



## Frequently asked Questions about Carers Together 2016

### What is Carers Together?

- Carers Together is a Hampshire wide organisation that has been operational for over twenty years and has its main base in Romsey.
- It was started in December 1993, when a meeting of carers from all over Hampshire decided there was a need for a countywide network of carers, carers groups and organisations.
- Following this initial meeting, a small working party formed to investigate how a countywide consortium could develop; this resulted in the name 'Carers Together' and the outline aims and objectives being established.
- Consultation with carers and carers groups across Hampshire ensued and the organisation was launched in November 1994, becoming a registered charity in 1995.
- Carers Together aims to highlight the needs and represent the views of carers across the whole of Hampshire.
- It involves carers from across the geographical county of Hampshire and all care groups are represented on the management committee.

### Why did it develop?

There were several reasons for the development of a county group: -

- To develop the profile of carers in the county
- To form a larger and stronger voice for carers
- To support and promote the development of local carers support groups/forums to offer carers local support and an opportunity to express their views in their own area
- To ensure local networks are linked together and are able to take a broader strategic view and to represent that view at a wider county level.
- To enable carers to form a strong cohesive partnership to ensure their needs are met.
- To be an umbrella organisation for carers and carers groups in Hampshire

### What are its aims?

The aims of Carers Together are to

- Empower and enable carers (of all ages and regardless of whom they care for) to identify, discuss, co-ordinate and represent their needs effectively,
- Be accessible and involve carers from all areas of historic Hampshire.
- Listen to carers with empathy and respond appropriately to their individual need.
- Improve the quality of life for carers and the people they care for by providing an independent non-judgemental listening ear to enable carers to offload.
- Recognise the expertise of carers and ensure this is used effectively.
- Advocate for carers, ensure they benefit from advocacy services and take an active part in expressing their needs when the needs of the cared-for person are assessed.
- Gather and collate information and share this with carers and carers groups.
- Improve carers awareness by running courses to increase their knowledge and skills.
- Develop the profile of carers and ensure their voice is heard.



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- Ensure carers are involved at all stages of planning, development, implementation and review of services locally and county-wide and in all levels of decision making.
- Support carers to find out more about services available to support them including Direct Payments, Advocacy, Personal Health Budgets, Respite Care and others.
- Give support as required to existing carers groups in the county, establish and support new groups/forums and to link them through a countywide support network.

### **What does it do?**

Carers Together:

- Listens to carers with empathy
- Harnesses the experience of carers for the benefit of carers,
- Ensures that carers are offered informed choice
- Enables and empower carers to care with dignity and independence
- Signposts carers to appropriate services
- Advocates for carers as needed
- Monitors
  - Implementation/effectiveness of care packages in providing support for carers.
  - The number of carers offered an assessment of their needs. (Our aim is to ensure all carers are informed of their right to a separate assessment of their needs and empowered by health and social care staff to achieve that)
  - The implementation of continuing care and the effect on carers of the changes in the Health Service/NHS Trusts to ensure carers views are taken into account.
  - The effectiveness of carers' involvement in the planning and development of services and ensuring that the voice of carers is heard as widely as possible.
  - The number of carers who are able to access Direct Payments/Personal Budgets
  - The planning of hospital discharges

### **How does it achieve this?**

Carers Together:

- Employs staff to give carers support, information, advice and advocacy
- Recruits volunteers to assist carers to deal with any problem or concern they feel they need help with – complain, deal with meetings and reviews etc.
- Provides a free, independent telephone line to support carers, listen to their concerns, enable them to offload stress and signposting to other services - 08000 3 23456.
- Provides Your Choice Your Support Take Break Service for carers, older people and people with disabilities in mid Hampshire and Southampton.
- Assists carers to find out how they can get funding instead of services from Social Services and gives help and support to carers to set up their own Direct Payments scheme so they can take control of their own lives.
- Maintains a comprehensive Information Resource available to carers to help them to care and to find out what is available to help them. The information and support is free to carers and is also available for professionals to assist them in supporting carers.
- Issues a regular News Sheet, with a continually growing circulation list.



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- Maintains a database of Hampshire carers and carers groups, as well as people/groups interested in supporting carers, and through this, and the newsletter, continues to develop and improve links with carers, local groups and forums.
- Works with carers to find out what they want and need, helping them to access appropriate services.
- Works with disabled people/groups on issues affecting users and carers
- Works with carers to:
  - Represent the views of carers on issues that affect carers, and which need publicising or have been brought into the public domain.
  - Provide carer representatives on a number of committees/consultation groups run by Health, Social Services and Voluntary Organisations including Say it Once, Hampshire Learning Disability Partnership Board, CCG Communication and Engagement, CCG End of Life Care Groups, CCG Neurological Group.
- Encourages and supports carers to establish Carers Councils/Forums/Groups/Drop-ins in all areas of the county so that they can have a stronger voice in the locality and ensure the services available meet their changing needs. Support to Carers Councils/Forums is on-going. Linking them together forms a strong carers network.
- Holds carers consultation and network meetings and seminars locally and countywide.

### **How are carers involved?**

- Carers were and are consulted in the design and the vision of support for carers
- The Trustees are all carers or former carers whose experience of caring is invaluable.
- There is regular consultation with carers/carers groups on issues affecting carers and those they care for.
- Carers/carers groups have the opportunity to input into regular information sharing.
- Carers are encouraged to join committees for planning, development, monitoring and review of services for themselves (and those they care for) and to feed back into the countywide network. This includes becoming involved with consultation, service provision and University Social Work Training influencing social work practice.
- There are regular seminars that also provide opportunities for carers from each locality to meet and share views, news, needs and seek mutually beneficial solutions.

### **What are its Principles?**

- Carers Together believes that carers support organisations should be carer-led and carer directed in order to learn from their skills, experiences and knowledge and implement a range of flexible services to meet their needs
- Carers Together has a commitment to the belief that carers should be supported according to their needs, sometimes by other carers, sometimes by paid workers and sometimes by volunteers.
- Carers have the right to represent themselves and, where appropriate other carers, and to be assisted and encouraged to do this whenever possible.
- Carers Together has a varied programme of services, training and activities for carers and workers to access that are supportive, practical and sometime fun – e.g. consultation, information, relaxation, signposting, training tips, creative activities etc.
- Carers Together breaks down barriers for carers and encourages them to feel more confident about themselves and their needs.