

# Camden Carers Centre Newsletter

Spring 2012



**All the news for carers in Camden – see inside**

**CARERS' RIGHTS DAY EVENT**

On Friday 2nd December CCC hosted a Carers' Rights Day event which over 40 people attended. It was an opportunity for carers and those who work with or support them to meet staff from CCC, Crossroads and Centre 404. Some new carers came plus several care professionals and we all chatted about our work over cups of tea and slices of cake. We also had two very helpful presentations about the digital switchover taking place in April.

Thank you to all those who attended.

We have already started planning for Carers Week 2012. If you would like to be on the planning committee, or have any ideas, please contact me by phone or email [allegra@camdencarers.org.uk](mailto:allegra@camdencarers.org.uk) 020 7428 8950.

Once again Camden Carers Centre received several nominations for Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust awards. Caroline Allouf and Angela Edwards were nominated in the Support Worker category; last years' winners, the Mental Health Carer Support Group, also received a nod, and Camden carer Kate Harwood won outright in the Carer Award category. See cover photos.

**Front cover photo credits:**  
 1, 2 and 3: *Camden Crafty Carers*, by Jill Pay  
 4, 5 and 8: *Carers' Rights Day*, by Chris Hawking  
 6 and 7: *The Awards, Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust*  
 9: *CCV's 2nd birthday cake*, by Nik Masters  
 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15: *Carers' days out*, by Marina Allan

Camden's current carers' strategy was launched in 2007 following wide consultation with carers and statutory/voluntary sector organisations. They are now refreshing it and would like to hear your views on what you think should be included in the future strategy, which will run until 2016.

In June 2008 the Government published a national strategy, which set out a ten year vision to improve support for carers. This was refreshed two years later, resulting in the National Carers' Strategy 2010, 'Recognised, valued and supported: Next Steps for the Carers' Strategy'. It has four underlying messages: that carers should be identified and recognised; able to realise their potential; have a life outside the caring role and are supported to stay healthy. We think that the future Camden carer strategy should broadly follow the direction of the National Strategy. The suggested priority areas are listed below. To help us, we would like you to tell us:

- What you think we are doing well.
- Which services you have used that have been most helpful.
- What you think could be improved, and any other comments about future support for carers.

Please write, e-mail or phone the Commissioner for Carers' Services by the 15th February 2012.

*Karen Timperley, Strategic Commissioner, Carers Joint Commissioning and Strategy Bidborough House, 38-50 Bidborough Street WC1H 9BD.*

Tel: **020 7974 2807** or email: [karen.timperley@camden.gov.uk](mailto:karen.timperley@camden.gov.uk)

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Welcome to Carers' Training 2012 – an Olympic year for us all here in Camden! By the time you read this we will already be off the starting blocks, with some of you having attended the Personal Planning Day, taking the Creative Writing course at Bishopsgate Institute or other training events and activities.

The spring training programme is a pretty full one with a lot more for dementia carers. We have been very fortunate to have gained funding from the Department of Health, through the Princess Royal Trust for Carers (PRTC), to offer a five-session dementia carers training programme – I hope that those who attend will gain a lot from it. Also 'Remembering Together', the reminiscence project for people with dementia and their carers, has been a huge hit. We have a number of people to thank for the success of the project, including Pam Schweitzer and Sally Knocker, who secured the funding and pulled it all together.

The 'Camden Crafty Carers' sessions have also been proving very popular and some of the carers' work is shown on the CCC webpage 'Creative Carers'. Carers can choose from a number of different media to work in – collage, painting, knitting, embroidery, etc. – so there is something for everyone. If you are interested in joining in, just let the office know. We are also open to ideas for projects and donations of materials to keep up the momentum.

Coming up in March we have another of the popular 'Let Rip! Let Go!' days with Alan Margolis (training consultant and carer); as well as a 'Not a Care in the World' day with Nick Lewellyn of Advocrete – these are great fun and really do act as a distraction from everyday caring life.

You should have received the January to March training schedule before Christmas. However, if you need another copy, or still want to book a place on a training event, you can either contact the office or go to the Training page on the website and download one. Any feedback – in terms of what is on offer, timings, venues, etc. – is gratefully received, so please do not hesitate to contact myself or Deborah with your comments. I look forward to seeing you at a training day very soon.

*Jill Pay,  
Carers Training Coordinator*

2011 was quite a challenging year for me. In January I reluctantly accepted voluntary redundancy from my job. I had worked as an addiction counsellor for six years, supporting homeless clients, new to counselling, in rebuilding their lives from the devastating effects of substance misuse. This was a challenging role which I relished. As well as one-to-one counselling I facilitated therapeutic groups in life skills, e.g. self-esteem, confidence building, meditation, laughter yoga and ear acupuncture to name a few. I enjoyed creating a fun and relaxing environment which enhanced learning. I love group work, improvising, facilitating, organising and building a safe and creative space.

As a carer for my son, who has a dual diagnosis, I found it difficult to separate home life from work. On reflection I realise I had reached burn-out. I have always kept my professional life separate from my personal life. I shared the reality of my situation with my manager, who was supportive and reluctant to let me go. Initially I enjoyed the freedom of not working, but this was short lived, as I missed the structure of work, my clients and my colleagues. I felt redundant in my own life, not a comfortable feeling.

However every cloud has a silver lining: I was free to engage more with Camden Carers Centre. I enrolled in lots of courses which I was unable to attend when working. In Setting Healthy Boundaries I learned the importance of separating and owning 'my stuff'. I'm aware that healthy boundaries are the cornerstone in creating healthy relationships. Stress Management and Relaxation, Feel Good and Pamper Days are pure joy while Carers Rights and the Law was informative. Thanks, Jill, for making the courses informative, enjoyable and fun. I appreciated the opportunity to facilitate a Laughter Yoga class with carers who embraced the concept with good grace. I have made many new friends through attending the courses and they have been extremely supportive in the past year. Thanks. CCC has been a haven for me – long may it continue!

*Mary Geraghty,  
A Grateful Carer*



Photo: Angela Edwards

I am a 76 year old lady and I care for my adult son who suffers from mental health problems and learning difficulties. I have to say that my health has deteriorated but I still continue to support my son.



I fell asleep around 1 am last night thinking what can I do to help my son, who is in a Mental Health Unit. Why can he not get the consistent help he needs so that he can be more independent? I laid there and slowly drifted off to sleep.

In the morning I sat at the edge of the bed thinking, "Where should I start?!" I have a meeting at the hospital for my son, an appointment for myself at another hospital, and must go and check my bank balance.

It's cold outside, so I have to go and buy another jacket and shoes for my son as his clothes go missing in hospital. Also food, cigarettes – oh, yes, his £10 daily spend.

I will take a taxi as I am not feeling good today. I bathe, dress, drink a small hot drink, make phone calls and out the door I go. My days are always busy and I have to ask God every day for the strength.

Everywhere I went today I started with "I am sorry that I am slightly late as....." and a big smile. I went off to church this evening and then home. Good night, god bless.

*Mrs Flora Pike*



The 7th December meeting of CCV attracted 30 carers and former carers. Karen Timperley, Camden's Commissioner for Carers, came to discuss and seek input to the Carers' Strategy Refresh (see page 2). There were also updates on several items such as an Admiral Nurse for Camden, the School Carers' Project and Camden LINK.

Kate Harwood spoke about her experience of Camden's financial assessment (her letter was published in the CNJ on 1st December). Kate would like to hear from any carers who are self-funding to discuss the difficulties and anomalies. Please contact [camdencarersvoice@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:camdencarersvoice@yahoo.co.uk) or ring **020 7428 8966**.

The meeting marked two years of CCV and to celebrate Nik made a biryani and Kate baked a cake (see cover photo). Kate said a few words on how much she has enjoyed being involved and how she hopes CCV keeps growing, to become a strong grassroots campaigning voice for all carers in Camden.

The next meeting will be on **Wednesday 7th March, 10 am – 1 pm**, at Argenta House, NW3. Please phone Catherine on **020 7450 8966** if you would like to attend. A notice will be on the CCV page on CCC's website, as are full minutes of the 7th December meeting.

**From a CCC volunteer who has now moved on to paid employment.**

**Camden's Carers**

To all at Camden Carers' Centre,  
To Catherine Evans, who became my mentor,  
To all the team, who gladdened my heart,  
Now I have a brand new start,  
Now I look and you and say  
I can never just walk away.  
I am here, if you need me,  
You know I'm free and easy.  
To end this poem, all I do  
Is say I'm always there for you.

**By Frank Waters, December 2011.**

**CCV Steering Group Update**

CCV Steering Group is delighted to welcome its newest members: Sue Parry-Davies, Beverley Chambers and Carolyn Stevens.

**END THE CARE CRISIS: LOBBY 2012**

The Care and Support Alliance (a coalition of 50 organisations) has organised a mass lobby of Parliament for **Tuesday 6th March**. See website [www.carelobby2012.org.uk](http://www.carelobby2012.org.uk) for more information.

If you are unable to go in person, you can lobby your MP on that day by writing to them with your personal issues and how your caring role has affected you.

## TIME FOR A CHANGE!

I was on my way – to where? And with whom? Sitting on a tube train heading towards Hammersmith and the unknown, I felt a little uncertain, a little tired after settling my husband, Marco, with his new carer and also a little alone. Had I packed all that I thought I might need? My case was bulging, so I guessed so. Had I remembered everything for the carer and would Marco be OK?



Photo: Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust

Walking towards the house, I realised that I had over four days to do whatever I felt like doing, but it felt as if I had forgotten how to make decisions just for me! As the door opened, I was bathed in the warmth of the Kiloran welcome – a cup of tea, a tour of the house and a chance to talk. My room was light and warm, with its own bathroom ... a real haven and mine for the next few days.

The evening meal gave me the chance to meet the two other carers who were staying at Kiloran. Both had stayed there before, and they told me a little of what they planned on doing. They seemed so organised! I reminded myself of something that a friend had said to me just before I left: “Don’t organise too much. Remember you can just sit around and do what you want.”

A phone call home put my mind at rest. All seemed well. Now I could sit and watch a little TV and read before bed ... Wow, what luxury! No interruptions. But sleep didn’t come easily ... a different bed, different sounds and too many thoughts.

After a late breakfast I set off on a nostalgic trip. I had lived near Hammersmith when I was young and went to see if my house and school were still there. Although the factory opposite now had trees around it, our home had been ‘redeveloped’. So, off to my Primary School – maybe they would let me go in and see? They did, but it’s now a care home! Ironic, really. The Co-op is now a posh restaurant and the church a Montessori nursery! How things change!

The next few days passed like a strange dream. I met a couple of friends, went to some exhibitions, saw a film, walked across Kensington Gardens without rushing and stopped for coffee whenever I wanted.

The last morning, I felt a touch of sadness, but also a feeling of being privileged to have been given this precious time for myself.

Thank you Camden Carers Centre for offering me the chance to visit Kiloran. If you ever need a place to be looked after, you couldn’t do better than spending a few days at the Kiloran Trust house.

*Kate Harwood*

*(Kate won her stay at Kiloran in our Carers’ Week prize draw and kindly agreed to share the experience with all our readers.)*

## TRIANGLE OF CARE – ‘CARER AWARE’

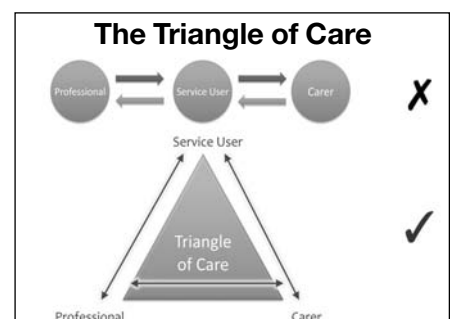
CCC’s Family and Carer Support Worker for Mental Health, Angela Edwards, clinical psychologist Dr Maddy Loat and Matron Anne Jumawan, are working together with the staff of the Huntley Centre, at St Pancras Hospital.

The Carers’ Awareness Forum meets monthly to support the staff on the mental health wards in recognising and engaging with the carers of inpatients, and to emphasise the importance of involving carers in the patient’s care plan and support.

The Huntley Centre has two Carers’ Champions on each ward. These members of staff take the

lead in encouraging other staff both to recognise carers and to make referrals to CCC. The introduction of monthly Carers’ Champion meetings is planned for 2012. There is also a ‘Carers’ Information Area’ on each ward.

The Triangle of Care tool is both constructive and productive and encourages positive working practices.



*Meryl Streep has been tipped for the Best Actress Oscar for her portrayal of Margaret Thatcher, but one Camden carer actually interviewed The Iron Lady at number 10 Downing Street. Here she writes about her impressions of the woman who rose to the top of British and world politics – and still divides opinion three decades later.*



Gender in politics, as in life, should not matter. Women achieve as much, and sometimes even more, than men. Margaret (now Baroness) Thatcher was a conviction-led Conservative; her time in government was full of both achievements and, some would say, wrong turns. Yet, the fact that she was a leader with vision is undeniable.

Many times from the House of Commons Press Gallery I had watched her lambast members of the Opposition, opening with “My Honourable friend ...” Now, on 10th June 1985, as Foreign News Correspondent with Worldwide Television News, I had the honour and privilege of being the only Latin American broadcaster to interview her in No. 10 Downing Street.

How do I remember her? As a very well-mannered British lady with a good-natured disposition and an amazing memory. She had a very bad cold yet, as a thorough professional, she did not cancel. Instead, she requested a make-up artist. The TV crew brought one from Pinewood Studios and she made Mrs Thatcher look her very best. At the shout of ‘Action!’ she sat up straight, uncrossed her legs, folded her hands in her lap and adopted the serious Mrs. Thatcher look.

The interview was beamed to the USA Hispanic and Latin American territories and later published in print, in Spanish and English. A phrase she used, picked up by author-economist Dr Luis Pazos, became famous for ushering in the British concept of privatization to Latin American economies. She said, “Business has to be in the hands of businessmen and women, not politicians”. She also said, “Never underestimate the value of housewives.” When I asked, “Is it hard to be a woman politician?” she replied, “Yes, they are all expecting one to make a mistake. You have to work twice as hard.”

At the end of filming the crew wanted her autograph; she personalised each one for all

their relatives, on Downing Street headed paper. She asked for the make-up artist’s card and popped it in the famous Handbag, leaving us then for the House and PM’s Question Time.

Apparently Meryl Streep said, while shooting the film, “I don’t know how she coped!” Mrs Thatcher survived on just a few hours sleep, with a punishing

work schedule. History will judge her. To some she is The Iron Lady, a sobriquet given to her during her ‘special relationship’ with Russian counterpart, Mikhail Gorbachev. To others she is the opponent of the Euro and European Federalism and the great ‘reformer’ of Britain’s industrial and manufacturing base. No wonder she is either hugely loved or tremendously hated. Having interviewed her, I respect and admire her as a distinguished head of state and a world leader.

Life is strange. Due to my darling mother’s very serious road traffic accident in 2009, I am now her sole carer. This means I have a new and challenging, yet very rewarding, role in life – which I am just as proud of as my other one.

*‘Maria’ Almendra McBride*

A longer version of this article can be found on the CCC website: Creative Carers page.

### ARE YOU ONLINE AT HOME?

More and more people are using the internet these days and at CCC we have been wondering whether some of our carers would like to receive an electronic version of the Newsletter? Although we do intend to continue publishing the print version, producing less would help us to save money on both print costs and postage.

If you feel happy to receive the Newsletter as an email attachment in future, please send us an email saying so – send it to: [info@camdencarers.org.uk](mailto:info@camdencarers.org.uk), put ‘Email me the Newsletter’ in the subject line and type your name in the message area.

Remember, you can look at the current (and last 24) issues of the Newsletter on CCC’s website. So if you are not sure, have a look at those and see if the format is all right for you.

Losing a loved one can present challenges that we are unprepared for. Whether the death is expected or unexpected the gap left behind can be quickly filled with a volume of emotions. Besides this, it takes time to adjust to the void remaining.

Most of us will experience bereavement at some stage in our lives and it is helpful to understand what we might go through. There are four stages associated with loss, which people experience in different ways, at different times and for different lengths of time.

### **Disbelief**

A sense of shock often follows the death of someone close: the emotion is so powerful that we are unable to absorb the reality of the situation, leading to a sense of immediate void and feelings of helplessness. People have described it as like being caught in a bubble, finding it difficult to understand how the world continues with its daily activities, oblivious to what is happening to us in our world. Others describe it as “overwhelming” – particularly if it is the first we have experienced. Conversely, some people report feeling very calm and organised, even relieved, especially if the death was a difficult one or the person had endured a long illness. That feeling of ‘relief’ can be a paradox, causing feelings of guilt. Why do we feel relieved? Of course we would not wish to lose the person, yet during a period of illness carers can feel as if they are suffering along with the cared-for. In this context a sense of ‘relief’ that suffering is over is understandable.

Coping and dealing with death is different for everyone, yet little can really prepare us for managing the associated emotions, as the tools to help us are not the kind we use in everyday life and the emotions can be just too raw.

### **Acceptance**

This period often involves ‘searching’ and ‘searching behaviour’. When we have lost someone we still search for them, think we have seen them from behind in a queue or standing at a bus-stop as we drive by, or heard them speak or call to us. Again, this can be paradoxical – part of us desperately wants to have the person back, yet when the reality becomes apparent, sadness and pain return. Many people report this, often commenting that they have never experienced it before. However, it is a common occurrence at a time of loss.

### **Feelings of despair or depression**

It would be unusual for us not to experience sadness and isolation at such a time. Some carers describe having lost their purpose and role, their pathway and meaning in life. This is unsurprising, given the often intense role of family and friend carers, perhaps supporting someone for a very long time, delaying aspects of their own life to do so. Carers can become so much a part of the cared-for’s life that the sudden loss leaves them feeling empty and confused. How to fill the days, all the unexpected time? Those who care for people with Alzheimer’s or dementia can experience gradual loss before the death, as these conditions take the person we know and love away from us over time. Bereaved people often describe doing, thinking or feeling things they find difficult to explain, for example:

- Talking to their loved ones, or laying the table for two.
- Worrying about dementia, as memory and concentration can be temporarily affected.
- Extreme tiredness.
- Guilt – could I have done more? What if ... Or they may forget the loved one as time passes.
- Guilt after a day when they have enjoyed themselves and not thought about the loved one.
- Feeling they have lost half of themselves; anxiety about going out socially or discovering a new identity.

All of these (and more) are not unusual during the process of loss and grieving.

### **Reorganisation**

People often say “Time is the great healer”. Yet this can be inappropriate when someone has experienced a death: emotions are raw and the bereaved can find it hard to imagine feeling healed from the pain. Realistically time does help, but it may not necessarily ‘heal’. Yet we do learn to find new meaning in life and remember the person we have lost without feeling overwhelmed by grief. This takes time, for some a very long time, and it is important not to be rushed at any of the stages. Acceptance of how a bereaved person is feeling can be a great support and very comforting.

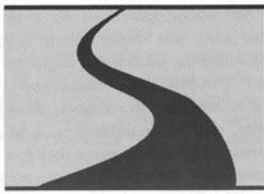
A question often asked is, "How long does grieving last?" There is no simple answer; it is very individual – one step forward, two steps back – until recovery gradually takes place. The process is painful. There will always be sadness but also happy memories. Life will never be the same, but that doesn't mean people can't move on and have a good life again. People often find a strength they never realised they had and surprise themselves with what they are able to achieve.

### What helps?

Again it is different for everybody, but support from friends and family helps with travelling the path to recovery. Aside from grief, people may experience emotions ranging from loss of self confidence or temporary forgetfulness through to anxiety, anger, guilt, panic/panic attacks or fear. Such feelings can be distressing but they are very common after bereavement. Making time to listen to bereaved carers is important and can be therapeutic for them, but some find it difficult to talk about loss. The key factor is to give them the opportunity to express their feelings and experiences and be listened to. An empathic and sensitive approach may be all that is needed, but only if that is what is wanted.

Those who have not experienced death may feel awkward, think it's best to avoid the subject or feel afraid of upsetting someone, even making them cry. Yet bereaved people can experience this as further isolation. It's best to judge the situation and time. When it feels appropriate, enquire how the person is doing. The response will help you to gauge whether they want to talk further. Uncertainty about what to say is a barrier which the bereaved can help to raise by being aware of it. Sometimes saying the words "loss" and "death" can actually be a relief, opening up a more comfortable place to start to listen and speak about what has happened.

Taking care of ourselves physically, socially, emotionally and psychologically is key to aiding recovery. Sleep may be troubled, dreams and memories can prevent sound restorative sleep, so resting and finding ways to relax is helpful, as is making the effort to nurture our physical selves with nutritious foods. Taking time to be with others when we need to be, and having space when we want it, are also therapeutic ways of caring for oneself. Getting out and about and taking light exercise, like a walk or



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visiting friends, can be useful and help us keep in touch with others. Just finding the motivation to do such things can be difficult, yet people often feel the benefit very quickly. For some it is also necessary to take care of spiritual needs, and this should not be forgotten.

Celebrating the life of those lost can also aid healing. It might start at the funeral/service or later, by collecting photographs evoking happier times, or looking

at things that bring us comfort and a sense of sentiment. Counselling also aids the process for some people.

### If you have recently been bereaved help is available:

Camden, City, Islington and Westminster Bereavement Service (CCIWBS) offers counselling and can be contacted on **020 7284 0090**, [www.bereavement-counselling.org](http://www.bereavement-counselling.org) or email [cciwbs@btconnect.com](mailto:cciwbs@btconnect.com)

For former carers, or those facing imminent loss, then staying in contact with others and seeking support may help. Contact CCC for advice and signposting to other helpful services and resources. **020 7428 8950** or [info@camdencarers.org.uk](mailto:info@camdencarers.org.uk) or [referrals@camdencarers.org.uk](mailto:referrals@camdencarers.org.uk)

Resources with thanks: CCIWBS leaflet; Stroke Association's Stroke and Bereavement Fact Sheet 23 and Marie Curie literature and personal experiences.

*Susan Burchell,  
Family Carer Support Worker (Stroke)  
Evelyn Blumenthal,  
Counsellor*

### Thoughts and feelings when we have lost someone special in our lives

When my dad was diagnosed with end stage heart failure, I didn't want to believe it. The professionals explained, but I still did not accept that this was the final stage in his life. He was always so strong, even up to the age of 89, but within nine months we noticed his health deteriorate. He was on oxygen all day as he found it difficult to breathe and his appetite was very poor. The only meals he could manage were soups, toast, tea and jelly, but at least he got some nourishment. He was very weak and, on the advice of health professionals, I or his carers escorted him to the kitchen/toilet as he wanted to get up from bed (otherwise he would have bedsores).

Dad died peacefully at home on the morning of 12 March 2011. My mother (who is mainly in bed) was in the same room, but as she has early stage dementia she did not know what was happening. My sisters and I were by dad's bedside when he took his final breath. He looked so peaceful and not in pain. We gave him a farewell kiss in our own way. We felt numb and did not believe our dad was no longer with us. We tried to keep busy, concentrating on mum, who didn't realise what had just happened. We gave her a bed-wash, dressed her, combed her hair, hoisted her into the wheelchair and brought her into the kitchen. We did not want her to be in the same room when the doctor came to certify dad's death. I was impressed by the manner of the funeral directors when they arrived to collect my dad – they said they were sorry they had to come to us.

### The role of family and friends in moving through the difficult time of loss

I could not have managed without the help of my family and friends during this difficult time. My two sisters, who live abroad, extended their stay so that they could be with me and mum, and my brother, sister-in-law and nephew were always there to offer help. The funeral arrangements kept us really busy – although we had arranged a pre-funeral plan there was still lots to do. My sister-in-law managed all the catering after dad's funeral and she also cooked for us at home. My brother's help in driving us wherever we wanted was invaluable. As is our tradition, he took us to department stores to buy black dresses, as we were all in mourning. Friends phoned and gave us comforting words.

### The support or value of organisations like Camden Carers Centre, Palliative Care Nurse, Marie Curie Hospice (Hampstead) and Carelink

I was so grateful to Marie Curie Hospice for looking after dad during his stay. The Liverpool Care Plan Pathway for patients in their end-of-life was followed. All the staff were exceptionally caring, nothing was too much trouble for them. Thanks also go to Susan Morris, Palliative Care Nurse, who helped us get a bed for dad at the Hospice, and particularly to Christopher McDonnell, who jointly organised with Susan for dad to come home to be with his family, this being his final dying wish. Our thanks also to Dr Anne-Marie, Dr Nicola, Dr Lambros Petrou, Ofilia (Staff Nurse) and the rest of the care personnel.



*Photo: George Fereos, courtesy of All Saints Greek Cathedral, Camden Town*

Camden Carers Centre was very supportive during this difficult time. I received a lot of comforting advice from Gavin Williams and

Tracie Stevens, both of whom had worked in Hospices. Tracie attended a case review of my dad at short notice and was instrumental in making sure that agreements were made and decisions acted on. During the last week of my father's life, Tracie was so kind to us. Her emails were always so welcome, especially when she sent me the breathing tool chart. My family and I were by dad's bedside when his breathing deteriorated and the chart gave us an understanding of the different stages in his breathing. Thank you, Camden Carers Centre, for being so supportive.

I wish to also express my gratitude to Mr. Aslam Ahmed from Carelink, who provided the carers for dad at home during the last week. They were so professional; nothing was too much trouble. We were also provided with an exceptional night sitter who alerted us when there was a problem.

### **The road to recovery – the gradual process of healing**

After my dad passed away I found I needed to be around my family, especially my mum. My parents were married for 67 years and I wanted mum to think about her life with dad and talk about him with me and my family. Dad was a chanter in the Greek Orthodox Church in Pratt Street and we all took comfort in listening to CDs with his wonderful voice. He had studied Byzantine church music and was very proud of his success. Shortly before he passed away, unknown to us, one of the priests interviewed dad and it was broadcast on Greek radio. When we heard it we cried, but at the same time wanted to listen to it again and again. This helped us as we felt he had led a very happy and contented life.

I find that I need to keep busy as this helps me to carry on, and thinking about dad helps too. Our home is full of photographs of him; we have a bookcase full of books in mum's room and also church icons which they collected over the years. My family and I have written a book about dad's life, 'Byzantine Music in the Light of History'. We have given copies to family, friends and colleagues. This kept us busy for a few months and it also helped our healing process. While writing articles about dad we felt he was still with us and wanting us to carry on with the book. We are proud of our dad and want family and friends to continue talking about him.

*Nitsa Skeffington*

Over the last year Government austerity measures and cutbacks have featured regularly in the national and local media. Health and social care have been affected, as have many voluntary organisations. Some of you may know that Camden's health service is now called (and part of) Central and North London Health.

CCC's Carers' Primary Care Development Co-ordinator (CPCDC) has been busy working with GP practices across Camden. In late 2011 posters and leaflets were delivered to 40 practices, along with the second edition of 'Supporting Carers'. This document, produced by the PRTC and Royal College of GPs, outlines how practices can improve the services they offer to family carers and lists suggestions to help carers approach their GP and practice staff for support. An electronic copy was also sent to each practice, plus a letter from CCC with up to date information about the needs of family and friend carers and how to support them.

To date the following practices have signed up to new pieces of development and partnership work with CCC. (An overview of the work is given below.)

### **Bloomsbury**

- has linked CCC work to their website, with our contact and referral details;
- displays a board with latest CCC information;
- includes paragraphs about CCC in their practice leaflet.

### **Fitzrovia**

- has agreed to link CCC information, web and referral details to their website;
- engage their two GP Link Workers with CCC, to refer more carers and work in partnership – continuing through 2012.

### **Gower Street**

- has linked CCC information, website and referral details to their website;
- downloaded a video, shown periodically on a TV screen in the waiting room;
- created a text message which flashes across the patient calling system;
- agreed a patient disease category for seeking hidden carers project partnership work with the CPCDC.

## PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUPS AND WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING IN THE PRIMARY CARE WORLD *continued*

### Abbey

- has updated the CCC display board with our information and help for carers;
- discussed how carers and patients can get involved in **Patient Participation Groups**.

**Patient Participation Groups** (PPGs) are a way of ensuring that GPs begin to meet their new obligations, in readiness for future registration and regulation, under the Health and Social Care Act 2008.

Carers and patients can participate in PPGs at their GP practice, to have a greater say and more direct involvement in services. They are ideal forums for carers to ask how 'Supporting Carers' will be used to improve services to family carers, as it will be a requirement that GPs consult and listen to patients and their families. (The Minister of Care Services, Paul Burstow, MP, has given assurance that local services must begin to demonstrate how they will meet the refreshed Carers' Strategy of 2010.)

Other work undertaken with all practices in Camden has included the following:

- Electronic email to every Practice Manager (PM) outlining how the practice can improve their service to carers;
- Individual Private and Confidential letters to every GP and PM in Camden outlining how to refer carers to CCC, what action they can take to improve services to carers, and encouraging them to ask carers to join the PPG.

New partnership work is being explored with Jackie Laidlaw, Centre Manager from Marie Curie Hospice – Eden Hall, on closer alliances for carers, and with Neeshma Shah, Lead Head of Medicines Management in Pharmacy, North Central London Health. Neeshma is based at St Pancras; she will be looking at a carers' campaign with local pharmacists.

The CPCDC has also been busy working with the Adult Community Nursing Teams, following agreements made with the Community District Nurse Provider Manager during the Health and Wellbeing Project. Carol Thompson, manager of district nursing services, has agreed the following work, now well under way:

- A joint letter from CCC and Carol to all community nurses in Camden, informing them of the partnership work.

- Presentations to the Senior District Nurse Leads and Community Matrons, followed by locality presentations with each team across Belsize Priory, Gospel Oak, Kentish Town and Hunter Street.
- Nurses given resources with CCC logo and contact details, to remind them to make referrals, plus two adhesive labels – one to be placed on each of the nurse's telephones and computers for prompts, the other stuck inside every new set of patient notes, so that family carers can see immediately how to contact CCC for support.
- The CCC leaflet has been inserted in the pocket of each set of patient files so that carers can self-refer; nurses having been provided with a stock of leaflets.
- CCC posters in all four of the District Nurse Team offices, along with the referral form and electronic referral details, on the nurses' shared drive.
- All nurses have received a batch of referral forms and Freepost envelopes to return them, and have been told they can also fax referrals.
- The CPCDC has offered free carer awareness training to new community nurses as part of their induction programme. This has been agreed but is still awaiting action, as Carol has been involved in a large recruitment drive for community nursing staff.
- The CPCDC has also supported several Carer Support Workers with complex cases involving the local nursing teams and the Bladder and Bowel service.

*Tracie Stevens,  
Carers' Primary Care Development Co-ordinator*

### **Contributions requested!**

Would you like to share a day in your life, or an experience that might inform, amuse or entertain other carers? If so, please send up to 250 words to Deborah Knight, Camden Carers Centre, 293-299 Kentish Town Road, NW5 2TJ or email it to:

**info@camdencarers.org.uk** – a photograph would also be welcome.

Emily Holzhausen (Policy Director, Carers UK) and Liz Fenton (Princess Royal Trust for Carers) were invited to give evidence on carers' experiences of health and social care services to the Select Committee. This is a brief summary of the issues they highlighted.

- The committee were reminded that carers save the government £119bn annually.
- There is a growing number of 'distance carers' who spend a lot of time travelling (often anxiously) to and from those they care for. One carer posted on Twitter that she regularly travels by ferry to support someone with hospital appointments, food shopping, etc.
- Professionals in the care field get full training to do their job, while many carers are just left to work it all out for themselves, which often puts both carer and cared-for at risk.
- Cuts to services, coupled with increased charges (12.5% national average), mean that carers who are unable to pay for replacement care just take on more.
- Those who are in paid employment are particularly stretched by increased charges and cuts, making it more difficult to continue working.
- The financial impact of caring is therefore increasing, not decreasing, with many more carers facing a life of debt, reduced pensions and negative effect on their health and wellbeing.
- NHS funding has increased year-on-year while Social Care funding has not, and so fails to meet the increasing demand on resources. This adds pressure to carers, who often have to fill the gap.
- Carers are often unaware of the continuing impact on their health and well-being that the demands of a caring role can have.
- Adults caring for adults now have better rights in law, while parent-carers of disabled children and young carers (two very important groups) still have fewer rights and are often forgotten.
- All too often caring remains a private family matter, whereas carers and their families do much better with increased public knowledge of what is involved. Therefore raising public awareness can only be good for carers and their families.
- There are some very strong positive aspects to caring which are not always highlighted and

many carers are very happy in their role; however these carers' situations may be threatened if the support they rely on is cut. There is still a problem, nationally, with the 'postcode lottery' of carer support – indeed support for all those in need – with some areas of real deprivation and others doing a lot better. There is often a call for national eligibility criteria and rights to a certain level of service that can be expected. If people move from one area to another (often to support family members) there is presently no portability of services.

### **FREE WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS AND CARERS OF PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES**

#### **Personal Budgets and Support Planning**

- Understand what personal budgets are about.
- Learn how to make good support plans, to ensure your loved one gets the best support.

**21st and 28th February or 15th and 22nd March (each is two parts)**

#### **PERSON CENTRED REVIEWS**

How to make sure that your loved one's review makes a real difference to their life.

**14th February and 8th March**

All courses at St Luke's Church Hall, Hillmarton Road, N7 9RE, 10.30 – 1.30, with a light lunch.

For booking and details please contact Lee Hubbard – Family Support Team, Centre 404. Tel: **020 7697 1337** or email: [leeh@centre404.org.uk](mailto:leeh@centre404.org.uk)

For further information or to join the wider caring community, you might like to look at the following useful links:

- Princess Royal Trust for Carers: [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org);
- Carers UK: [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org);
- Crossroads Care National: [www.crossroadscare.org.uk](http://www.crossroadscare.org.uk);
- on Twitter: **@CarersTweets** and **@CarersUK**
- on Facebook: The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Carers UK both have pages;
- Gordon Conochie of PRTC and Crossroads Care has a regular blog on <http://carersblog.wordpress.com/>

### FROM SUSAN BURCHELL AND CIARE REYNOLDS – Family and Carer Support Workers (Stroke)

Some of you will know that Rosanna Thurlow left her post as F&CSW for stroke at the end of August. Since September Susan Burchell has been back in the post, working Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. The good news is that Ciare Reynolds, who some of you already know, is now covering the role on Mondays and Tuesdays!

We offer advocacy, information and emotional support to carers of people who have had a stroke and who live in Camden. We can liaise with health professionals and social services on your behalf, and we can put you in touch with welfare benefits advisors or more specialist services for stroke, should you require them.

**We also run trips for carers and stroke survivors** – some of you have already joined us for the museums visit with afternoon tea and the Cologne Christmas Market at the South Bank. We will be organising more trips in 2012 – we hope to get to the seaside and to some green spaces!

If you are caring for somebody who has had a stroke and you would like support with a specific issue, or just to join us on a day trip, please call **020 7428 8950** and ask for Ciare or Susan.

### THE CAMDEN HANDYPERSON AND SAFETY PROJECT

The Camden Handyperson Project is part of the Home Improvement Agency, run for Camden Council by Origin Housing.

It is a scheme whereby Camden residents aged 55 or more, and disabled people of any age, can get minor household jobs done at an affordable rate (£10 per hour, with a minimum charge of £10).

Enquire by phone on **020 7284 5450** or e-mail [hia@originhousing.org.uk](mailto:hia@originhousing.org.uk)

### TIME TO TALK

CCC's counselling service Time to Talk offers the chance to talk things over with a counsellor who understands the difficulties and problems with which carers have to live. Counselling is about providing a safe space and an understanding ear to help explore ways of working through the difficult feelings that can arise in a carers' life.

In addition to the existing counsellor, Evelyn Blumenthal, we now have four more, all in their final year of training and all supervised regularly by Evelyn. This means we can offer a more flexible service, including seeing carers on Tuesday evenings.

If you are interested in Time to Talk and would like to know more, please ring Deborah at the CCC office on **020 7428 8950** or speak to your Carer Support Worker.

### HEALTHWATCH CAMDEN

HealthWatch Camden is to be a new local champion for people who use health and adult social care services in the borough. Its role will be to help local people make their views heard in order that services can be better designed for the users. HealthWatch Camden will be independent, but it's the council's responsibility to make sure it is set up and runs effectively.

The council wishes to involve as many people as possible, to determine what HealthWatch Camden should look like and the types of things it might do. You may wish to take part in the online consultation. Or, if you have been involved in previous discussions about HealthWatch (or its predecessor, 'Local Involvement Networks'), you might find it more useful to follow and contribute on the interactive site.

For more information, contact Rachel Kelly (Project Manager) by phone on **020 7974 5321** or email: [rachel.kelly@camden.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.kelly@camden.gov.uk)

### PHYSICAL DISABILITIES FORUM

The next Physical Disabilities Forum will take place at 2pm on Wednesday 22nd February 2012. The venue is Kingsgate Resource Centre, 208 Webheath, Netherwood Street, NW6 2JU.

To confirm attendance, or if you require further information, please contact Valeria Carrizo Collie on **020 7974 2972**, textphone **020 7974 6866** or email: [valeria.carrizocollie@camden.gov.uk](mailto:valeria.carrizocollie@camden.gov.uk)

## CARERS HEALTH AND WELLBEING PILOT PROJECT

During 2010-11 Camden Carers Centre, in partnership with LB of Camden and Crossroads Care, Camden, was part of a national research pilot to look at how carers can be better supported. Camden ran a Carers Health and Wellbeing Pilot that offered health and wellbeing checks to carers. The local evaluation of the project found that 67% of carers who had a H&WB check had improved wellbeing when surveyed six months later.

The full local evaluation of this project will be available from January 2012 and will be posted on both Camden's and CCC's websites. If you would like to receive a paper copy of the evaluation, please ring **020 7974 2807**.

## DEMENTIA CARERS GROUP

CCC's dementia carers' group now meets monthly, from 11 am–3 pm, at Argenta House, 1 Aspern Grove, NW3 (off Haverstock Hill). As well as catching up with fellow carers and getting mutual support through the group, we aim to have a slot during each meeting for a speaker on a particular issue or aspect of dementia caring.

The next meeting is on **Wednesday 15th February**. The Dementia Lead Nurse from University College Hospital will talk about supporting someone with dementia in hospital. On **Wednesday 14th March** someone from Age UK, Camden, is coming to talk about Direct Payments. CCC will provide refreshments and lunch.

Dates for the next few meetings will be published in the April to July training schedule, so please look out for those. If you have any suggestions for subjects to discuss and/or speakers to invite, please let Jill, Caroline or Deborah at the CCC office know. Also, we would like to organise a social event in the spring or early summer – so any ideas for that would be most welcome.

On a practical note, if you do want to come along to a meeting, could you let the office know, so we have an idea of how many to cater for? We look forward to seeing you at the group.

## WELCOME TO WAIN

Wain is a post-graduate social work student at Brunel University. She will be on placement with us for four days a week until the end of July.

## FREE ACTIVITIES WITH CREATIVE HEALTH LAB



Due to funding uncertainties, this innovative community service may only run until the end of March. We currently provide free weekly art therapy, creative writing, art, horticulture, singing, filmmaking and yoga and relaxation sessions. No experience is necessary as the groups focus on the process of creating.

Open to all Camden residents, our activities encourage an exploratory approach to wellbeing by stimulating creativity, raising self-esteem and mood, promoting physical health and relaxation, enhancing self-awareness and reducing feelings of isolation. Led by friendly, qualified, experienced practitioners, they can support people experiencing general stress as well those recovering from mental or physical health issues.

We feel that exploring your creativity within a supportive group environment can really help take your mind off day-to-day worries and concerns. If you're interested in any of the above activities and would like to take advantage of them before they disappear – contact us on: **020 8888 6293**, email: [info@creativehealthlab.com](mailto:info@creativehealthlab.com) or visit [www.creativehealthlab.com](http://www.creativehealthlab.com) for more information.

## BRITISH MUSEUM 'BEHIND THE SCENES' VISITS AND EXHIBITION PREVIEWS

CCC's active participation in the British Museum's Community Outreach Project continues with an 'object handling' session on Friday 2nd March. If you would like to join a group of carers and get 'hands on' with art works from the museum's teaching collection, please ring the office and let Deborah know. The last community exhibition preview in late January was 'Haaj: Journey to the heart of Islam.' You can read reviews by carers of this and the previous exhibition, 'The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman', on the Activities page of CCC's website.

THE  
BRITISH  
MUSEUM

*Camden Carers Centre takes care in compiling the Newsletter and responsibility cannot be taken for any action arising from information given on the pages. We therefore urge carers to thoroughly investigate all providers of services before entering into any commitments.*

## **CHARLIE RATCHFORD CENTRE**

### **ACTIVITIES FOR CARERS AND PEOPLE OF 55+ RESIDENT IN CAMDEN**

#### **SPANISH LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Learn Spanish in a mixed group, including carers, on **Mondays** from **10 am – 11 am**. Contact Miguel Angel Alforcea. Email: [dsgangels@hotmail.com](mailto:dsgangels@hotmail.com)

#### **POETRY**

Read and discuss poems and poetry in a lively and friendly atmosphere – and perhaps feel inspired to write your own! This mixed group, including carers, meets on **Fridays, 10 am – 11 am**.

#### **RELAXATION CLASSES**

Try relaxation techniques to relieve stress and anxiety, provide balance and calm, leading to a healthier wellbeing. A mixed group meeting on **Wednesdays, 11 am – 12.30 pm**.

#### **STRESS MANAGEMENT**

Try a one-to-one session with a qualified worker who can offer emotional support and stress management techniques. All areas are covered, including depression, anxiety, panic etc. The sessions are available by appointment, made by ringing the Centre (details below).

#### **TAI CHI FOR CARERS**

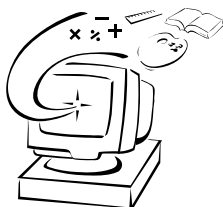
Tai Chi is a form of gentle exercise, an excellent way of relaxing and improving your balance, posture and mobility. Free Tai Chi classes for carers take place on **Mondays, 11 am – 1 pm**. Classes are informal – you don't need to be experienced and you don't have to commit to attending every session. Wear loose clothing and just come along and join in.



#### **COMPUTER LEARNING**

Learn how to use computers and programmes as well as the Internet at drop-in sessions on **Fridays, 10 am – 1 pm**. Please ring the Centre for other drop-in session times.

Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre is on Belmont Street, NW1 8HF (off Chalk Farm Road). For information on all classes and groups please call **020 7485 2968**.



## **ACTIVITIES FOR PEOPLE AND CARERS OF 50+ AT KINGSGATE RESOURCE CENTRE**

- Women's exercise class – **Mondays, 11 am – 12 pm**. Gentle chair based exercise class aims to improve flexibility and strength.
- Men's exercise class – **Thursdays, 2 pm – 3 pm**. Exercises with and without dynabands, to build up muscle strength and improve flexibility.
- Mixed exercise class – **Tuesdays, 11 am – 12 pm**. A little stronger, good for balance. Taught by Camden Active Health Team, there is a £1.40 charge.
- Tai Chi – **Mondays, 11 am – 12 pm**. Gentle sessions designed to make you feel more energised, refreshed and balanced. Taught by Camden Active Health Team, there is a £1.40 charge.
- Singing for 50+ – **Wednesdays, 1.30 pm – 2.30 pm**.
- Pet therapy – alternate **Fridays, 1 pm – 2 pm**.
- Health talks for over 50s – monthly on **Mondays, 10.30 am – 11.30 am**.
- Memory exercise group – **Mondays, 1.30 pm – 2.30 pm**. Mental exercises to improve the memory.
- Family history course – **Mondays, 10 am – 12 pm**. How to trace ancestors and create a family tree using computers. Please ring the centre to enrol.

Kingsgate Resource Centre is at 208 Webheath, Palmerston Road, NW6 2JU.

If you are interested in any activity or want to know more, please phone **020 7624 8818**. And if you attend any afternoon activity you can enjoy a 3-course lunch for only £3.10! Please ring the same number by 11 am on the day.



## CARERS' SUPPORT GROUPS RUN BY CAMDEN CARERS CENTRE

**For all carers** – The longest-established support group run by Camden Carers Centre meets at **'Mind' in Camden, Barnes House**, 9-11 Camden Road, NW1 9LQ on **second and fourth Wednesdays**, from **10.30 am – 12 noon**. The group is carer-led; activities include occasional invited speakers and days out.

*For further information please phone 020 7428 8950.*

### **For African and Caribbean carers**

Meets on the first **Friday** of the month at **Peckwater Centre**, 6 Peckwater Street, Kentish Town, NW5 2UP, from **10.30 am – 12.30 pm**.

*Please contact Angela Edwards on 020 3317 6702.*

### **For carers of people with dementia**

Camden Carers Centre's dementia carers' group now meets once a month, on a Wednesday, from **11 am – 3 pm** at Argenta House, 1 Aspern Grove, NW3 (off Haverstock Hill). Please see page 14 for more information about the group, and ring the CCC office if you wish to attend.



## OTHER CARERS' SUPPORT GROUPS IN CAMDEN

### **For carers of people experiencing mental distress**

A support group for carers of people with mental health problems meets at **Peckwater Centre**, on the **second Tuesday** of the month between **10.30 am** and **12.30 pm**.

**Carers' awareness session** (formerly at the Grove Centre) will be held at **The Huntley Centre, St Pancras Hospital**, 4 St Pancras Way, NW1 0PE, **2 – 3 pm**, **second Monday** of the month.

*For the above please contact Angela Edwards on 020 3317 6702.*

**Mind in Camden** provides a 'Carers Space' where carers of people with mental health issues can be supported by a qualified therapist on a one-to-one basis. Carers Space will be on **Monday evenings** at Barnes House, 9-15 Camden Road, NW1 9LQ.

*Booking is necessary. Please phone or text Richard Oliver on 07956 418 601 if you are interested.*



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If you have access to the Internet, Camden Carers has its own website at **[www.camdencarers.org.uk](http://www.camdencarers.org.uk)**

We are interested in carers' views of the site – and also welcome suggestions for new content. Please contact **Deborah Knight** on **020 7428 8950** or email **[info@camdencarers.org.uk](mailto:info@camdencarers.org.uk)**

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**We welcome contributions** to the Newsletter. Please send us your letters, poems or articles. Phone Deborah on **020 7428 8950** or email them to **[info@camdencarers.org.uk](mailto:info@camdencarers.org.uk)** – or you can post them to the CCC office.

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*Camden Carers Centre is now open until 7 pm on Tuesdays.*

### **CAMDEN CARERS CENTRE**

**Tel: 020 7428 8950**

**Email: [info@camdencarers.org.uk](mailto:info@camdencarers.org.uk)**

**Web: [www.camdencarers.org.uk](http://www.camdencarers.org.uk)**

