

The newsletter of the
Carers' Centre Bath &
North East Somerset



Melissa Grady with her daughter Katie - Toby didn't feel like being photographed.



Toby Grady enjoying a Family Sport Session last year.

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A Friend For Parents in Crisis

Face 2 Face is a new befriending service for parents of disabled children. It is a network of trained befrienders supporting parents who are in crisis, going through the trauma of having their child diagnosed or simply feel they would benefit from someone to talk to.

"The Carers' Centre is training 12 befrienders all of whom care for a disabled child," explained Carers' Officer Jo Grobler. "These volunteers are experienced and can offer empathy, emotional support and reassurance to help other parents."

Face 2 Face training lasts for 10 weeks, covers a wide spectrum of themes and thoroughly prepares volunteers for the sensitive role of befriending.

Parent-carer Melissa Grady is a single mum and training to become a befriender. She has two children, Toby, who is 11 and diagnosed with autism/Asperger syndrome, and 9-year-old Katie.

"Staff at nursery school picked up some issues when Toby was about 3 and within 6 months he had been diagnosed," said Melissa. "I call the next 3 years my 'lost years'. I think I was grieving and depressed and Toby was very difficult. It affected my relationship with Katie, whom I

couldn't give enough time to and I always felt so guilty."

Toby couldn't cope at mainstream school and now attends Fosseyway Special Needs School in Radstock. His behaviour is getting easier, he's learning well and working hard.

"I can reason with Toby now," explained Melissa. "His behaviour used to be so extreme when he was younger. Everything for Toby is magnified, whether he is happy or sad.

"Face 2 Face befriending is my way of giving something back. I've been there and understand how it feels to be the parent of a disabled child. If I can prevent just one person going through what I went through, then it will have been worth it."

If you are a parent-carer and would like help and support, please contact the Carers' Centre.

Safety First For Junior Fire Fighters

A special day out brought a group of disabled children and their families to Bath Fire Station to meet the team from Avon Fire and Rescue Service.

"It's so much harder for families to enjoy activities together with a disabled child," said Carers' Officer Lorraine Frapwell. "Many traditional days out cannot accommodate their physical or behavioural needs. Today has been wonderful; the children have been allowed to dress up as Fire Fighters, have a go with the fire hose and learned about fire safety."

Watch Manager Paul Cullen from Avon Fire and Rescue Service said, "We actively encourage people to visit us and meet our team - today's been very special for everyone here at the station."

Eleven-year-old Oliver Rabbitts enjoyed the day-out with his parents and seven-month-old baby sister Daisy.

"It's our first trip with the Carers' Centre and it's been really exciting for Oliver," said dad Steve. "He's usually really shy, but today has been an unforgettable experience for him."



Left to right: Steve, Julie, baby Daisy and Oliver Rabbitts with Watch Manager Paul Cullen from Avon Fire and Rescue Service.

Real Need For Think Tank

Think Tank is a new support group recently launched by the Carers' Centre. A group of 25 carers, all of whom look after someone with a mood disorder such as bi-polar disorder, depression or schizophrenia, met in Radstock to help get the group up and running.



Left to right: Jude King from Bath MIND, Tom Fox-Proverbs from the Carers' Centre, Rosie Brandon from PALS and carer Jon Cooper.

"By working with Bi-polar UK, Bath MIND, PALS and Rethink, we are going to be able to offer a wide range of support and advice to carers who come along to meetings," said Tom Fox-Proverbs from the Carers' Centre.

Getting together for mutual help and support can help carers feel less isolated, but feedback from the first event showed carers want more than this from the group.

"These carers really want to get involved in service development and provision, which is something the Carers' Centre can make happen," added Tom. "The success of the launch proves there is a real need for specialist help for these carers."

Why not come along? Monthly Think Tank meetings are taking place in central Bath.

See What's On for more information.

Tough Life For Roger

Caring for his wife, working part-time in a care home and looking after his teenage son means Roger Bowring lives a complicated life. Combine all this with a learning disability and it's easy to see why Roger sometimes feels frustrated.

"I worry a lot about work and looking after Steph and Liam," he explained. "Steph's got to have a heart operation next month and I don't know how I'll manage going to work when I'm needed here to look after her."

Steph and Roger met when they were just 7 at their local special needs school and have been together for the last 37 years. Their son Liam is now 14.



"Liam is a clever boy and helps a lot. He's doing really well at school," said Roger, smiling. "We also have volunteers come to the house each week to help us to understand our post and pay bills."

"I wouldn't be able to manage without Roger," said Steph. "He does all the housework and the cooking and looks after me. I have scoliosis which means walking and getting about is difficult. I have a heart condition and problems with my hip too, so I need a lot of looking after."

"Everything is a struggle and I get really frustrated sometimes," added Roger. "The Carers' Centre have helped me with free counselling which has made me feel better. I'm now going to the gym every week through Give Us A Break and it's brilliant. I switch off from caring and have a bit of time to look after myself."

Roger receives support from the Carers' Centre's service for carers with learning disabilities. If you would like more information, or need help, please contact the Centre.

New Patron for Carers' Centre



Edward Bayntun-Coward with Chief Executive Sonia Hutchison.

Bath-based philanthropist Edward Bayntun-Coward has kindly agreed to become the new Patron of the Carers' Centre. He brings his life-long experience of working with local and national charities to the role and hopes to help raise the profile of the Centre.

"I'm local and involved in a number of charities in the area," said Edward. "I volunteered for 10 years for the Samaritans in London and learnt a lot about how hard life can be for carers. I also have a disabled nephew and have seen first-hand how caring for another person changes everything."

Edward went to Oxford University with David Cameron and has his own views on The Big Society. "Everyone should try to do something other than just make money. I'm lucky to have the life that I live, and every week I do my best to devote time and resources to various good causes."

Edward is the owner of George Bayntun, one of the world's most famous bookshops, established by his great-grandfather in Bath in 1894.



Left to right: Michelle Winter Teaching Fellow, Department of Social and Policy Sciences, Social Work students Joe Suckling and Sarah Gregson with carers Donna Amoah and Sue Comely.



Carers Get Involved

Carers can help the Carers' Centre raise awareness of the issues they face to the media, the public, health and social care professionals and funders. Getting carers involved helps create better understanding and develop local services for the better.

Students Learn From Carers

Carers regularly help first and second year Social Work students at the University of Bath to learn about what being a carer is like.

"It's a privilege to be able to meet and talk to carers," said student Sarah Gregson. "Hearing their stories helps us to think about better practice."

"Working directly with students brings the reality of caring right into the classroom," said carer Donna Amoah.

Carers' Help Required!

Bath Royal United Hospital needs carers of people who use the hospital to get involved in the Patient Experience Group.

Sirona Care and Health need carers to sit on their service user panel.

Carers UK wants carers to tell their stories to the press to raise awareness.

Please get in touch with the Centre if you would like to get involved.

Carers' Update

Trouble sleeping?

Researchers at the University of Bath are looking for people with mild Alzheimer's disease or dementia, and their carer, to take part in a new sleep study. Contact Lisa Austin on 01225 386575 or 07966 341354

Useful Websites

www.netbuddy.org.uk is an award-winning website for parents, carers and learning disability professionals. Log on for ideas, to swap tips and access information.

Extra Help After Hospital Discharge

The Hospital Discharge Support Service is working to provide home safety checks for vulnerable people after leaving hospital. Contact Somerset Care & Repair on 01749 345379

Help With Energy Bills

The Energy Advice Project offers home visits, one-to-one advice and group sessions. If you are struggling with utility bills contact 0117 954 3544

Computers for Carers

Carers may be eligible for support to obtain a refurbished computer at a greatly reduced price through PCXuk. Visit www.pcxuk.com or email jen@pcxuk.com if you are claiming:

- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Pension Credit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit
- Employment & Support Allowance
- Disability Element of the Working Tax Credits.

Diamond Travelcard

Free off-peak bus travel for older people and those with disabilities who live in Bath and North East Somerset. Please contact Council Connect on 01225 394041



Treasurer Bunny Harvey

Welcome to Bunny

Malcolm (Bunny) Harvey is the new Treasurer at the Carers' Centre, an important voluntary role within the charity's Board of Trustees.

Bunny has extensive business experience to help with the work of the Centre, plus he understands the issues faced by carers. "My mother had dementia so I know how important the role of carers is in society," said Bunny. "I'm tremendously impressed with the running of the Carers' Centre and proud to be able to help such a well-organised and effective organisation."

"The role of Treasurer in a charity is vital to oversee and monitor financial matters, ensuring money is used wisely," said Sonia Hutchison, Chief Executive. "We are pleased to welcome Bunny to the Carers' Centre."

Monthly Carer's Drop-in Services for confidential help, support and advice

First Wednesday

2.00pm to 4.00pm
The Atrium, Royal United Hospital,
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG

Second Wednesday

2.00pm to 4.00pm
Paulton Hospital, Salisbury Road,
Paulton, Bristol BS39 7SB

Fourth Wednesday

2.00pm to 4.00pm
St Martin's Hospital, Midford Road,
Bath BA2 5RP

First Saturday

10.00am to 12 noon
Oldfield Surgery, 45 Upper Oldfield
Park, Bath BA2 3HT

First Saturday

2.00pm to 4.00pm
Combe Ward, Royal United Hospital,
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG

First Thursday

2.00pm to 4.00pm
Combe Ward, Royal United Hospital,
Combe Park, Bath BA1 3NG

First Tuesday

9.00am to 11.00am
Keynsham Health Centre, St Clements
Road, Keynsham BS31 1AG

Sonia Says

The Carers' Centre is now preparing to bid for carers' services in Bath and North Somerset. The local Council and NHS Bath and North East Somerset have made it clear that they would like to combine a number of contracts into one.

The Carers' Centre is planning to work together with other organisations to ensure the views we have heard from carers through forums and questionnaires is reflected in the bid we make. There will be more news on this soon.

If you would like to comment on the detail there will be a forum on the 13th March to give you more information and get your views. Please see What's On to book your place.

We still have places on the London 10K run on the 8th July 2012. We will be taking a minibus up for runners - for a free place and transport we ask that runners raise a minimum of £250 to take part.

Chief Executive



Carers Help Improve Hospital Experience

A joint initiative from The Royal United Hospital and the Carers' Centre aims to benefit staff, patients and their carers during hospital stays. The Carers' Resource Pack contains vital information to help staff understand patients' needs and improve their experience at the hospital.

Neil Drinkwater from the Carers' Centre explained, "Carers are telling us that when a loved one goes into hospital, they want to be more involved in the decision-making around their care. The Carers' Resource Pack contains a questionnaire to be completed by the carer with useful information about the patient. This will help everyone work together and communicate more effectively as a team."

Through the Centre, the hospital asked for feedback from carers about how it could improve. The Carers' Resource Pack is part of a range of collaborative services developed as a result. Another improvement is a Carers' Officer based at the hospital, visiting patients on wards and providing their carers with information and advice about services that could help them.

"We are constantly finding new carers from across the region at the RUH," added Neil. "Looking after someone who is frail, ill or disabled can mean giving up work, struggling financially and damage to health for carers. They often don't realise there is help and support available."



Neil Drinkwater from the Carers' Centre, Dr Katherine Asplin, Chris Brasier - Charge Nurse and Ben Woodland - Nurse.

Dr Chris Dyer, Consultant Geriatrician at the RUH has been leading the launch of the new resource. "We are delighted to be working so closely with Carers' Centre and recognise carers as expert partners in the treatment and care of patients. Admission is a worrying time for vulnerable patients and their carers - the Carers' Resource Pack will help to ensure we understand their needs more clearly. We think this will be a big step forward."



**Contact
the Carers'
Centre**



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