

Please find below comments from carers accessing each service to include in reporting. We have hard copies if required.

Core Information, Advice and Support Service

Margaret, 74, from Middlewich, has been accessing Cheshire Carers Centre since summer 2008. She regularly attends the monthly support groups in Middlewich and Crewe, and has accessed benefits advice from our carer support worker, both for herself and her husband. She has also attended Carers Days and Caring at Home courses. Her husband had been suffering with dementia and moved into a care home, and Margaret found the support from Cheshire Carers Centre extremely useful in supporting her through this, especially talking to other carers in similar situations. She attended the support groups for social interaction but also gained specialist knowledge from attending sessions such as a "Living with Dementia" talk at the Middlewich support group. Sadly her husband passed away in April 2012 and when Margaret phoned the centre to inform them, she said, "I couldn't have got through this without you, you have helped me so much over the past few years." Cheshire Carers Centre continue to support former carers for up to one year and have now developed a former carers group which is run by volunteers which Margaret has decided to attend when she is ready.

Miss A from Crewe area contacted Cheshire Carers Centre Helpline extremely distressed and unable to cope with caring for her mother who suffers from Alcohol related dementia, and she herself was alcohol dependent. She spoke at length to our Carer Support Worker to who made an immediate referral to Social Services for the family to receive additional support. He also referred the family to Addaction who support people with alcohol issues. The support worker called the lady a few days later to follow up the case and Miss A expressed that she felt much more able to cope now that some additional support was being put in place.

Melanie, from Audlem cares for her 22 month old son with Cerebral Palsy and has accessed benefits advice from Cheshire Carers Centre. "I appreciated the help, support and guidance given to my family by the centre's staff. The staff are professional, caring and helpful. They understand the needs of carers' and the children / adults they care for. Being a carer can be lonely and stressful, and I felt that the appointments I had with Lizzie Tettmar were just what I needed. Lizzie was someone to talk to and she helped me locate important information relating to benefits and support groups...She also helped me write letters to support my son's DLA application, which I had felt unable to do by myself due to my caring role and the emotional

stress that I was feeling. We achieve the higher level DLA care component for Jacob because of your help and expertise."

Caring at Home Courses

Roland, 75+ from Handforth attended the Handforth Caring at Home course in Autumn 2011. He had never had contact with Cheshire Carers Centre before. He cares for his wife Sheila who has physical disabilities and has had to take on many new responsibilities along with his caring role, such as cooking, cleaning and personal care for his wife. The course informed him about many local services for carers, and also put him in touch with other projects within the centre.

He applied to Cheshire Carers Fund in October 2011 for a new cooker and was awarded £220. He also began attending the Male Carers Group where he has learnt new skills and gained social support by accessing cookery workshops, trips out and social support from other male carers. He contacted the centre to thank both Janet Vowles , Carers Fund Co-ordinator and Dave Johnson, Male Carers Support Worker and said "I am really getting a lot from the Male Carers Group and I am pleased to have my new cooker from the Carers Fund."

Eileen P, in her 60s, from Crewe has been accessing various services at Cheshire Carers Centre, including information, advice and support via office drop ins, benefits advice, and the Caring at Home course. "When my husband had a stroke I became his carer and was subsequently invited into the carer's organisation. I attended a 6 week course which helped a great deal in giving me confidence and providing me with all kinds of extra knowledge to help me fulfil my role as a carer. During the course I met a lot of very nice dedicated people. Our course leader encouraged us all to be friendly and get to know each other which would help us all to feel more comfortable within the course setting. This we did, and I was introduced to one lady who was delightful and very friendly and we got on well together. We now continue to meet every month for coffee, which we both enjoy and we can be ourselves for a couple of hours."

Eileen B from Knutsford, first contacted Cheshire Carers Centre via the helpline for information on our services. Her husband is elderly and she was struggling to cope. She had benefits support from our Carers Support Worker and then attended the Congleton Caring at Home course from 06.09.11 to 25.10.11. When asked what the most helpful topic was on the course, she replied, " A talk by a representative from social services, it changed my life and gave me the feeling I wasn't alone. I had a carers assessment following on from this". Elaine also expressed verbally to the course co-ordinator and the rest of the group that she had found the talk from Social Services to be life changing as

she was getting to breaking point and they very quickly carried out a carers assessment and got her husband into respite as soon as possible to give her a much needed break.

Training and Personal Development

Amanda Whittaker, 53, from Macclesfield, cares for her husband with physical disabilities. She attended the overnight residential to Manchester Marriott hotel in November 2011 where she took part in a cookery class, experienced pamper treatments and relaxed in the hotels facilities. Amanda's caring role requires her to help her husband dress, wash, and supervise him at all times as he is prone to falls. She had not had a break for 3 years. She wrote following the break saying, "The break was just what I needed...it has been a difficult year, so it was lovely to chill out and enjoy the great company, good food, and enjoy the facilities of the hotel...it was fantastic to have some space to myself."

Denise, from Congleton, cares for her father who is now in respite with a view to going into long term residential care. She has accessed a variety of services at Cheshire Carers Centre including the Caring at Home course and monthly support groups. She attended a Therapy Day in March 2012 where she experienced a back massage, reiki and a workshop on Emotional Freedom Technique. Denise commented, "I was really stressed when I arrived but I enjoyed the therapies I tried very much. The day gave me a break from my caring role and I would recommend alternative therapies to other carers. I really found the Emotional Freedom technique helpful as I was given a one to one session which was brilliant and I am hoping to continue this at home, it has really helped."

Carole, 54 from Nantwich cares for her partner who was injured in a car accident. She is going through a lot of stress as he is now becoming less independent as he is getting older and her caring role is increasing. She has accessed one to one counselling at Cheshire Carers Centre which she said is really helping her to cope and she also attended the Therapy Day where she enjoyed treatments and a relaxation workshop. As a result of accessing these services she now feels more confident and has applied to become a volunteer at the centre to help with carers groups and courses, and she has also accessed a personal budget.

Relaxation Vouchers

Bev, 50, from Crewe cares for her mum with Alzheimer's Disease. She accesses therapies at Cheshire Carers Centre as a result of having a Personal Budget. She told the Personal Budget Co-ordinator that she would not be able to continue her caring role if

it was not for accessing therapy sessions to help her cope and provide her with a break.

An anonymous carer who accesses therapies at the Crewe office commented about her reiki treatment, "I both enjoyed the treatment and feel positive about benefitting from it. Any such treatments I feel are very worthwhile to carers in a similar position to myself as I feel the strains and stress of caring take their toll."

Helen, a parent carer from Crewe, has accessed services via the Disabled Children's Database, including a parent carer drop-in, and as a result of this has accessed therapies at the centre, and introduced her mum to the services as well, as she cares for her husband. She received a massage and reflexology and said she really enjoyed the treatment and the opportunity to chat to other carers at the centre, and she would recommend alternative therapies to other carers to help them take a break from her caring role.

Carers Fund

Alan, 60, from Crewe cares for his son with Learning Disabilities. Alan supports his son financially, ensures he has a nutritious diet, prompts with personal hygiene, provides emotional support and social stimulation. In December 2011, Alan applied to the Carers Fund for a tumble dryer and was awarded £220. As he lives in the Crewe and Nantwich area, he was also automatically referred to the Personal Budgets Project for a break from his caring role. Following this a Carers Assessment was then carried out for Alan to ensure his needs were being met, and he being supported to apply for a Personal Budget.

Sharon, from Crewe, cares for her son with physical disabilities and applied to the carers fund in February 2012 for a gym membership. She was awarded £209 and she wrote to us stating that as a result of receiving the gym membership the previous year, she had lost 25lbs in weight which made her feel much better and gave her more energy to continue with her caring role. Attending the gym provided her with a break from her caring role and increased her confidence, hence the fact that she wished to apply for this again this year to continue this.

Joanne lives in Crewe cares for her husband with Mental Health Problems. She first accessed the centre for a Personal Budget, and in addition to this received support from Making Space. Joanne discussed the she is "going to try to make time for myself and try and gain some independence back into my life and create a more "balanced" lifestyle. She accessed the Carers Fund in February 2012 to attend a one day course to learn something

new in her profession as she wanted to look into further training and start to be independent again, rather than relying on Carers Allowance. "The thought seems daunting at one day working back in my profession but this has enabled me just that one step closer to achieving this so I thank the Funding very much for this opportunity. Life can very quickly become bleak and despondent when your independence is stripped away and this funding has been very beneficial into helping me think of myself again and give me hope again into one day achieving a small income to help with the ever rising cost of living."