

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2026

# NEWSLETTER



Hello one and all!

I hope you're all keeping well! Can you feel it? There is an excitement in the air, the first few crocuses are peeking through, birds are getting busy and we are officially marching toward those glorious longer days.

Don't forget that on Sunday, 29th March, the clocks go forward! While we might lose an hour of sleep, we gain that beautiful evening light. It's amazing how a little extra sunshine can completely shift our outlook and put a spring back in everyone's step—clients and volunteers alike!

You may recall being asked to complete a short questionnaire earlier this month, which has caused a lot of spring in the steps of and excitement in the staff at the moment. Care Network is 40 in October! Can you believe it? We will share more with you later in the year about our celebration plans.

With the spring comes the annual spring clean. I have made a start and emptied the biscuit barrel. It always causes strife divvying up the tasks and unfortunately my husband and I had a disagreement about whose turn it was to do the laundry. In the end, he threw in the towel.

Kind regards

Tina

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## HIGHLIGHTS

LT update

Help at Home update

Wellbeing tips for volunteers

Exceptional you

Safety reminder

Volunteer passports

What would you do?

Save the date



If you have any ideas for articles or would like any information featured in the newsletter, please let me know.

Company number:  
6297277

Charity number:  
1120693

# LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATE ...

After five years with Care Network, our Fundraising Officer, Pauline, has moved on to new opportunities. We are incredibly grateful for her dedication and the impact she has made during her time with us. As we adjust to this change, we'll be looking to our wonderful volunteers to help fill some of the gaps Pauline leaves behind. This may include support with event coordination, creating social media content, and identifying new fundraising opportunities. Your skills, ideas, and enthusiasm will be hugely valued during this transition.

Looking ahead, we are focusing on bringing some of our smaller projects from our five-year strategy to life. Projects such as Digital Inclusion, Travel Companions, and Good Neighbours will be priority areas, and volunteer involvement will be essential in shaping and delivering these initiatives.

We're also delighted that Tina will be supporting the Community Development team as we develop these new projects. With her extensive experience and knowledge, we're excited for the creativity and direction she will help bring to this work in her volunteer coordination role.

As these projects grow, our services will be taking a more active role in communicating with volunteers and supervising cases alongside you. We will be looking to your advice, input, and expertise to help us shape new ways of working that truly meet the needs of our communities. If you would like to be part of a short-term project group to support this development work, please let me know—we would love to have you involved.

There have been a few new faces to the staffing team in recent months, so we want to share with you the latest organisation chart that we have so you can put some names to faces. All of our new recruits are looking forward to meeting our volunteers soon.



Thank you, as always, for everything you do.  
Emma, Head of Services

# HELP AT HOME - UPDATE

Throughout winter Hospitals have been under immense pressure throughout, with wards frequently operating at full capacity. The support you have all provided has played a crucial role in helping patients to be discharged safely and promptly, ensuring they could return home with the practical and emotional support they needed. This has not only benefited the individuals and families involved but has also helped to ease pressure on frontline hospital services.



We were also delighted to welcome Lorraine to the Help at Home team. Lorraine has joined us as a relief worker and brings with her a wealth of experience in this field. Her knowledge, compassion, and enthusiasm have already been a fantastic addition to the service, and we are very excited to have her on board.

This month also brought a particularly unusual and heart-warming referral, when we were asked to support a client on a maternity ward. These referrals are rare for us, and it was a real joy to be able to assist a new mum and her baby as they prepared to come home. We have since passed this case on to one of our volunteers, who will continue to provide support in the home for a few weeks, helping the family settle into this new and exciting chapter.

Overall, the past couple of months have highlighted just how vital Help at Home's work is, especially during the winter period. We are incredibly grateful to our volunteers for their ongoing commitment and flexibility, which continues to make a meaningful difference to people when they need it most. We have particularly enjoyed when we have spoken on the phone with some of you to 'check in'. We really value your feedback and love listening to the stories you share where you have helped a client.

# WELLBEING TIPS ...



## 1. Beat the Winter Slump

February can feel long and grey. Boost your mood by:

Getting outside for daylight (even 10 minutes helps!); opening blinds first thing in the morning; adding a short walk to your day. Natural light supports sleep, mood, and energy.



## 2. Check In With Yourself

Mid-winter is a great time for a gentle reset. Ask yourself: How is my energy lately? What's one thing I need more of right now? What can I let go of this month? Small adjustments make a big difference.



## 3. Spread Kindness (Including to Yourself)

February often focuses on caring for others — don't forget self-compassion. Speak to yourself as you would a friend; celebrate small wins; say "no" when you need to. Healthy boundaries help you continue supporting others sustainably.



## 4. Stay Connected

Cold weather can increase isolation. Reach out to a fellow volunteer for a quick check-in. Arrange a coffee (virtual or in person); send a message to someone you haven't spoken to in a while. Connection supports resilience.



## 5. Support Your Immune System

Winter bugs are still around. Prioritise sleep; Stay hydrated (even when it's cold!) Include colourful fruits and vegetables in meals. Your body works hard for you — fuel it well.

## 6. Try a "Mini Mood Booster"

Pick one small daily habit: 5 minutes of stretching; a gratitude note; listening to uplifting music; deep breathing before bed. Consistency matters more than duration.



## 7. Remember Your Impact

If motivation dips this month, remind yourself: The time you give truly matters. Your presence makes a difference. Small acts of volunteering create ripple effects.



# SAFETY REMINDER ...

A staff member recently informed us of an incident involving a mobile phone charger that caught fire. Fortunately, the staff member noticed the flames immediately, and was able to act quickly to prevent further damage and, most importantly, avoid any personal injury. With this mind we thought we would send some tips.



## Key Safety Tips:

- **Use Certified Chargers:** Only use genuine, branded chargers and cables.
- **Inspect Regularly:** Check for frayed cables, exposed wires, or loose connections. Replace damaged equipment immediately.
- **Avoid Overheating:** Charge on hard, stable surfaces (e.g., tables, worktops). Never charge phones on beds, pillows, or sofas as these trap heat.
- **Do Not Charge Overnight:** Avoid leaving devices plugged in while sleeping or away from home, as this can lead to overcharging and fire hazards.
- **Don't Overload Sockets:** Avoid plugging multiple devices into one socket using adapters. Use long-strip adapters if necessary, but stay within the 13-amp limit.
- **Unplug When Finished:** Once the battery is full, unplug the charger to prevent overheating.
- **Keep Dry and Cool:** Do not use chargers with wet hands, and keep them away from extreme temperatures and moisture.
- **Remove Covers:** If a phone gets hot while charging, remove its case, to aid heat dissipation.

# VOLUNTEER PASSPORTS



The "Volunteer Passport": My Vision for Your Freedom! ✨

For the past three years, I have been championing a single, simple mission: To make volunteering as easy as possible for you. I believe that whether you want to volunteer however, wherever, whenever, or with whomsoever you choose, the "paperwork" and training shouldn't be what stops you. That is why I am so passionate about a concept of a Volunteer Passport.

## What is a Volunteer Passport?

Imagine a world where you don't have to fill out a fresh application form every time you want to help a new cause. Instead, through a collaboration with charities across the county, we would agree on:

- **One Universal Application:** Fill it in once, and share it with the charities you want to support.
- **Standardised Training:** Complete your core training (like Safeguarding) just once, with a universal refresher schedule. No more sitting through the same slides at three different organizations!
- **The Auto-Update DBS:** By using the DBS Update Service, you can give charities instant access to view your certificate, removing the need for a brand-new application in most cases.

## Total Fluidity: Volunteering at the Speed of Life

I see this as giving you the ultimate freedom to "dip in and out" of support as it suits your life. Imagine picking up a Help at Home assignment with us on Monday, then—because it's a beautiful sunny day—using your "Passport" to spend Wednesday helping out at a Wildlife Park! Perhaps next month you've got a spare afternoon and decide to lend a hand in a Charity Shop. By removing the duplication that eats into your precious time, we open up a world of flexibility and variety. You get to utilize your skills wherever they are needed most, without the administrative headache.

## Where are we now?

This is a big vision that requires a lot of collaboration across Cambridgeshire, but the momentum is gathering speed! It's a "hot topic" among local leaders, and I am determined to keep pushing until "Volunteer Fluidity" becomes our new reality. After all, your time is a gift—and I want to make sure you can spend it doing what you love, not filling out forms! With that in mind we are building a relationship with CamSight who would be happy to use passporting between our volunteers. Would you like to occasionally support CamSight as well as CNC?

What do you think of the Passport idea? Drop me a line for more information or with your thoughts.

With warmest wishes and huge thank for everything you do, Tina



# EXCEPTIONAL YOU...

“My volunteer was absolutely lovely, very friendly, helpful, and reliable. She communicated clearly and always checked the day before, in case plans had changed, which I really appreciated.

She was also wonderful with my cats, who absolutely loved her. We formed a friendship, which was a really positive and meaningful part of the experience. I truly appreciate all the help and support she gave me.”

There's a stranger out there who still thinks of you because you were kind to them when they really needed it.

Never stop being that person.

# CASE SCENARIO - WHAT WOULD YOU DO



Have a look at this case scenario and ask:

What are your concerns?

What would you do?

Malcolm received an email for a potential assignment to befriend, help to sort post and do shopping for 6 weeks, for a client who is currently housebound following a period of ill health. It is in his district and he is interested.

The email advised the coordinator would be in touch the following week, after their annual leave.

Two weeks have gone by and Malcolm has still not heard anything more, and would probably be available, he does have a short break coming up, but could support as long as he knows when this needs to start.



# CASE SCENARIO - WHAT WOULD YOU DO? RESPONSE

Communication is key to ensure timely support for our clients. We sometimes send a general 'Assignment opportunity' email to all volunteers that are suitable for an assignment. This helps us respond better to quick turnaround or one off referrals. There is never any pressure for you to accept but if you could respond either way, we would be grateful. Saying no will never be held against you.

We appreciate that as a volunteer you give your time freely and that volunteering must complement your personal commitments and life; that there will be times when you are not available. Self care is not selfish.

However, if you could drop us a line, to let us know when you will not be available, especially during Bank Holidays or holiday season, it helps us plan ahead.

Whilst we try as hard as possible to ensure that you have all the information you require for an assignment in plenty of time, time sometimes runs away with us and we may inadvertently forget to follow up with you about something or send information.

If that should happen or you have not received an assignment template for a client, or feel you need more information please do contact the coordinator, or email our generic inboxes:

[wellbeing@care-network.org.uk](mailto:wellbeing@care-network.org.uk) or  
[admin@care-network.org.uk](mailto:admin@care-network.org.uk)

# SAVE THE DATES - MARCH

Date	What	Where
<p><b>Wednesday</b> <b>11 March</b> <b>Arrive: 09:30</b> <b>Meeting:</b> <b>10:00-12:30</b></p>	<p><b>North Locality Meeting.</b> <b>Find out what's happening across Care Network, share your ideas for community development and meet the wider team.</b></p>	<p><b>Apple Conference Room,</b> <b>South Fens Business Park, Fenton Way,</b> <b>Chatteris PE16 6TT</b></p> <p><b>Free onsite parking. 1<sup>st</sup> set of double gates on the right after turning into Fenton Way.</b></p>
<p><b>Thursday 12 March</b> <b>Arrive: 12:00</b> <b>Meeting: 12:00-14:30</b></p>	<p><b>South Locality Meeting.</b> <b>Find out what's happening across Care Network, share your ideas for community development and meet the wider team.</b></p>	<p><b>Broadway House, 149-151 St Neots Rd,</b> <b>Hardwick, Cambridge CB23 7QJ</b></p> <p><b>Limited parking on site but layby's along the road.</b></p>
<p><b>Saturday 14 March</b> <b>10:00-13:00</b></p>	<p><b>Volunteer recruitment fair</b> <b>Come along to share your volunteer story and inspire others to volunteer.</b></p>	<p><b>Peel House 8 Queen Street, Peterborough,</b> <b>PE7 1AY.</b></p> <p><b>Limited parking on site, some on street parking available.</b></p>

To reserve your space at any of the events please email Tina:  
[tina.o@care-network.org.uk](mailto:tina.o@care-network.org.uk) or call: 01223 869892

# SAVE THE DATES MARCH

<b>Date</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>Where</b>
<p>Thursday 26 March 10:30-12:00</p>	<p><b>Volunteer Monthly meet up - South</b></p> <p><b>Wear your badge to get a coffee on us, meet with other volunteers and the wider team and bring any case studies (without the client name/address etc.) for peer support.</b></p>	<p><b>The Mary Challis Museum - 68 High Street, Sawston, Cambridgeshire, CB22 3BG</b></p> <p><b>Parking limited. Meet at the entrance.</b></p>

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# SAVE THE DATES APRIL

Date	What	Where
Tuesday 21 April 13:00-14:30	<p><b>Volunteer Monthly meet up - Fens</b></p> <p>Wear your badge to get a coffee on us, meet with other volunteers and the wider team and bring any case studies (without the client name/address etc.) for peer support.</p>	TBC - is there anywhere you can think of that would be a suitable venue?

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