



## Chief Officer's Update - Dave Williams



The arrival of the unwelcome guest of Covid 19 has forced many of us to find new ways to safely continue to care. Shielding, social distancing and new mantras such as "HANDS FACE SPACE" have formed part of our everyday vocabulary.

Here at Manchester Carers Forum we very quickly learned to respond to the challenges using tried and tested ways to speak with carers as well as learning new virtual skills such as ZOOM and other internet based applications. Our organised walks have enabled those who are able to meet and exercise and socialise in a safe way. We have had to postpone our regular group meetings and our planned visits to theatres, as well as a trip to Llandudno. We look forward to picking them up again once we are through this pandemic.

We have tried to support carers with whom we have already been in contact as well as making new relationships with those for whom the new situation has proved all too difficult to manage alone.

AND YET we are still here! Over the past months Manchester Carers Forum has been

actively engaged in working with others to expand the work of the Carers Manchester Network and establish the Carers Manchester Contact Point. More recently we have been successful in beginning to develop the Carers Local Offer in South Manchester which we aim to have functioning in the New Year. Together with the City Council and Manchester Carers Centre we have supported the development of an Carers Hardship Fund for those carers who find themselves in difficulty during these very trying and testing times.

Yes the present times are hard and challenging, yet we are proud of those carers in Manchester who continue to rise to the challenge of providing care and support to some of the most vulnerable of our citizens. As ever, MCF will press for carers to have the support that is needed to keep them safe and well so that our vital role in the ongoing work to ensure that we come through this demanding time so that we can look forward to better times ahead.



## Message from our Chair - Gaynor Morgan

As a carer and in my role as a Chair of MCF, I understand the value of connecting with carers. I personally, have found this

to be more important during these challenging times. Change is unsettling for anyone. However, for a carer one of the biggest stresses is not knowing how this change might impact the support that is available to the person they care for and how they/you are going to cope with this change. Being connected in with others, helps to normalise what is happening around us, and helps us not to feel alone. I am proud of the Staff at Manchester Carers Forum and the efforts that they have put into place to continue to make that

Contact with Carers, to keep them up to date with changes, and to help them feel less isolated. We have been working with the Carers Network promoting events and support that are available to Carers via All FM. Our telephone support line has continued during lockdown, and Carers who have attended our groups have been contacted with a friendly "Hello! How are you?". We have tried out zoom meetings, and taken steps to get people together again in groups thanks to our partnership work with the Ramblers and Stepping Out. So yes, it is a challenging time, and yes, we don't know what the future holds. However, we continue to think of carers and support them in the best way we possibly can during these unprecedented times.

# It's been a year of change...

## Stories from a Carer's Perspective



Sue Samson

**“Being separated from the person you care for in lockdown made me realise how much I did...”**  
**Says Sue Samson**

I'm in my 70's now and ended up taking on the caring for my sister who has Down's syndrome many moons ago.

As people are now living longer and living better, my sister, Linda has outlived what she was expected to as someone with Downs Syndrome. However, as I have got older the challenge of caring for her has become too much to cope with. Around November 2019 my sister, Linda ended up in hospital with a either a fall or a fit, we are uncertain which, along with 3 fractures in her spine. I'd been going into feed her, as not only has she got Down's Syndrome, but she has developed Dementia; which came on rather quickly.

I'm getting older myself now, and I just thought, “I can't look after her any longer”. There were so many thoughts going through my head. Social Services were great and helped me transition her into a care home. It wasn't easy, I didn't know if she would cope, but she has and the care staff are great.

Now we are in lockdown we talk nearly every day on the phone. The challenges I have faced being separated from her are mixed. It's a relief now that she seems settled, and at the beginning of lockdown it gave me an opportunity to just stop and take some time for myself.

Once lockdown is lifted I will be plenty busy again organising and looking for a new place for her to live as this is only temporary. Along with getting my hip replaced...there's always something happening it seems.

**“It's no big Change”...**  
**says Gordon**

“Gordon has been a carer for his wife for several years. She has a brain cyst which causes in-numerable physical difficulties, along with, at times low mood (quite understandably). In his former life Gordon was a mental health nurse, a sports enthusiast, and had a passion for travel.

He has found lockdown hasn't caused that many changes for him and his wife. He does miss coming to the Carers Support Group which runs once a month, however, other than that the “day to day life is pretty much the same”, he says. Him and his wife go for a stroll in the gardens, they enjoy cooking, and Gordon likes window shopping, “although not a lot of window shopping is happening these days” he says.

What he misses most under the lockdown is the day trips out; even if it's to Bury Market to walk around the shops, have a look and find anything that takes his fancy, or perhaps a day trip to Burnley to get some decent cakes.

They are both looking forward to the Support Groups returning. Gordon enjoys being social with other people who know the struggles that caring for a loved one can bring. “I really like meeting up in Marks and Spencer and just going out for the day, it perks me up and is a real treat.” He finds the guest speakers and tips that he picks up from fellow Carers useful when navigating through new situations; it gives him an insight into what challenges might be ahead for him so he can prepare. His wife chuckles, “I enjoy the peace when he's out the house! Can you make the meetings more regular?” she jokes.

“Taking a break for me provides that change of scenery. It allows me to take a break from everyday life and the challenges that we face together with my wife's condition. It allows me to re-charge my batteries, so we can get on with life and enjoy another day together” Gordon says.

# Making the best of what we've got...

## *The Carers Support Service in Lockdown*

### **One to One Support The Telephone Support Line**

At Manchester Carers Forum we connect carers to other carers who offer a listening ear and support. We can also point you in the right direction if you need specific information. During lockdown we have kept our support lines running, as this service was more vital than ever.

If you are a carer and want some support why not call us on 07415436382 to register.

### **A new service...Carers Manchester Contact Point**

This Service has enabled four organisations to come together to provide a single contact point for carers in Manchester to access information support and advice. In addition to being a first point of contact, the service will be able to signpost you to services which are there to assist you in your caring role. It will also be able to give advice on a number of issues which may be challenging you, a listening ear as well as being a focus for practical support. For further information call Carers Manchester Contact Point on: 0161 543 8000

### **Day Trips and Weekends away**

We run day trips during the year to give you a chance to have a bit of time for yourself. Unfortunately these have had to be postponed due to government guidelines.

However, never fear...we are on the case and as soon as restrictions allow we look forward to organising some more opportunities or you to take a break.



The team; before lockdown! Ian, Hannah, Miriam and Daniel

### **Monthly Groups**

We have several groups across Manchester each month, offering a friendly environment where carers share tips and provide support to each other refreshments. We often have guest speakers or training sessions on topics that affect you and the person you care for.

During lockdown we have done some zoom meetings and met people in the fresh air across the city going on walks, allowing people to meet up.

### **Walks...Fancy a stroll in the Park?**

In Partnership with the Ramblers and Stepping Out we now organise walks throughout the year.

Walks are usually through parks in Manchester, are accessible and usually end with lunch.

In lockdown times, we have had to apply social distancing measures, this however, has not stopped us getting out!

### **Have your Say...**

Carers are at the heart of what we do. This year we are unable to have an event, so we are waving "Hello" with this newsletter. In the New Year we will be sending out a questionnaire for you to fill in to give us some feedback on how you would like things to look next year.

We very much look forward to hearing from you!

# Picture Highlights and Comments...



**'I really enjoyed getting out of the house and meeting other people. It took a lot for me to come out today as I didn't know anyone and I felt really anxious at first but I'm definitely glad I did it.'**



**'It was lovely to get out into a green space. Most important a chance to chat with other Carers. After a few hellish months of isolation the meet up was fabulous.'**



**'This walk has been a Godsend. Yesterday was a very stressful day and I nearly decided not to come out today but it's been good to get out and see people.'**



## MCF Finance 2019/20

As our annual accounts are still with the auditors we are not able to include an up to date end of year breakdown of spending for the financial year 2019-20. If you would like a copy of our audited accounts then please let us know and we will send you a copy as soon as they become available.

## Thanks to our funders...

**Many thanks to our funders over the previous 12 months!**

