society

"I didn't know where to start. Thanks for the advice and positive result!"

"Thanks very much, I am so glad I contacted you as I had no idea about having to inform them of the hospital admission and the person wasn't very happy so I am really stressed out. Many thanks" Carer ND

"Good news". He then spoke to my colleague Tuesday to say DB had been successful in her application. "Many thanks for all your help". - Health Colleague

# Veteran Carer and Cared For Project

## Alan Smiles - Veterans Carers Support Worker

The Veteran Carers Support Worker started in January 2020 and is honoured to be supporting Veteran carers or Veterans who are being cared for across Bridgend County Borough. A Veteran himself he has spent 23 years in the British Army, 5 years as a Fire Fighter/Emergency Medical Technician and 8 years on a High-Angle rescue team (in the United States).

"I hope that provides me with an insight and connection with Veterans regarding some of the challenges they face. In time I believe that we can break down some of the barriers of Veterans seeking help. To date we have had good success in achieving this, but there is much to be done."

He has identified 56 veterans who are a much marginalised group and produced a variety of online health and wellbeing activities such as Tai Chi and opportunities for Veterans to improve wellbeing and resilience including the provision of 35 Tablets to assist with digital inclusion, helping veterans to prevent isolation and loneliness. In addition a range of digital training sessions and craft sessions to increase Veteran's skills.



"I also wanted to say that my Dad has really got going with his tablet – it has been of huge benefit to him during the lockdown – he is reading the papers every day and searching for things on the internet that he is interested in".

"Sadly, he became very ill last week and was admitted to hospital.....I took his tablet to the hospital and he is using it there too, although has 'done something' he can't fix, so I am taking my son with me this afternoon so that hopefully the ward staff will bring the tablet to us so that our combined brains can sort out whatever has 'glitched'".

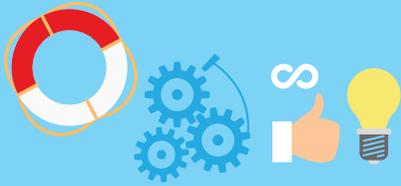
"The staff are very helpful but it is intensely frustrating not being able to see Dad. We have installed Skype on the tablet so I hope we can somehow get him using that so we can communicate better".

"Anyway – we are very pleased that you gave him the tablet as it is really helping him whilst in hospital and is very helpful in keeping him occupied generally at this awful time. If anyone needs to know how successful your project has been – please feel free to quote this email. The tablet has given my Dad a completely new lease of life at the age of 89 and supported him through what is a very challenging time for us all. Thanks very much indeed".  
E-mail from Carer of Veteran



# Carers Assessments/Emergency Planning

# 230



230 Carers Assessments completed via Integrated Carers Support POW, 3 Carers Links and Integrated Carers Assessment Worker.

Carers Assessments

# 112



112 Anticipatory Care Plans (New and reviewed) to record contingency planning with the 'cared for' by 3 Carers Link posts.

Anticipatory Care Plans



"Helpful to have information face to face"

"Glad of the support and help"

"Thank you for your help. The last few months have been the worst in my lifetime, as I had given up hope. I now have something to look forward to and know there are people who can support me".

"Useful to have information about the Carers Centre and to talk to someone".

"I didn't know where to start to look for help, I was at

breaking point and ready to just lock myself away with my little girl. I have my own issues, caring for dad has made my life almost impossible. You made me feel reassured that things will get sorted, I can't thank you enough I can now see light at the end of the tunnel. Dad has improved, he's on medication, attended his hospital appointment and Sycamore have been a great help, they have told him he will have the support of a key worker until he can live independently. Hafal have been in touch and will be arranging to see dad, what a relief, thank you".



# Carers Counselling Service

**Joanna Mordecai** has been providing a Counselling Service for Bridgend Carers since June 2016. Joanna is a graduate of University of South Wales and has a Bsc hon degree in systemic psychotherapy. Joanna is also a registered member of the British association of counselling and psychotherapy.

Joanna offers a safe, confidential and non-judgemental space for carers to work through any issues they may face. Her practice is very much person centred. This allows the carer to process their thoughts and feelings at their own pace and to find a way forward that is right for them.

**A total of 180 hours of Carers Counselling for 59 carers for the year - sessions funded through general donations.**



"The time I saw Joanna and the times we spoke were such a help because Joanna listened intently, made me feel that I mattered, and understood both my grief and my stress in my own home. The advice she gave me I am trying to do although some days are difficult. I can see the benefit of keeping and building a structure to my day and also keeping a journal, reviewing things and seeing if I can see a better way to deal with the problems I have recorded. Above all Joanna has not made me feel ignorant or stupid & has been so kind to a stranger - a real Good Samaritan".

"I have been so pleased with it really. It seems to have opened a couple of doors in my mind which has affected the way I think".

"I suspect I have a little way to go as I'm still quite emotional but I really feel I'm making progress. There is something about you that makes more things

make some sense and it's opened my eyes to the way I relate to other people too. I still have work to do...scrap book, photos, my story, etc but I'm a bit further down the good road than I was when we first spoke".

"I'm so grateful to you and Bridgend Carers I can't even begin to say. I see a little chink of light at end of the tunnel now and I'm not pretending about what I feel in the same way. Thank you for helping me to progress".

"I am very happy with the service I receive with Joanne I have a place to go and talk though what's worrying me and stressing me out without feeling judged or ashamed of what I have talked though. It's very important for people to have a safe, place to go and Joanna makes you feel welcome and safe in every session I have had. I struggle a lot with anxiety and when I go to Bridgend Carers Centre everyone is so welcoming".



**180** hours of Carers Counselling for

**59** carers - sessions funded through general donations.

# Carers Individual Grants

Bridgend Carers Centre are one of the most successful Network partners in securing individual grants for carers. This year has been no exception.

**We are delighted to have issued 29 carers grants for much needed items to help them to continue caring or weekend breaks and holidays totalling almost £6.5k.**

Our staff pride themselves in thinking outside of the box when supporting carers wellbeing, so apart from much needed white goods we were able to secure gym memberships, driving lessons and training to carers to support them in their caring journey.



## Keeping Carers, Families and Communities informed

There are 5561 carers on our database, 211 former carers and 4191 care receivers

1059 carers have been identified in this year and added to our database, representing a continual increase each year.

544 home visits and 1096 appointments and one to one support held at the Centre with 2239 telephone specific support calls given by the team.

## Analytics for Social Media

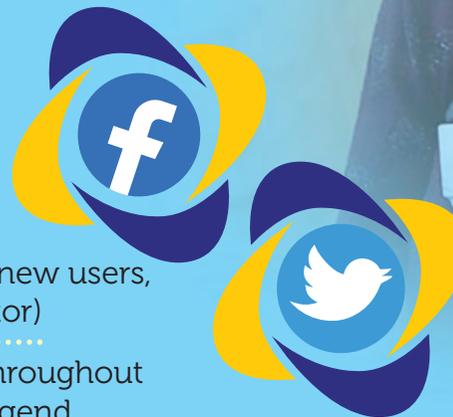
Number of 'likes' Facebook 840 and increasing

Number of 'followers' on Facebook 883 and increasing

Number of Twitter 'followers' 896 and increasing

Website 4914 sessions  
(3798 users = 80.8% new users,  
13.2 % returning visitor)

Carers Contact Newsletter Distributed 12,000 throughout  
communities in Bridgend.



# Mindfulness Sessions

Funded by Morrisons, this Project was a huge success.

All courses were in groups supported by Carers Link Workers. A strong sense of peer support was quickly established in all groups. Group members really appreciated attending a group which was specifically for Carers. All felt a sense of solidarity, security and safety in being able to share their challenges, worries in a confidential supportive setting.

Several of the group members had not heard of mindfulness or had no or very little experience of mindfulness. All members quickly took on board the concepts, meditations and practiced them at home. All reported a greater sense of wellbeing, a shift in the mindset of being willing to begin considering their own wellbeing and how this impacts their caring role. A number of people, as is typical with carers, were severely neglecting their own wellbeing.



**For Health • For Living • For Life!**

Mindfulness based strategies for living in the modern world.



## 1. CARERS STORY

A carer who undergoing a very emotional battle with services, found that by applying the strategies she was able to cope a lot better with the situation. She was previously very frustrated and angry but was able to manage the situation well. The same carer had not been on holiday for a very long time due to her caring role for her father. She had not visited her grandchildren for over 6 months. Halfway through the course, she went to stay with her

grandchildren for the weekend which gave her a real lift as she realized that she was neglecting all her other relationships. She also booked a holiday with her husband which has greatly improved their relationship as all of her attention was being poured into caring for her father. She reported that previous to attending the course she has been unable to even think about her own wellbeing but was able to plan the holiday, and her father's care to enable her to give herself a break.

## 2. CARERS STORY

Another carer's husband passed away during the course. This carer had also not been taking care of herself and had started implementing self care just before her husband's passing. Although she was unable to attend the remainder of the course, the strategies she learned helped her to manage her wellbeing during and after her husband's death. She now reports that she is managing well and that the strategies she learned has helped her to cope through this difficult time.



## Weekly Carers Carefree Community Cafe

The focus of our week is the much loved Carers Carefree Community Café. The Café was named by a carer in a competition back in 2011 to combat the loneliness and isolation of carers over 50 years.

It was funded by Big Lottery back in 2011 but is now a self-sustaining social enterprise. The Café is organised through the help and dedication of a team of committed and friendly volunteers who welcome customers to the café. They prepare and serve light lunches and refreshments to all including carers, cared for, professional staff who love to visit and hear about carers lives and what is so special about the Café.

Every week there are different activities, themed lunches, information, quizzes, crafts, music and activities to improve health and wellbeing.

43 Community Cafés have taken place providing lunch, information and extensive programme of activities for carer and cared for. Funded from various funding streams and donations since April 2019. 2 Cafes cancelled due to Covid- 19. Activities include Music, Art, Footcare, Quizzes, Talks and Information, Crafts Fayre, Vintage Tea Party, Health Checks, Skittles, Chinese New Year, Mardi Gras Celebrations, Line dancing, Bingo, Pets as Therapy and so on.

## Planning for Tomorrow Workshops

Funded through Carers Trust UK, Bridgend Carers Centre provided three workshops across the Borough, one which was in a very rural community and delivered locally at accessible times to make it easier for working carers to attend. They were delivered over 4 weeks with each session discussing various topics and facilitated by a different expert on the topic being covered. The workshops were:

### 1. Meaningful Conversations

facilitated by the Carers Centre counsellor. Carers were given a number of tools and materials to facilitate conversations about end of life issues with the person they care for e.g. photograph albums, cards, and memory books.

### 2. Legal Matters

facilitated by a local solicitor. This was an informal session where carers could ask questions about all sorts of legal matters relating to end of life care and death e.g. wills, lasting power of attorney and housing issues.

### 3. Practicalities around arranging a death

facilitated by a bereavement officer from the local hospital. The bereavement officer explained what happens in both a hospital based death and a death in the community, how a death certificate is

issued, documents needed to register a death and which organisations need to be informed about a death. At the end of the session carers took part in a tai chi session and were given a hand massage to reduce any stress caused by some of these difficult and emotional conversations.

### 4. Coping when caring role ends

facilitated by the Carers Centre counsellor. Discussion about the stages of grief, support mechanisms and coping strategies. Signposting and referral to organisations to support carers to move forward and explore future opportunities.

## Short Respite Breaks

With thanks to various donations from the public, fundraising events and grants from Carers Trust UK we were able to offer a variety of short breaks for carers giving carers some valuable time out from caring to recharge batteries and renew old friendships.

Provision of short respite breaks to carers - Delivered 11 Holistic Therapy Sessions, 2 Foot Care Clinics, Pamper Day, Wellbeing Retreat, Trip and Walk around Gnoll Park, Margam Park, Trip to Gwyl Railway and Carmarthen, Christmas Shopping Trip to Bristol, Summer Trip to Tenby, Carers Christmas Lunch, Vintage Cream Tea, Craft Fayre, Volunteering Training, Moving and Handling Training, 3 'Time For Me' Wellbeing Groups, 4 WhatsApp 'Time For Me' Wellbeing Groups, Macmillan Brunch for Carers, Two Day Wellbeing Retreat at Margam

Park, Planning For Tomorrow Workshops, Carers Wellbeing Peer Group Sessions. A number of Trips and Activities were cancelled due to Covid - 19 in March 2020.

## Wellbeing Retreat

The event was held at Margam Country Park where carers had a first class one night break all catered for curtesy of the grant.

For most carers who attended it was their first time away from loved ones to experience a stress and worry free break with other carers to share experiences and emotions.

The retreat truly delivered above carers expectations. The even organised by the Macmillan Family Information and Support Worker, was a mixture of mindfulness, holistic therapies, tai chi, yoga, wellbeing sessions and singing, fun and laughter around the campfire. Thanks to all those wonderful therapists who helped to make it such a success.



# Carers Feedback

## Trip to Gnoll Park

"I had a fabulous day – I had never been to Gnoll Park before and I really enjoyed the day out with friends from the centre".

"Break away from caring role and socialising. Fantastic day".

"Really enjoyed, lovely day - break away from my caring role".

"To enjoy a day out with good company. Sometimes I would not normally drive to. Thank you for including me. It was a very enjoyable day".

## Trip to St Fagans

"Break from caring. A chat and a laugh with others"

"Catch-up with others. It would be nice to return in the spring or summer"

"A lovely, relaxing time - away from the normal stress of daily life. Very well organised"

"Good. Thank God for this place for carers"

"To meet with friends is so wonderful"

## Trip to Tenby

"Being able to spend the time doing all the things we used to do when the family was young. And I had a lovely time on the beach"

"Almost door to door transport and company. Distance not too far"

"Spending time away from home, meeting new people"

"Such a lovely day with my friends from Carers"

"I just wanted to say Thank You Carers Centre for such a lovely day out, and everything you do"

## Trip to Gwyl Railway and Carmarthen

"The benefit for me was that I had a nice relaxing day out with good company"

"The social part. Lovely people, best time on a train for a long time - lovely cream tea. Very good event"

"Time away from caring for my husband. To relax and talk to others. Excellent trip. Bus first class. Free time in Carmarthen and the steam railway was fantastic. Cream tea excellent"

"Very enjoyable day out. An opportunity

to think about just my needs. The coach start point wasn't ideal as there wasn't anywhere nearby to park the car"

"Time for myself to recharge my batteries and to be with other carers. This event was something different - more like this please. Thanks"

"Going out and about with likeminded people and relaxing in good company. An excellent day out. Very enjoyable with friends and lovely cream tea"

"Time out to relax. Excellent day out"

"A change of scenery with friends and to be spoilt with a cream tea, relaxing. Today was a wonderful tonic for me, with good company, well organised and relaxing"

"Enjoying the ride on the steam train, cream tea very good, and meeting friends made by being a member of Bridgend Carers. Today was a lovely trip - a return visit would be something to look forward to. A very big thank you to rosemary for her organisation!"

## Christmas Lunch

"The atmosphere and sense of overwhelming happiness amongst those carers was palpable and whilst it was great to see, it also reminded you

that their everyday lives are so embroiled with stress and loneliness, that these events truly are a lifeline for them"  
Claire – Coastal Housing who support the event annually providing Christmas gifts for every carer.

"It was great to get together with other carers to celebrate Christmas. The venue, atmosphere, disco and the lovely gifts from Santa were lovely. It was nice for mum to get out to meet other carers. A very enjoyable special occasion with lovely people. Many thanks to Bridgend Carers Centre staff for organising such a special event"

"Lovely company nice to meet other carers. Good laugh but not so nice meal but the atmosphere and love from likeminded people was enjoyable. It's nice to have these events to have something to look forward to. Sometimes I find day by day I have been inward looking. These events perk you up. And Santa gave us lovely presents"

"It was a real fun packed few hours out of the house. Lovely to chat to other carers I hadn't met before. We all have different caring roles but are all in the same boat. I loved having a dance and being carefree".



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