Meet the Young Carers Forum

Read about our most recent activities and find out how we have been improving our communication through social media.
Welcome to the Spring/Summer issue of the Carers News. In this issue you will find lots of useful information including our new support groups, workshops and training diary (March – September). You will also find useful information and advice on hydration and urinary tract infections.

We are really pleased to support the dementia team at Milton Keynes University Hospital with their new “John’s Campaign” initiative. This allows carers of patients with dementia and complex needs to better support their loved ones by allowing them to attend appointments, stay overnight and arrange discounts on car parking charges.

As ever we are very grateful to those who have given us generous donations over the past few months. This support helps us to pay for the invaluable work Carers MK does to support unpaid carers in Milton Keynes. It allows us to provide services in addition to that which is paid for by the contract we have with the council and other funding bodies.

I am pleased to say that the opportunity for young carers to access support in school is continuing to grow as we now have monthly drop-in sessions in several schools across Milton Keynes.

We are running a number of workshops over the coming months to help carers in their caring role including; first aid awareness, manual handling, managing stress, eating healthily on a budget, dementia awareness and sewing.

Save the date! We are holding our Annual General Meeting on Friday 1st June from 10-1pm at Herons Lodge, Loughton. All carers are welcome to attend – please make sure you call to book your place.

Stephen Archibald
Chief Executive Carers MK
and Carers Bucks
stephen.archibald@carersbucks.org
Hello, my name is Angela Doherty and I joined Carers MK in December 2017.

My role is Adult Carers Co-ordinator. This is a very varied role which includes supervising and supporting the Adult Support Workers in the delivery of a high quality advice, information and support service for adult carers, overseeing our rolling programme of support groups and workshops, and developing our network of amazing volunteers.

There is also a support worker aspect to my role. This means that I will have the privilege of supporting individual carers on a one to one basis too.

I have extensive experience in managing and delivering information, advice and support services and have worked in the voluntary sector for over 13 years; spending some of that time with a local disabled persons’ organisation and some time with a national charity.

I am very much enjoying working with such a great team at Carers MK and providing much needed support to local carers.

I also have personal experience of caring for a family member.

Hi, my name is Sue and I started working as a Young Carers Support Worker in MK in December.

I have worked with young people for over 15 years. My roles have been in pastoral care and specialist care for young people with a range of additional needs such as ASD, ADHD, attachment disorders, ADD, PDA, BESD etc.

I enjoy working with young people and am in awe of their resilience, determination and infectious enthusiasm despite the challenges they experience daily. I am looking forward to getting to know our young carers and spending time with them at our many clubs and activities.

Hi, my name is Chris and I joined PACA as an Administrator in November.

My role is to provide administrative support to the Parent and Carer Alliance and I am trying to learn as quickly as possible as there are a variety of daily tasks. I look forward to working with people and volunteers from across Milton Keynes.

Previous to joining PACA I had worked in education and secondary teaching before moving into administration with student fees at the Open University. There were challenging times as a number of grants were withdrawn and student loans introduced.

Outside of work I enjoy being a volunteer with MK Reader Service for the visually impaired and I like a number of sports, more armchair watching rather than participating, although I do try and provide some competition with young great nephews and nieces...just about!
Shared Lives services are designed to support adults with care and support needs who need a helping hand. This service is available to all Adult Social Care service users.

The scheme matches an adult who has care and support needs with an approved Shared Lives Carer. The carers share their regular family and community life with the adult to provide the help they need, this can include social and recreational activities, washing and dressing (personal care) and preparing food. Shared Lives support can vary from a day a week, a day a month, overnight stays or living with someone for a short while or permanently.

If you are interested in using this service or becoming a Shared Lives Carer you can get further information from our website www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sharedlives or telephone 01908 258088 or contact sharedlivesmk@milton-keynes.gov.uk

**Mental Health Carers Support Group**

**First Wednesday of the month**
6.00pm-7.30pm
At Carers MK Offices

7th March: Tracey Keech from Healthwatch will give a talk.
4th April: Support session.
2nd May: Session focussing on managing stress. Beth Lawrence will facilitate this session which will include tips on dealing with your own stress as well as that of the person that you are caring for.
6th June: Support session.
4th July: Sarah Broadhurst from Oxford Brookes University will be joining us to share the findings of her research. Sarah will feedback the findings from her research on understanding resilience of family carers. She will discuss the ‘Carer Model of Resilience’ and how effective current interventions are. Some of our local carers assisted with this research so it will be interesting to hear the findings.
1st August: Support session.
5th September: Pamper Evening
An opportunity to have taster sessions in Reiki, Reflexology and Indian Head Massage. These are being very kindly offered by Jean Stemson and Liz Rabone.

**Why Weight Milton Keynes**

Would you like support and guidance on how to improve your health and lose weight?

In partnership with Milton Keynes Council offers FREE Weight Management and Healthy Lifestyle programmes for both adults and children across Milton Keynes.

For further information, please visit www.whyweightmk.co.uk or contact us via 01908 046380 or info@whyweightmk.co.uk

**Healthwatch Milton Keynes**

Is your voice in health and social care. It’s the statutory body that works to improve health and social care for the people who use it.

Healthwatch Milton Keynes wants its work to be guided by the people it works for. The organisation is launching its new strategy for 2018-21 and wants your input. The strategy will set out its guiding principles and what it aims to achieve over the next three years. It will be launched this April.

Healthwatch Milton Keynes is also looking at how it will put the strategy into practice, and how it can ensure that it is an effective local voice for people who use health and social care services.

Healthwatch Milton Keynes wants to be better informed about the issues that most affect you as patients, service users, or family and friends of people who use health and social care services. This information will help the organisation understand which areas it should focus on evaluating and scrutinising in 2018-19.

This is where you come in. Healthwatch Milton Keynes wants to hear what you think about its current priorities. It would also like to hear about the specific issues you think are the most important for the organisation to look at and act on over the coming year. Examples might include care homes, access to mental health services, social isolation, or access to healthcare in your school. Healthwatch Milton Keynes wants its work to be based on the issues YOU think are most important when it comes to YOUR health and care needs.

Share your views online at www.healthwatchmiltonkeynes.co.uk or by calling the office on 01908 698800.
Do you care for a person who is living with dementia or complex needs and is a patient in our hospital?

If the answer is yes, you will be eligible for a Carer’s Pass which will enable you to support the person you care for at a range of appointments, investigations, and during their stay at the hospital.

This is a new initiative called ‘John’s Campaign’ which was recently introduced into the hospital by the dementia team. We recognise that family members and carers know their loved ones or the person they care for best and our staff would like to work with you to provide the best care and experience.

Hospital stays can be very distressing for someone with dementia or complex needs and by having someone they trust to accompany them to an x-ray or medical procedure can make the patient much more settled and cooperative. It has also been proven that having a relative stay with the patient overnight can reduce the likelihood of an agitated and unsettled night.

What do I need to do?
You need to ask for a ‘Carer’s Pass’ and a John’s Campaign leaflet.

How do I get a Carer’s Pass?
In the first instance, speak to the nurse in charge (you can identify them by the red badge on their uniform). They will ask you a few eligibility questions to see if the pass is appropriate for you. Once issued, the pass is valid for seven days and will entitle you to have access outside of visiting hours and even staying overnight with your relative (if you wish to) and to accompany them to any appointments or procedures they may need whilst in hospital. For example you could provide support with feeding and personal care on the ward. The nurses on the wards will be responsible for the care delivery and treatment and you can discuss together the level of involvement you would like to proceed with and a clear care plan can then be produced and agreed.

You will also be entitled to a substantial discount on car parking and will only need to pay £6 per week whilst you have the pass. After seven days, the pass will be reviewed by ward staff to see if it is still required. Please do speak to the nurse in charge and remind them about this review a day before your pass expires.

The dementia team wish to champion ‘John’s Campaign’ in the hospital and have been fully supported by the executive team, wider clinical teams, colleagues and Carers MK.

Hearing from patients and carers is very important to us. Your feedback helps us to understand what is important to you and where we may need to improve. It also lets us know what we are doing to provide a positive experience for you. We would love to hear from you about your experiences in the hospital when you have used the Carer’s Pass. You can talk to any member of staff, fill in a ‘Friends & Family Test’ (FFT) feedback form or you can email us on patientexperience@mkuh.nhs.uk

www.carersmiltonkeynes.org
Hydration and urinary tract infections

Hydration

Poor hydration

There may be times when carers or the people they care for feel unwell and experience a range of the following symptoms:

• Dry mouth
• Headache
• Dizziness
• Tiredness

• Confusion
• Constipation
• Falls
• Not wanting to take part in activities

The cause could be dehydration so check your urine against the chart below to find out if you are hydrated or dehydrated.

Did you know that good hydration for carers and the cared for person could prevent admissions to hospital?

Good hydration can help:

• avoid low blood pressure
• reduce the risk of kidney stones forming
• prevent falls and risk of falls
• improve cognitive functions (for example thinking and communication)
• wound or pressure sore healing and aid healthy skin
• prevent constipation as drinking enough water and eating fibre rich foods increases stool frequency
• people with diabetes to replace fluids lost due to frequent urination
• prevent urinary tract infections

How hydrated are you?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hydrated</td>
<td>If urine colour matches 1, 2 or 3 then you or the cared for person are hydrated, carry on drinking fluids as usual.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dehydrated</td>
<td>If urine colour matches 4, 5 or 6 then you or the cared for person needs to drink more. Drink a glass of water now and increase the amount of fluids.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Severely Dehydrated</td>
<td>If urine colour matches 7 or 8, you or the cared for person needs to be re-hydrated urgently. Drink plenty of water at hourly intervals and if there is no improvement call the GP.</td>
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Urinary tract infections (UTIs) are common infections that can affect the bladder, the kidneys and the tubes connected to them. Anyone can get them, but they’re particularly common in women. Some women experience UTIs regularly (called recurrent UTIs).

UTIs can be painful and uncomfortable, but usually pass within a few days and can be easily treated with antibiotics. However, not all infections require antibiotics as often the infection clears up on its own. The following information is about UTIs in adults. UTIs in children may be more serious and medical advice should be sought.

Symptoms of UTIs
Infections of the bladder (sometimes called cystitis) or the urethra (tube that carries urine out of the body) are known as lower UTIs. Lower UTIs are common and aren’t usually a cause for major concern but can cause the following symptoms:
- a need to pass urine more often than usual
- pain or discomfort when passing urine
- sudden urges to pass urine
- feeling as though you’re unable to empty your bladder fully
- pain low down in the stomach
- urine that is cloudy, foul-smelling or contains blood
- feeling generally unwell, achy and tired.

Infections of the kidneys or ureters (tubes connecting the kidneys to the bladder) are known as upper UTIs. Upper UTIs can be serious if left untreated, as they could damage the kidneys or spread to the bloodstream. These can cause the above symptoms and also:
- a high temperature (fever) of 38°C (100.4ºF) or above
- pain in the sides or back
- shivering and chills
- feeling and being sick
- confusion
- agitation or restlessness.

When to get medical advice
It is a good idea to contact the GP if you have any of the following:
- the symptoms of a UTI haven’t started to improve after a few days
- the symptoms of a UTI are severe or getting worse
- frequent UTIs
- symptoms of an upper UTI

If a UTI is detected, antibiotics are usually recommended because untreated upper UTIs can potentially cause serious problems if they’re allowed to spread.

Treatment for UTIs
UTIs are normally treated with a short course of antibiotics. The symptoms will normally pass within three to five days of starting treatment. Always complete the whole course of antibiotics even if you are feeling better. Over-the-counter painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen can help with any pain. Drinking plenty of fluids will also help. Return to your GP if the symptoms don’t improve, get worse or come back after treatment.

How can you help?
1. Drink water and fluids through the day and at mealtimes
2. Always have water available to drink and within easy reach
3. In warm weather drink more water and fluids
4. Eat more fruit and vegetables which can also help with hydration
5. Sucking ice-pops and ice cubes can also help!

If you have found the information helpful in relation to hydration and UTI guidance and are happy to make comments to the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), please respond to our survey online via this link bit.ly/2EFLMAE or call Claira from the CCG on 01908 278703 to give feedback over the phone.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support groups</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bletchley Support Group</strong></td>
<td>Tuesdays</td>
<td>10.30am-12.00pm</td>
<td>13th March – This group will no longer be meeting after this date.</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Bletchley Parish Council Offices</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Olney Support Group</strong></td>
<td>Thursdays</td>
<td>2.00pm-3.30pm</td>
<td>1st March, 5th April, 3rd May, 7th June, 5th July, 2nd August, 6th September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olney Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Great Linford Support Group</strong></td>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>2.00pm-3.30pm</td>
<td>14th March, 11th April, 9th May, 13th June, 11th July, 8th August, 12th September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Great Linford Parish Council Offices</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hanslope Support Group</strong></td>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>10.30am-12.30pm</td>
<td>28th March, 25th April, 30th May, 27th June, 25th July, 29th August, 26th September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hanslope Church</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Newport Pagnell Support Group</strong></td>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>1.30pm-3.00pm</td>
<td>28th March, 25th April, 30th May, 27th June, 25th July, 29th August, 26th September</td>
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<td>UR Church</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Autism Support Group</strong></td>
<td>Tuesdays</td>
<td>2.00pm-3.30pm</td>
<td>6th March, 3rd April, 1st May, 5th June, 3rd July, 7th August, 4th September</td>
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<tr>
<td>(for carers of someone over the age of 18 with autism)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Health Evening Support Group</strong></td>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>6.00pm-7.30pm</td>
<td>7th March, 4th April, 2nd May, 6th June, 4th July, 1st August, 5th September</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friends and Family Mental Health Group</strong></td>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>6.00pm-7.30pm</td>
<td>28th March, 25th April, 30th May, 27th June, 25th July, 29th August, 26th September</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Personality Disorder)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Carer Group</strong></td>
<td>Mondays</td>
<td>10.30am-12.00pm</td>
<td>19th March, 16th April, 21st May, 18th June, 16th July, No group in August, 17th September</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Former Carers</strong></td>
<td>Thursdays</td>
<td>1.30pm-3.00pm</td>
<td>8th March, 12th April, 10th May, 14th June, 12th July, 9th August, 13th September</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stroke Group</strong></td>
<td>Thursdays</td>
<td>10.30pm-12.00pm</td>
<td>22nd March – This group will no longer be meeting after this date.</td>
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<td><strong>Parkinson’s Support Group</strong></td>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>2.00pm-3.30pm</td>
<td>7th March, 4th April, 2nd May, 6th June, 4th July, 1st August, 5th September</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MS Support Group</strong></td>
<td>Mondays</td>
<td>2.00pm-3.30pm</td>
<td>9th April, 21st May, 2nd July, 13th August, 24th September</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alzheimer’s Support Group</strong></td>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>10.30am-12.30pm</td>
<td>14th March, 11th April, 9th May, 6th June, 4th July, 1st August, 29th August, 26th September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alzheimer’s Offices, Margaret Powell House</td>
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You need to book a place on our workshops and training sessions by emailing us on mail@carersmiltonkeynes.org or calling 01908 231703. If you have booked but unable to attend please contact us so that we are able to offer your place to another carer – thank you.

Don’t forget to visit our website at www.carersmiltonkeynes.org or ‘Like’ our Facebook page to receive the latest information on forthcoming events, news and vacancies.

We regularly send out email reminders to carers about our training sessions, activities and events. If you would like to be kept up to date in this way please make sure we have your current email address – email us at mail@carersmiltonkeynes.org or call 01908 231703.
Drumming party
Moulsoe Millennium Hall, Cranfield Road, Moulsoe, MK16 0HB
Carers MK warmly invites you to a drumming party for children, young people with additional needs and their *parent carers.
Siblings are welcome to join in the fun too!
Please call us on 01908 231703 or email mail@carersmiltonkeynes.org to book a space.
*Parent carers are responsible for their children at all times.
Dates/Times
Tuesday 14th August 2018 – 2.00pm-4.00pm

First aid awareness
Quaker Centre, 1 Oakley Gardens, Downhead Park, Milton Keynes, MK15 9BH
The course will start with an introduction where the attendees will be asked to briefly explain who they care for and the types of challenges that they face. This will allow the tutor to tailor the session to best meet their needs. Courses will be delivered by Guardian.
Compulsory elements
• How to deal with an unconscious adult or child
• How to deal with a person who is choking – including the technique for dealing with wheelchair users
• How to manage a major bleed
• How to deal with seizures/convulsions
• An overview of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (video and tutor demonstration)
Dates/Times
Monday 5th March 2018 – 10.00am-12.30pm
Monday 14th May 2018 – 1.30pm-4.00pm
Monday 2nd July 2018 – 10.00am-12.30pm
Monday 10th September 2018 – 1.30pm-4.00pm

Manual handling – back care
Quaker Centre, 1 Oakley Gardens, Downhead Park, Milton Keynes, MK15 9BH
The course will start with an introduction where the attendees will be asked to briefly explain who they care for and the types of challenges that they face. This will allow the tutor to tailor the session to best meet their needs. Courses will be delivered by Guardian.
Compulsory elements
• Care plans and communication with the patient
• “Power Posture” and a practical exercise
Mix and match sessions (depending on the needs of the attendees)
• Sitting to standing/standing to sitting
• Walking with a frame or stick
• Assisted walking
• Laying to sitting
• Use of wheelchairs
• Equipment
  - Slide sheets
  - Glide cushions
  - Turning seats etc.
Dates/Times
Monday 5th March 2018 – 1.30pm-4.00pm
Monday 14th May 2018 – 10.00am-12.30pm
Monday 2nd July 2018 – 1.30pm-4.00pm
Monday 10th September 2018 – 10.00am-12.30pm

CarersNews – Spring/Summer 2018
Managing stress workshop
10.00am-12.00pm
Learn how to identify sources of stress and ways to manage it. Explore ways of avoiding unnecessary stress by learning to say ‘no’, taking control of your environment, avoiding the ‘hot’ topics, setting realistic goals, focusing on the positive and learning to forgive.

Dates
Tuesday 27th March 2018
Tuesday 29th May 2018
Tuesday 24th July 2018
Tuesday 25th September 2018

Healthy eating on a budget workshop
1st March 2018 – 10.00am-12.00pm
Eating well within a tight budget can seem tricky, but it doesn’t have to be. It can be done, believe me! So come and learn the simple things that can keep costs down, but still ensure you eat well and look after your health.

In this workshop run by Felicia Jones of stresslessliving.co.uk, you’ll learn great tips. These range from simple kitchen tools that can help you reduce costs, to choosing reasonably priced healthy ingredients. All of this will help you to make great choices and healthy meals at a fraction of the take away prices.

The session will cover:
• Pricing up meals
• Looking at low cost healthy ingredients
• Simple time saving and cost effective tools to reduce costs (bulk buying/cooking, freezing/planning)
• Going through recipes and designing a week’s worth of healthy meals

Sewing workshops
12.00pm-2.00pm
Our sewing workshops are run for 6 weeks and are a great way to learn something new or develop skills that you already have.

These workshops are always popular and numbers are restricted, so if you have not been before and would like to book you place, please give us a call on 01908 231703 or email us on mail@carersmiltonkeynes.org

Dates
4th May – 8th June 2018 (weekly on Fridays)
7th September – 12th October 2018 (weekly on Fridays)

Two week dementia workshop
10.30am-12.30pm
Two informal sessions looking at the symptoms and behaviours associated with dementia.

The sessions will look at practical ways you can support someone living with dementia, meet others in a similar caring role and find out about support services available in the local area.

Please call our offices to book a place on this workshop.

Dates
Thursday 12th April and Thursday 19th April 2018

For carers attending the Carers MK offices in Margaret Powell House
Our offices are located on the third floor and, under normal circumstances, there is lift access. Please be aware that in the event of a fire evacuation it is not permitted to use the lifts and you will need to exit the building via the stairs. If you have any difficulties managing stairs then please contact us as soon as possible.
Parents and Carers Alliance AGM – changes to the Committee!

Following our AGM on 27th September 2017, we have a new Committee and welcome Jon Ralphs as our new Chairperson.

You can email Jon directly at chair@pacamk.org

SEND Information Day
Saturday 3rd February 2018

Thank you to everyone who attended the SEND Information Day on 3rd February, which was organised by PACA and MK SEND IAS.

This annual event was a great success with over 300 parent carers joining us with their children and young people.

The theme for the day was Inclusion and Transition. The programme included very motivational talks by two young people, Georgie Ralphs and Dean Pittman.

There were workshops for parents, children and young people, and over 30 information stands.

This annual event takes place on the first Saturday in February. We do hope you can join us next year!

Contact – the new name for Contact a Family

Contact is the national charity for families with disabled children, for information and advice on any aspect of caring for a disabled child.

Contact have recently launched “The helpful guide for families with disabled children”. You can order a copy via their website www.contact.org.uk which also contains lots of information and resources.

FREE helpline 0808 808 3555
9.30am-5.00pm, Monday-Friday
Calls are free from UK landlines and UK mobiles.

Thank you Jason!

We would really like to thank Jason for being Chair of PACA for the past few years. He has done a fantastic job over this time to help steer the forum and bring PACA to where it is today. We are really pleased that he has decided to stay on the Committee as Secretary.

Would you like to join the Steering Group or become a Parent Rep?

For parent carers who want to get a bit more involved, we really welcome your presence at meetings and offer training and support. Parent Reps are required to register as a PACA Volunteer with Carers MK. The process will be explained to you when you apply.

Please contact us or see our website for more information.

07852 526057
pacamk@gmail.com
www.pacamk.org
facebook.com/parentsandcarersalliancemk
@PacaMk
Thank you to Abdul Hai of the Jalori Indian restaurant in Woburn Sands for hosting a charity quiz and curry night on the second Tuesday of each month. Thank you also to Shirley Jones for nominating Carers MK as one on the charities that benefit from the monies raised by the quizzes that take place.

The cost of the evening is £20 per person and this includes quiz entry and a generous Indian style buffet. The next event is on 13th March. Anyone is welcome, teams are made up of a minimum of 2 or a maximum of 4 people. If you would like to attend the next quiz please call Jalori on 01908 282116 to reserve a table.

Thanks to Kingfisher GP Surgery for raising £50 at a recent carers support session and cake sale event held within their practice.

Fazilat Shivji, Practice Manager said that the event went really well, it was a great opportunity for carers to come along and be supported by Carers MK as well as raising funds for the charity itself.

£429
The Carers MK November raffle was drawn, a total of £429 was raised, we would like to thank everyone for their generosity.

£550
Thanks to Stony Stratford Mummers

One of our registered carers is part of the Stony Stratford Mummers, she regularly uses services via Carers MK and wanted to thank us for the support that she receives.

Stony Stratford Mummers have been keeping alive the tradition of performing mummers plays since 1973. Each year they donate whatever they raise to charity and this year’s performances (at Stony Stratford’s Turning on the Lights Day, Olney’s Dicken’s Day and a Christmas pub tour around the local villages) raised £550 for Carers MK.

For more information see www.stonymummers.org.uk or visit Stony Stratford Mummers on Facebook.

£50
Thanks to Kingfisher GP Surgery for raising £50 at a recent carers support session and cake sale event held within their practice.

Fazilat Shivji, Practice Manager said that the event went really well, it was a great opportunity for carers to come along and be supported by Carers MK as well as raising funds for the charity itself.
**Our new Young Adult Carers Service is now up and running**

Are you looking after someone in your family who cannot manage without you because they are ill or have a disability? Are you between the ages 16-25?

The Young Adult Carers programme supports young people as they transition into adulthood and independence whilst continuing to provide unpaid care for a member of their family at home who suffers from an illness, physical disability, mental health problem or an addiction.

At Carers MK we believe that a young person with a caring responsibility has the same right to life choices as their peers. Caring for a family member should not reduce life opportunities, such as further and higher education, employment and independent living.

We can offer you:

- regular social events
- one to one intervention
- targeted group work
- life skills sessions
- representation at meetings
- information, advice and signposting.

If you would like to be part of this project please get in touch and we will be in touch to arrange a young adult carer’s assessment. Contact Debbie on 01908 231703 or email debbie.norton@carersmiltonkeynes.org

**The Forum**

The Forum group have been amazing! Over the October half term, Forum put on their very own activity and created an amazing Halloween party for our younger, young carers group. The party was filled with decorations, games and crafts which were all created by forum members. Everyone had a fantastic time, and we even had our very own young carer who DJ’d for us.

The Young Carers Forum is all about reviewing the service and giving recommendations as to how it could be improved. Between them they have decided we need to have more interaction on social media as the majority of our young carers use this as a way of communicating. We have taken this on board and now we have made it into the world of Twitter, Instagram and we still have Facebook. This has been a fantastic initiative as we are able to connect with other young carers services around the UK and share ideas to help raise awareness to others. So give us a follow everyone @YoungCarersMK.

We have a few more projects coming up in Forum and we are always on the lookout for new members to join us. If you are interested, currently in secondary school and have lots of enthusiasm and ideas about what Young Carers MK should look like, please contact Bryony or Marianne on 01908 23170. We meet every 6-8 weeks at our offices in Central MK and have three social events a year such as Christmas meals, bowling or ice skating.

Here at Young Carers MK, we have a successful project that we run in some secondary schools. We are happy to announce that it is continuing to grow!

Once a month, two of our support workers go into school and check in with as many of our young carers who attend that school as possible. We spend time with each young person, finding out how they are and reminding them that we are here to listen.

We are currently running monthly drop-ins at:

- Milton Keynes Academy
- Radcliffe
- Lord Grey
- Stantonbury
- St. Paul’s

Stantonbury, Lord Grey and St. Paul’s are brand new to our list! If you attend any of these schools and would like to be put on our drop-in list, please call the office on 01908 231703, and let us know.
Young carers book

ONE DAY...EVERYDAY
A book written by young carers for young carers is coming soon!

During a sibling workshop five young carers aged 8 and 9 years old reflected on their experiences.

Together they created the beginnings of the book. The art work continued at Wolverton café sessions and youth clubs. During the summer we spent a day collating a collage of the city centre as a scene in the book and are hoping to print this interactive resource later this year.

The concept is to find a family member, a teacher, a young carers support worker or an adult you are happy to talk to and fold out a scene and choose characters and emojis to share your story.

We think this book will help young carers express their feelings and thoughts and we will let you know when the book is printed and available.

Why we wrote the book:

“This book is dedicated to young carers, the amazing people who look after their loved ones every day. They spend most of their time caring for them, they go through all sorts of situations but they never lose hope. They stay strong and are ready for any challenge. We care for people who inspire us, who open doors to new beginnings. We stay strong and learn new skills. Our daily lives sometimes are different, but this does not stop us from enjoying happy times. We are young carers who can achieve anything, no matter what!”

Muiz Chaudhry, aged 14

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Carer short story

By the Carers MK Writing Group

Cara stared out of the window. She watched enviously as people went about their daily business. Doing things she could no longer do. Well she could, but what would she do with her mother? Dementia had stolen her mother’s mind and four years ago she’d moved in with Cara, no longer able to live alone. That was the day Cara’s life stood still. Her mother couldn’t be left alone so Cara watched the world go by through the glass of the living room window. As her mother’s carer, there were a lot of things Cara could no longer do, but what she could do was write. Short stories, poems, a diary. Writing was her way of releasing the whole rainbow of emotions that each day brought; anger, loneliness, exhaustion. Some days Cara wanted to run as far away as she could, then she’d feel guilty. Her mother had given her life and taken care of Cara until she left for university, so Cara would take care of her mother until the end. The trouble was Cara no longer existed, her needs had become her mother’s needs and Cara’s only existence was through her writing. She lived vicariously through the characters in her stories and poems. All the things she couldn’t do, she let her characters do. She could travel, she could party, she could run barefoot through grassy fields. Maybe one day she would publish her stories and become a famous author. Imagination knows no bounds.

If writing helps you cope then perhaps you’d like to join other carers in the Carers MK Writing Group who meet every second Wednesday each month, 10.30am-12.00pm at the Carers MK offices to chat and, over coffee, share their love of writing.