

Volunteers'
Week &
Carers' Week
Special
Edition



Volunteers' News

Summer 2024



Carers
Leeds



Happy Volunteers' and Carers' Week

Valerie, Volunteer Co-ordinator/
News Editor



Hello Volunteers,

Welcome to this special edition dedicated to the incredible worlds of volunteering and caring.

This year Volunteers' Week celebrates 40 years, and volunteer Joan celebrates 25 years volunteering at Carers Leeds! Two amazing milestones!

This issue has heart-warming stories from two of our volunteers. Both sharing their journey from caring to volunteering filled with dedication, love and the complexities that come with caring for someone.

Additionally, there's news on two new volunteer ventures that are making our vision a reality, because of the dedication and positivity of our volunteers.

In this digital age, we are excited to welcome a new regular article 'Digital Volunteers' Corner' helping you to confidently explore the online world. We are also delighted to introduce you to Juliet, Project Coordinator, who is helping carers share their experiences.

Lastly, mark your calendars for our upcoming events and SharePoint training sessions. The sessions are a perfect opportunity to learn how to digitally access Carers Leeds news and volunteering resources.

This Volunteers' Week, on behalf of Carers Leeds, a heartfelt thank you for being part of our vibrant volunteer community. Together, we are creating a brighter more compassionate world for the carers we support.

Warmest wishes, Valerie



Long Service Awards 2024

Ann - 5 years

Bernadette - 5 years

Constance - 5 years

Diane I - 5 years

Dianne C - 20 years

Glynis - 5 Years

Irene - 15 years

Joan - 25 years

Mari - 5 years

Paul - 15 years

Total Years = 105!

≡ Welcome ≡

Let us introduce you to our new volunteers

Gail, Keeping In Touch Caller
Luke, Befriender

Sand, Befriender
Sajjid, Befriender

Thank you for choosing Carers Leeds. We're so happy to have you here.



Thank You, Volunteers

#volunteersweek



Valerie Banks Volunteer Co-ordinator/News Editor

Thank You to our volunteer proofreaders Christine, Irene and Ruth. And to our contributors Joan, Holly and Juliet.

Image Credit [Illustration 208735993](#) | [Heart](#) © Benjavisia Ruangvaree | [Dreamstime.com](#)

If you have any ideas for content, please email Valerie, Volunteer Coordinator (valerie.banks@carersleeds.org.uk) or give her a call (07985 754 570)

Celebrating Joan's Silver Jubilee: 25 years volunteering!



As Joan celebrates her 25 years of volunteering at Carers Leeds this year, we asked fellow volunteer Catherine to speak with Joan and learn more about her time with us. Joan is also celebrating her 86th birthday this year!

What did you do before you came to Carers Leeds?

I was a stay-at-home mum until my daughter was old enough not to need me at home. On Saturdays, I did office work at C&A until my husband was made redundant and we bought a business. When I was 49, we sold the business and bought a house. Needing a little bit of something to do, I saw the advert for a part time job as an ambulance driver. Having driven a car since I was 22, I began driving ambulances at the age of 50 and continued with them until the day of my 60th birthday, when I decided to retire.

How did you come to Carers Leeds?

When my lovely husband John's behaviour changed due to dementia, I was in my mid-fifties, and he was almost sixty. The dementia rapidly

advanced to the point where he needed 24-hour care.

I thought "I'd best go see if I can find a good care home", because I had seen a lot of awful ones when I drove an ambulance. Someone told me that Carers Leeds held inspection reports for care homes.

When I called into the Carers Leeds office, it was then located in Leeming House on Vicar Lane. I talked to a woman named Nora, who gave me a lot of support through lots of tissues and tears. Knowing that I would have spare time when my husband went into care, she encouraged me to volunteer. At that point, I began filling the carers newsletter into envelopes once a month. I met new people, and it was very nice.

What voluntary roles have you done for Carers Leeds over the years?

Following the move of the Carers Leeds offices to The Headrow, a new support group known as the "Moving On Group" was set up for bereaved carers. The group's leader, Jonathan, invited me to volunteer with the group.

After that, everything was wonderful; we had enjoyable trips and meetings at the office, we visited York and other interesting places, and I got to know a great bunch of people—some of whom I still see now, but sadly the majority have passed away.

I also met wonderful carers while volunteering as a Befriender. However, the project was closed down when the money ran out. I also took some carers from Morley for meals as a volunteer for the Carers Connections project. I now volunteer as a Support Group Assistant with Jan at the Garforth Carers Group. The group offers support to carers looking after a person with dementia. I welcome the carers and chat with them while preparing the tea and coffee. I now know what everyone's favourite brew is!

What has made you stay so long at Carers Leeds?

I believe in the work of the organisation, and I enjoy what I get out of it. It is great for me. After my husband John went into care, I started to make friends and made a life for myself. Being part of Carers Leeds has been a massive part of that and I've had some lovely times.

I'm very grateful for having had the chance to do what I do so that's why I stayed – because I enjoy what I do so much.

I also think people who work for Carers Leeds are very special people. They all have a way with them that makes you feel comfortable, welcome and appreciated. In addition, Val Hewison was lovely as our boss and made us feel good for volunteering.

What has been the highlight?

Oh my goodness. A lot! Perhaps travelling to London to meet with other carers from all over the country at a conference at the Hotel Café Royal, where we met Princess Alexandra, and Floella Benjamin, who is best known for children's shows like Play School and Play Away and is now a Baroness.

What advice would you offer to new volunteers?

Only do it if you really believe in it. You've got to want to do it. You have to make up your own mind. If you don't like it and it's not your thing, give it up and try something else. It is my thing and I am lucky enough to still continue volunteering. I've had some wonderful times.



A Heartfelt Thank You

"Congratulations on 25 incredible years of volunteering! Joan your unwavering commitment and passion have truly made an impact. Thank you for your dedication and for inspiring others through your service! And thank you for sharing your story."

EVENTS FOR VOLUNTEERS

SAVE THE DATES!



PRIDE PARADE

- Sunday 21 July
- Time to be confirmed
- Bring a friend, family or partner

VOLUNTEER PICNIC

- Thursday 22 August
- 12pm - 2pm
- Kirkstall Abbey
- Bring a friend, family, partner or pet



ASK CLAIRE

- Tues 23 July & Thurs 12 Sept
- Carers Leeds and Zoom
- Ask Claire, CEO, a burning question, raise an issue or offer an idea

From Vision to Reality: New Volunteering Ventures

by Valerie, Volunteer Coordinator



We are excited to announce two new initiatives aimed at strengthening our volunteer community and ensuring that every member feels welcomed, valued, and supported in their journey with us. As we continue to grow and evolve, these initiatives reflect our commitment to fostering meaningful connections and providing the best possible experience for our volunteers.

Welcome Conversations Scheme

One of the cornerstones of our volunteer programme is the warm and inclusive environment we strive to create for everyone who joins our organisation. To enhance this experience, we are introducing a Welcome Conversations scheme, a new initiative designed to personally greet and connect experienced volunteers with new volunteers and new members of staff.

The scheme has been co-designed with volunteer Catherine in her role as Volunteer Programme Assistant. Through co-design, Catherine contributed by helping to produce the scheme's proposal, looking into buddying schemes and assisting with the creation of a volunteer handbook and online evaluation forms.

The scheme is now going to be piloted and evaluated by a team of volunteers – Catherine, Christine, Dianne and Sue.

The conversations will offer a friendly introduction to our organisation, and answer any questions that new volunteers may have. Whether it's a brief chat over coffee or a virtual meet-and-greet, these conversations will serve as the first step in building lasting relationships and helping new volunteers and staff feel at home from day one.

Lead Trustee for Volunteers

In addition to our commitment to volunteer engagement, we are thrilled to welcome Rod, as our new Lead Trustee for Volunteers.

Rod brings a wealth of experience to the role, having volunteered for other organisations and serving as a Trustee at Carers Leeds since 2021. Additionally, Rod is a carer.

As Lead Trustee for Volunteers, Rod will champion our volunteer community at Board meetings. Rod is eager to get to know and hear from our volunteer team when you are volunteering, at meetings and events.

These new initiatives underscore our commitment to fostering a culture of collaboration, inclusivity, and mutual support within our volunteer community.

Join us in welcoming Rod as our new Lead Trustee for Volunteers and celebrating the launch of our Welcome Conversations scheme thanks to Catherine, Christine, Dianne and Sue. Together, we will continue to make a positive impact and build a brighter future for all.

We look forward to hearing from them all in future editions of the newsletter.



Catherine



Christine



Dianne



Sue



Rod

From Vision to Reality!

Coming this September, our first Volunteer Forum! It's your chance to shape the future, influence decisions, and help us turn our volunteering vision into reality!

Date to be revealed!

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

*SHAREPOINT AND SANDWICH

*Our digital hub for Carers Leeds and volunteer information and resources

Dates & Times

Mon 1st Jul 11-1

Tues 9th Jul 11-1

Wed 17th Jul 17:30-18:30

Thurs 25th Jul 11-1

Fri 2nd Aug 11-1

Mon 5th Aug 11-1

Tues 13th Aug 11-1

Trainer:

Ranbir Singh,
Communications Officer

Bring your own device:

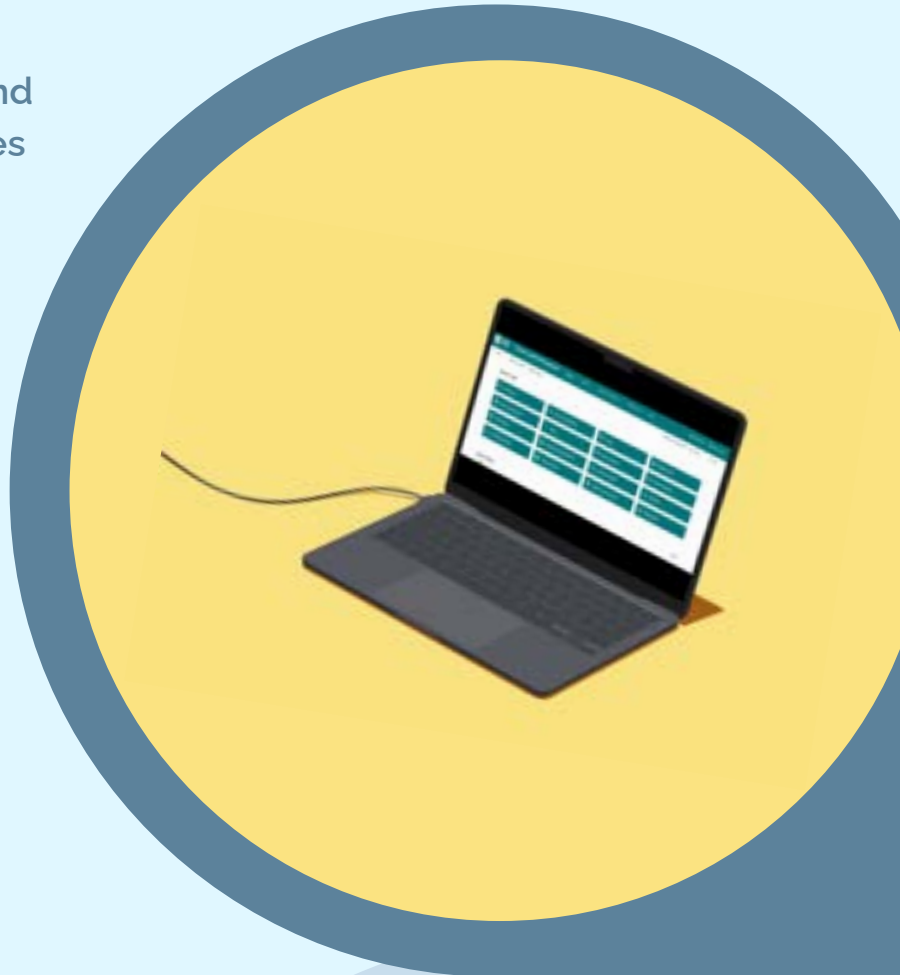
Laptop*

Smartphone

Tablet

*A laptop can be
provided on request

**TO BOOK A SESSION
CONTACT GAYLE,
HOLLY OR VALERIE**



You will learn:

- Introduction to Sharepoint
- Benefits to Carers Leeds and volunteers
- How to access the site and install the Sharepoint app
- How to confidently navigate pages to find news, documents and resources

Sandwiches and refreshments will be provided and travel expenses paid

Digital Volunteers Corner

by Holly Wilkins, Digital Inclusion Co-ordinator



Hi everyone! As you all know, our fabulous digital inclusion befrienders and I, love nothing more than to support carers to go online, and we'd love to extend our help to volunteers too.

Being connected can be practical in so many ways, as it can empower individuals to manage and improve their own finances, health, and social connections. However, going online doesn't always have to be endless forms and online banking – it can be an amazing tool to support your wellbeing and enrich your hobbies in a fun way too.

Perhaps you want to discover your roots and start a family tree, fancy picking up a new yoga hobby, want to listen to your favourite comedians, or just want to play a game of sudoku – you can do all that online!

With that in mind, take a look at my favourite recommendations below that will help you to 'dip your toe' into what the online world can offer, and hopefully you will find something that sparks your interest.

What are podcasts?

Podcasts are audio recordings – just like the radio – but you access them from your device wherever you like and listen to them in episodes. You can listen to an array of podcasts for free on apps such as Spotify.

Enjoy stand up comedy? There's a podcast for that! Prefer politics? There's a podcast! Health and wellbeing? You guessed it – there'll be a podcast for you! I love listening to podcasts whilst I drive and do house work, as it keeps my mind busy and helps me feel engaged whilst I get on with my day.

My top podcast recommendation is Zoe Science & Nutrition. Join the world's top scientists who explain the latest health, nutrition, and gut health research and translate it into practical advice to improve your health and weight.

Guests help to bust common myths and misconceptions about topics including ageing, dementia, gut health, inflammation and more. As you listen, you will learn lots about your own health and might be inspired to make some positive, impactful changes to your lifestyle

What are your favourite apps?

I have a range of apps I'd love to recommend. BorrowBox is perfect if you're a bookworm. Borrow e-books and audiobooks from your local library straight to your phone! All you need to do is log in with your library card credentials and away you go.

If crafts are your forte, Knitting Genius offers you free tutorials and helps you manage your knitting projects with row counters. I'm not very good but I'm trying to learn!

To support my mental health, I also use MindShift CBT which is a wellbeing app designed to manage anxiety, stress, and

negative thoughts. It includes tools such as a daily anxiety check-in and tracker, a thought journal, coping cards, and even a fear ladder that you can use to conquer fears.

Worry not if you're reading this and thinking 'but I'd like to feel more confident online first!' because you could try 'Learn My Way'. It is an amazing online learning platform aimed at beginners who would like to develop their digital skills. Explore topics such as employment, staying in touch with family and friends and much more.

I hope you found some of this useful and feel inspired to take some time for yourself this Volunteers Week by trying something kind or relaxing – you deserve it!

A final note from Holly:

As ever, if you have any questions or want to learn about anything in particular, please get in touch with me as I'm more than happy to help!

About Carers' Week



Carers' Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, highlight the challenges unpaid carers face, and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK.

It also helps people who don't think of themselves as having caring responsibilities, to identify as carers and access much-needed support.

The new theme for 2024, is 'Putting Carers on the Map.'

This theme aims to galvanize activity in a general election year, to highlight the increasing pressures on carers and to campaign for much-needed recognition and support.

Carers' Week is led by Carers UK, with the support of a number of other charities. Find out more on the Carers Week website www.carersweek.org



The State of Unpaid Caring in Leeds

Download our Annual Survey 2023 findings [here](#) or ask your Volunteer Supervisor for a printed copy

Helping carers share their experiences

We asked Juliet Prager, Project Co-ordinator to tell us about her work



I've been working as Project Co-ordinator for Carers Leeds since February 2024, and it's my job to help turn good ideas into practical projects.

I've worked in charities most of my adult life, and I've got a lot of experience of planning, delivering and reviewing projects. I think of projects like "making a patchwork quilt" – gathering all the fabrics, putting them together in the right order, adding layers and stitching everything firmly. Hopefully you end up with a quilt that's not just warm but also beautiful.

A year ago I was a full-time carer for my partner, and at the moment I'm a long-distance carer for his mother. So I know from first-hand experience some of the challenges and some of the joys. I know from hard experience that good ideas can't always become real. But I also know that exploring ideas together is never a waste of time.

One of my main areas of work is helping carers to share their experiences with other people. Carers Leeds wants the experience of carers to shape everything we do, and how we do it. We're keen to make sure carers influence our own services and support for carers; and also that the health and care services listen to carers and improve what they do. Sometimes we're asked to find carers willing to talk to the media, or to researchers. We also want to help carers share their own stories, because we know other carers can feel less alone and lost when they hear from people going through the same sort of thing.

I've also done a lot of volunteering – helping to organise children's holidays, advice work, and admin tasks. I want to say thank you to all the Carers Leeds volunteers. You make a big difference to the support that carers get in this city. So come and have a cuppa with me some time and share your good ideas – you never know where they might go.

A Caring Journey to Volunteering

A volunteer shares their carer story with Juliet

I cared for my mother for several years. My mother was a busy person. Her generation went through the war and she knew what it was like to experience air raids over Leeds. Bringing up four children she had to be a bit feisty, but her grandchildren gave her a new lease of life – she mellowed.

Mam lived very near me, so I often visited her. As she became unwell I helped every day, with meals, washing and dressing, watching TV together and keeping her company. I tried to go home in the evening, or sometimes at lunchtime, because other family members (and the cats) needed me. In the end I stayed with her most nights.

She didn't want paid carers in the house. Thankfully I'd already retired from work. I tried to be there for her, and in those years I knew there was no room for anything else. She was so grateful for what I could do, and spending this time with her was a comfort to me also.

Caring for Mam developed our bond. It was intense - we shared a lot and I got to know her really well. I found out things I wouldn't have known otherwise. She had good friends, she liked clothes and jewellery. We went on holiday together, and she loved sitting down with me to watch Dickinson's Real Deal.

Mam lived in the same home for 62 years, and was desperate to stay there, but she spent her last three months in hospital. It was not a good time, and so many things were done badly.

She was moved ten times between different wards; her property went missing, which she found really upsetting. I visited her every day. I'd been a nurse, so I knew what should be done. Even so, there were some very difficult times. Thankfully, the evening of her death was a very peaceful one, and I'm glad I was with her.

While she was in hospital I got in touch with Carers Leeds. It was a relief to talk with someone who understood. Afterwards, the support worker told me our experience had been a difficult one. Hearing that acknowledgement made a big difference to me.

The months after her death were a wasteland, and I felt lost. I was put in touch with the bereavement team - I had to wait quite a while for bereavement support but it was incredibly helpful when it came.

Looking back I think my anxiety had been growing during my mother's last years, but the hospital experience had a big impact. The anxiety means that now there are places I can't go, and people I can't see. I miss them, but it's too much some of the time.

Even though I thought I was a strong person, being a carer has affected my wellbeing. I'm naturally a loyal person, and I'm determined, like my mother. It's been a hard experience at times, and sadly the hospital system made it more difficult. But I wouldn't have done anything differently for her; that's me.

Things are slowly improving for me, and I've decided it's time to give something back, so I've offered to volunteer for Carers Leeds. I've really enjoyed the training, and I'm looking forward to volunteering. I'm a little nervous about how it'll go, but I think it'll feel good to share some of my experiences, as a nurse and as a family carer – and help other people who are going through similar things.



Carers do all this and more for family and friends who are older, ill or have a disability...



...all while trying to maintain a life of their own.

Help Build Carer Friendly Communities carersweek.org

61,500
unpaid
carers
in Leeds



Carers Leeds

Working together to support carers

Carers Leeds

6-8 The Headrow
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