

Speaking with one voice for all carers in Wigan borough

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Everyone deserves a little TLC

During March, a small group of carers came together for our 'TLC Tea Listen Connect' group. This group offers an informal get together for registered carers to meet other carers, members of the WLCC team and to take part in discussions around self-care and mental health.

Carers enjoyed some respite through Easter-themed craft activities and looking at different ways to make this year's Easter memorable for their families.

The next TLC group is Friday 16th April at 10.30 am. If you would like to book a place, visit <https://www.wlcccarers.com/events-booking2/> or give us a call on 01942 705959 and we can book you in.

Why not treat yourself to a little TLC. You know you deserve it.



Our short term project funded by Carers Trust to help us support carers with reducing loneliness, increasing peer and community networks and reach out to carers who may be harder to reach, is making good progress and a real difference.

Through **#CarersTrust** we are able to offer a range of activities such as:

- Phone befriending
- Email chat befriending & letter writing contact
- Bereavement peer support group
- Carers social drop in
- Digital skills sessions & support
- Parent carer peer support
- Reaching out to LGBTQ+ carers
- Volunteering opportunities

Contact us to find out how you can stay connected on 01942 705959, www.wlcccarers.com, or info@wlcccarers.com.



CARERS TRUST

Supporting Carers

- Phone befriending
- Email chat befriending & letter writing contact
- Bereavement peer support
- Carers social drop in
- Digital skills sessions & support
- Parent carer peer support
- Reaching out to LGBTQ+ carers
- Volunteering opportunities

WLCC
Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre
Charity Number 1138908
Registration Number 7293521

Wigan Council

Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre are commissioned by Wigan Council to carry out Carers Assessments and work in partnership with them to deliver other services to support unpaid carers.

Take a look at our new therapy room

We are very pleased to share with you our new therapy room at the Carers Centre in Hindley.

A dedicated, comfortable and confidential space for carers to gain wellbeing support through our range of therapy services, provided by experienced and well-qualified therapists.

Catherine Ellis, Volunteer and Befriending Co-ordinator said ***"This is a lovely, warm, nurturing therapeutic space, which can be used for talking therapy or emotional support for carers."***

As you can see, our therapy room has been tastefully furnished to support therapeutic interventions, offering a safe space in peace and quiet, with complete privacy.

If you would like to know more about our counselling and wellbeing support services, please get in touch by calling 01942 705959, or emailing info@wlcccarers.com.



Autism Training

Understanding sensory differences in autism. **Tuesday 20th April, 9.30 am**

This online workshop delivered by the specialist occupational therapy team will give you an understanding of the sensory differences in autism and how these can impact your child. This workshop is designed to look at practical strategies alongside understanding your child's sensory needs.

Book a place: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/understanding-sensory-differences-in-autism-tickets-129311336689>.

How to write and use a Social Story. **Wednesday, 21st April, 9.30 am**

This online workshop, delivered by the specialist ASC speech therapy team is designed to support parents develop a greater understanding of how to write and use a Social Story to help your child understand a social situation.

Book a place: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-to-understand-use-a-social-story-workshop-tickets-129322831069>.



Mobilise - a community for unpaid carers

There is a great new online community for carers – www.mobiliseonline.co.uk. Mobilise is a movement with a mission: To make sure nobody has to figure out a caring role on their own.

You can sign up for the latest content, by email, straight to your Inbox. Written by carers for carers, Mobilise emails are packed with tips and tricks from their community of carers. There is a choice of a daily or weekly email of practical advice, tips and content to help each other get through. There's a series of podcasts, carer's stories, latest research and a blog.

Joining their community is a chance to share the tips and tricks you've learned as a carer. Even sharing your challenges and frustrations could be a real help to someone else who feels the same way.

Join carers like you for a virtual cuppa, come together to share stories, tips, tears and laughs. However you're feeling there's a place to listen and be heard, give and get advice, and help people like you across the UK.

Let us know your thoughts and feedback: info@wlcccarers.com.

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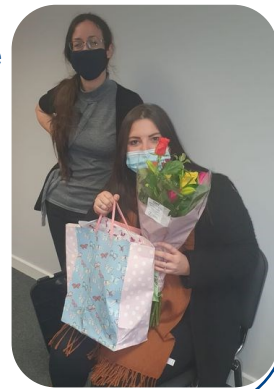
Thank you Rebecca

We recently said a fond farewell to Rebecca, our fantastic Social Work Student from Edge Hill University. Photographed here with Dionne (left) our Training and Support Officer, she was overwhelmed to receive a bag of goodies as a thank you for all her hard work.

Rebecca (pictured right) said ***"I just want to thank each and every one of you for my lovely presents! Thank you all again for your fantastic support. I will truly miss you all."***

Rebecca - we will all miss your beautiful smile and the warmth and compassion you have brought to our team and the carers we support.

All the very best Rebecca, and thanks for all you have done during your time with us.



Hello to Lucy

We would like to introduce you to Lucy who has recently joined WLCC team on placement.

Lucy is a Student Social Worker studying her MA Social Work Degree at Edge Hill University. The masters degree combines perspectives from social care, health, education and other relevant disciplines to ensure graduates can work effectively in the multi-disciplinary environment of today's social work.

We caught up with Lucy and here's what she had to say: "Hi I am Lucy! This is my first placement in a social care setting. Previous to my masters degree, I have had experience in educational settings during my placements on my undergraduate course 'BA Working with Children 5-11'. I am looking forward to gaining more experience surrounding the support available to carers, and I am hoping this placement will provide me with the transferable knowledge to apply throughout my future social work career."

Dionne Carroll, Training and Support Officer said ***"Students are an integral part of WLCC. Their contribution of energy, skills and compassion help us provide the best possible services to unpaid carers in Wigan."***

Welcome to the team Lucy!



Welcome Paula to the team

Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre are pleased to introduce our new Peer Support Volunteer, Paula.

"My name is Paula and I'm a full-time carer for my son who is 17 years old and autistic. I'm really passionate about volunteering with the Carers Centre to help other carers on their journey."

I have lots of experience in listening and helping other parents and carers. Being a carer can be very difficult and at times lonely and isolating. Sometimes a listening ear is all we need - you are never alone."

Paula's role is to connect with other parent carers who may need a listening ear, support or encouragement. She is also part of the Parent Carer Circle monthly group. Please get in touch if you would like to speak with Paula and share your experiences with her or to join the next Parent Carer Group.

If you feel that, as a carer, you could offer support to others who may be experiencing similar situations to you and you can offer them support, encouragement and a listening ear, please get in touch with our Volunteer Co-ordinator to find out more about peer support or telephone befriending volunteering opportunities. Email catherine@wlcccarers.com or call 01942 705959 and ask to speak to Catherine Ellis.

A warm welcome to Paula and thank you for joining our dedicated team of volunteers.



Why not volunteer for us?

To discuss our volunteering opportunities contact catherine@wlcccarers.com or ring 01942 705959.

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WLCC Training

Training grant applications now available!

WLCC is pleased to announce that Wigan Council has provided further funding for carers and community groups to access training for the coming year. An individual carer can apply for up to £200 towards training, and community groups can access up to a maximum of £1,500. To complete an application form and for further details please contact Dionne dionne@wlcccarers.com.

Training grant deadlines for applications

Wed 12th May 2021 4:30 pm
Wed 11th Aug 2021 4:30 pm
Wed 10th Nov 2021 4:30 pm
Wed 9th Feb 2022 4:30 pm

New training for April 2021

WLCC is pleased to announce that the next dementia activity programme will take place in Atherton Town Hall for carers to enjoy a relaxing afternoon with the person they care for. Flower arranging and dancing sessions will also take place over the Easter holidays and have been fully booked due to demand! More digital skills sessions will be arranged for next month and Peter our volunteer has kindly offered to provide another digital skills support session on Monday 19th April at the centre at 2.00 pm. Other training available in April includes menopause training between 10.00 am and 12.00 pm, and mental health awareness from 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm (both online on the 21st April delivered using Teams).

More weekly mindfulness walks

Wednesday mornings 10.00 am – 11.00 am

Windy Bank Wed 7th April WA3 5NT (meet at Bent's Car Park)

Byrom Hall woods 14th April (meet at Slag Lane Car Park, Lowton)

Haigh Hall 21st April (meet at **pay and display** car park, WN2 1PE)

Viridor Wood 28th April (meet at WN4 8TL, Ashton in Makerfield)

For more details on any of these events or courses please visit:
<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/wigan-and-leigh-carers-centre>.

University funding for carers

The Open University's Carers Scholarship Fund is now open for applications. The scheme offers funding for 10 carers to complete a full undergraduate qualification, and applications close at midnight on 21st August. To find out more visit: <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding/carers-scholarship-fund>.

Everything about wills, lasting Power of Attorney and trusts

Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre are delighted to welcome a speaker from Mark Reynolds Solicitors who will be delivering an informative session and discussing ways of planning for the future. This will include Wills, Lasting Power of Attorney, Inheritance and Living Will Trusts. The session will be held at the Carers Centre in Hindley on Thursday 29th April, beginning at 10.00 am.

Book online at <https://www.wlcccarers.com/events-booking2/>. If you wish to join via zoom, please let us know and this can be arranged.

LEGAL ADVICE FOR CARERS

ESTATE & PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

CALL 01942 705959
WWW.WLCCCARERS.COM
INFO@WLCCCARERS.COM

MARK REYNOLDS
SOLICITORS

THURSDAY 29TH APRIL
10 AM
CARERS CENTRE
HINDLEY
WIGAN
WN2 3BD



Experiencing dementia first hand

It was great to welcome **Training 2 Care UK Ltd** in March for our Virtual Dementia Tour which gives carers, staff and volunteers an interactive experience of what it might be like to live with dementia, so we can start to understand the issues that they experience every day.

The Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT) is medically and scientifically proven to be the closest we can give a person with a healthy brain to experience what dementia might be like. Invented 20 years ago in America by P.K. Beville, the VDT aims to give people the ability to understand dementia by walking in the shoes of a person with the disease.

The VDT has now been proven during research produced by Ulster University to change practice within 95% of delegates, improve knowledge in 97% of delegates and improve outcomes for 100% of clients.

WLCC Chief Officer, Angela Allison said ***"The Virtual Dementia Tour and Training Experience is an immersive experience for anyone who wants to help people living with dementia to gain a better quality of life. It is vital that we continually improve awareness and the quality of training regarding dementia in order to improve standards and the quality of life for people affected."***

After taking the tour one participant said, ***"I now have a greater understanding and empathy for some of the everyday challenges that someone living with dementia may face."***

If you would like to learn more about any of our exciting training events or workshops, please feel free to visit <https://www.wlcccarers.com/> or drop an email to info@wlcccarers.com.



Support with dementia - Guardian Angels

Getting lost and feeling disorientated is cited as a common problem which causes great distress for the person with dementia and their carers/families.

The Good Deeds Trust has developed a solution in the form of 'Guardian Angel' devices including a badge, wristband, bag-tag or keyring. These devices are Near Field Communication (NFC) smartphone enabled and so by simply tapping a phone over the device, the person's first name and emergency contact number will be displayed.

The scheme is currently confined to operation in Wigan and the cost is £5 per device to cover manufacturing costs and administration of the scheme. For more details visit: www.dementiabuddy.co.uk.



Dementia Skills Sessions



Mood & Motivation

Free Online Training

Wed 5th May - 10.30am

Mon 14th June - 6.00pm

dementiaadventure.co.uk/mood-and-motivation

Free dementia mood and motivation training

Some people with dementia and their supporters feel challenged in finding the motivation to 'get up and do'. This 'Mood and Motivation' session looks at why that might be, from the perspective of both the carer and the person with dementia.

Dementia Adventure will discuss some helpful hints and tips on how to raise mood, build confidence and consider meaningful activities, whilst encouraging the individual to feel happy, safe and secure 'in the now'.

www.dementiaadventure.co.uk/mood-and-motivation for further information about training, support, and ideas about dealing with dementia.

Young carers

Wigan Council want to make sure that all young carers are receiving the support and help they need so have developed a short survey to find out what your thoughts and opinions are in relation to being a young carer. They would be grateful if you could complete their survey, it shouldn't take any longer than 10 minutes to complete: <https://wh1.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=161313585649>.

They would also like to hold some face to face (remote) sessions on Wednesday 7th and Thursday 8th April in the afternoon. If you would like to be involved in these conversations please let them know by emailing SWPH@wigan.gov.uk and they will confirm the times.

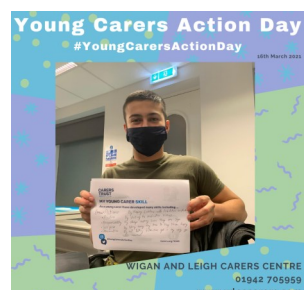
Young carers are people who are under 18 years old and help to look after a relative with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug or alcohol problem.

As a young carer you could look after one of your parents or care for a brother or sister and may do extra jobs in and around your home, such as cooking, cleaning or helping someone get dressed and move around.



ARE
YOU A
YOUNG
CARER?

Action Day helping to raise awareness of young carers

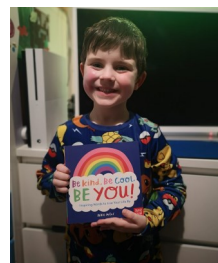


Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre were proud to support Young Carers Action Day on Tuesday 16th March.

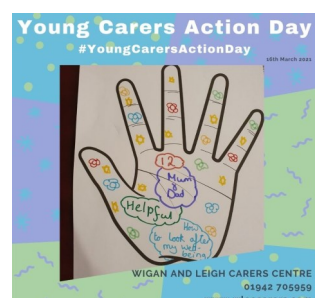
Young Carers Action Day is an annual event held by The Carers Trust raising awareness of some of the challenges young carers face in their day-to-day lives, and the incredible contribution they make to their families and local communities. This year's theme was *'protect young carers' futures'*.

Young carers in Wigan were given the opportunity to share the incredible skills they have developed through their caring roles - like confidence, resilience, time management and empathy.

Carmen France-McGrail, Manager of Young Carers said, ***"Coronavirus (COVID-19) has had an effect on all our day-to-day lives but for young carers, lockdowns and closure of services means very often, they are caring for loved ones for much longer periods. Being a young carer can be rewarding, but it may also be difficult to juggle daily life with caring responsibilities."***



Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre developed projects to work with young carers to complete Carers Trust Action 'Skills Cards' and 'Young Carers Handprint Project' to use over social media, raising awareness and celebrating the additional skills that being a young carer has given them.



Angela Allison, Chief Officer said, ***"Young carers often put aside their own needs so they can provide support and care for someone close to them. Our Young Carers Support Service are very proud to help these incredible young people navigate their way through this important stage in their lives, with a view to a happy and positive future."***

Thank you to the young carers in Wigan - you perform an indispensable role in looking after your loved ones and we want to thank you for all that you've done during these unprecedented times.

Young Carers Voice group

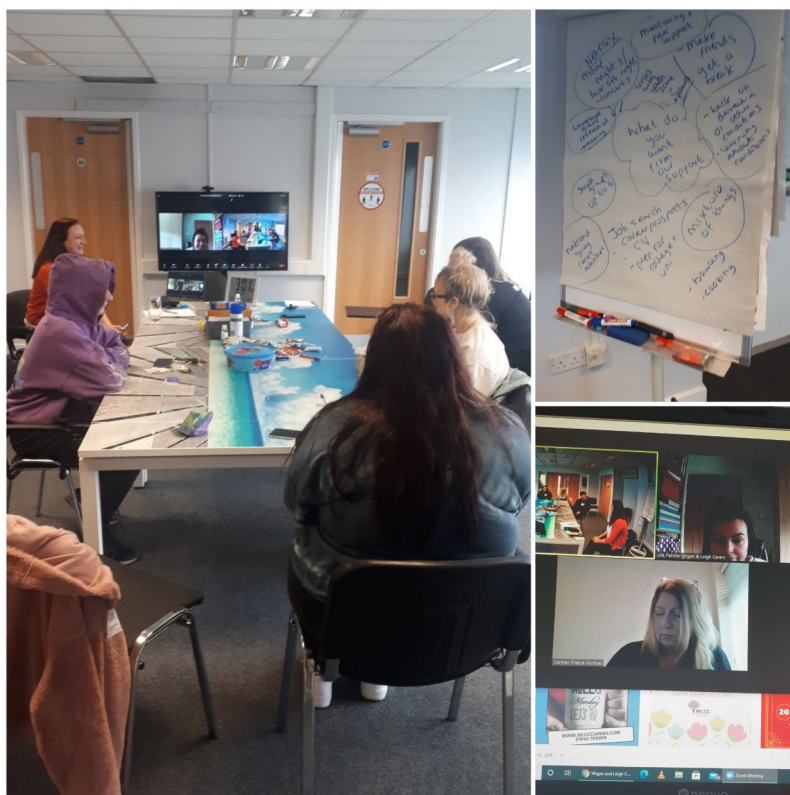
Over the February half term holidays, young adult carers were invited to attend a transition steering meeting. This group of young adult carers came together, along with Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre staff to create a 'Young Carers Voice' group.

Members of the group want to play an active role in developing the services for Wigan young carers and have their voices heard in the way they would like support to be offered.

Manager of Young Carers, Carmen France-McGrail said **"We want young carers to be at the centre of this group and play an active role. It will give an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of other young adult carers, plus learn some helpful skills along the way."**

We want to make sure that as many young carers can be involved in the steering group as we can, with the aim of improving outcomes for all young carers.

If any young carers or young adult carers are interested in being part of a 'Young Carers Voice' group, please get in touch with us on 01942 705959 or via info@wlcccarers.com. The next meeting for the group is Thursday 3rd June 2021 at 2.00 pm.



Mind of my own for young carers

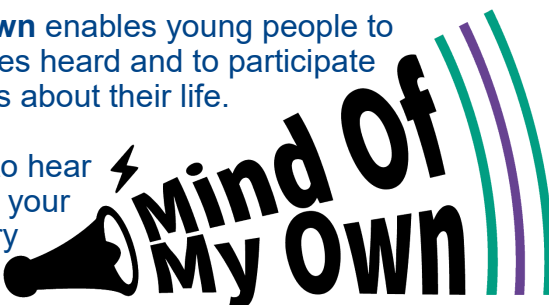
We are delighted to launch a brand new app for young carers - **Mind of My Own**. Mind of My Own is an app co-produced with young people for young people. It aims to fit into young people's lives and will encourage our young carers to share their thoughts and feelings more regularly - they can send messages to our support workers, completely securely, to vocalise their thoughts, ideas, problems and worries. As well as being 100% secure, it has a fantastic young person-friendly interface which we hope you will love.

We are really excited to launch the app and we want to get as many young carers onboard as possible.

If you're a young carer and would like the app on a phone/tablet/PC at home please get in touch with the Young Carers team and we'll get back to you in due course about how to get up and running with it.

Mind of My Own enables young people to have their voices heard and to participate in the decisions about their life.

We're waiting to hear from you. Use your voice, it's a very powerful thing.



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Movie and Pizza Night

Who doesn't love pizza and a great film?

In March, it was wonderful to welcome some young adult carers to our Movie and Pizza Night at the Carers Centre.

The young people that attended the event enjoyed a relaxing evening watching American comedy film, *Bad Neighbour*.

Complete with pizza, treats and refreshments, the group sat back and enjoyed some quality time together.

Claire Thorpe, Support Worker for Young Carers said ***"It was great to have a catch up with everyone and to see young carers enjoying some social time together."***

We look forward to holding more events for young carers, giving them a much-needed break from their caring responsibilities.



On the record with Cerys

We would like to introduce you to Cerys. Cerys is a young adult carer, living in Wigan, aged 19 years old. She cares for her Mum and Dad and has been involved with Wigan's Young Carers Team since 2013. Through our support, Cerys was given the opportunity to get involved with the **Sound Creators Course** run by Wigan Youth Zone. Sound Creators puts women and girls with caring responsibilities front and centre, offering opportunities for fun, creative expression and (re)discovery of self through music making activity.

Ian Morton, Music and Media Co-ordinator from Wigan Youth Zone explains more about this exciting programme, *"Through this creative programme young carers will learn new music making skills, becoming more confident in both the production and creation of music, and, by the end of the programme will have been supported to write, or even perform, a piece of music."*

With regular commitment to the course, Cerys was able to perform and record her own song. Cerys said, *"I got involved in sound creators because I thought it would be a great opportunity to show my musical talent and to be able to make new friends and develop new music skills. I have been singing from a very young child, around the age of 5 years old."*

By using music as a method of engagement this course provided a supportive, safe space where Cerys was able to use music to increase her resilience and improve her emotional wellbeing.

Cerys continues, *"It makes me feel happier to be around people as it's been tough being at home in this pandemic. I chose to record this song because it means a lot to me as I had a breakup last year and I can really relate to it and I can express my feelings through this song."*

Please take a moment to watch Cerys in her stunning recording of *'I can't make you love me'*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA9e8sCuu6Y>.

Finally Cerys concludes, *"I am proud to be a young carer because I know it shows I'm a great role model to any other young people and this role shows how kind and caring I am as a person."*

Our projects at Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre aim to build confidence, improve relationships and to offer respite from difficult times. This was a much-needed safe space for fun, expression and individuality.

We are so very proud of everything you have achieved Cerys – your creativity flourished and is truly captured in this inspirational performance.



Rivington Barn Bikers egg collection makes Easter egg-stra special for young carers

Generous members of the Rivington Barn Bikers group have clubbed together to provide eggs for an Easter egg-travaganza.

For many years Rivington Barn Bikers Group has donated Easter eggs to Wigan and Leigh Young Carers. Once again, we are very thankful that the group has chosen our charity to provide young carers with a wonderful gift of an Easter egg.



We are overwhelmed by such generosity - the group donated over 200 easter eggs!

Particular thanks to Susan Rigby who coordinates the collection on behalf of the group.

During the month of March, WLCC staff and volunteers kindly distributed the yummy chocolate eggs to Wigan's young carers.

(Photographed are Jill Woosey (left) and Catherine Leyland (right) from Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre).

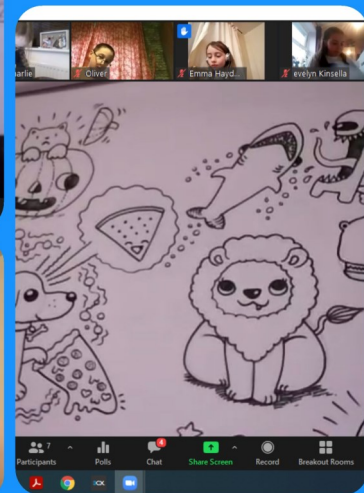
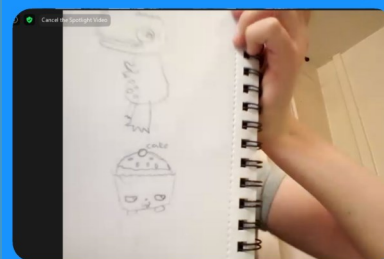
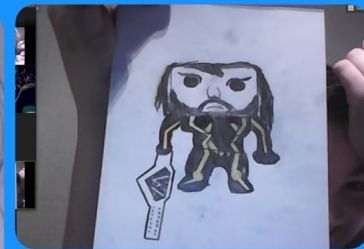
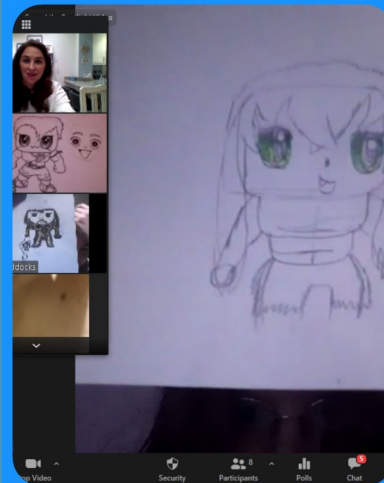


Comic Club for young carers

During February we held two Comic Club sessions for young carers aged 5-11 and 12-16. The sessions were well attended and a great success.

James Parsons, the well-known comic artist from the **Crazy Comic Club** taught young carers how to bring their characters to life which included a superhero cupcake and a pizza eating dog! James was really impressed by how imaginative and super talented the groups were.

We received some great feedback and look forward to running sessions with James in the future.



Training for young carers

WLCC is proving a range of courses over the Easter holidays including:

Autism Training Wed 7th April 1.00 pm - 2:30 pm at the centre

Kooth Training Wed 7th or 14th (anxiety and stress). Tutor will be online but young carers can attend the centre to access the training 3.30 pm – 4:30 pm (TBC)

Part 1 Facts and Foundations Fri 9th April 1.00 pm – 2.30 pm

Part 2 Changes and Choices Fri 16th April 1.00 pm – 2.30 pm provided by Natwest Bank

Special effects make-up Monday 12th April 1.00 pm – 3.00 pm at the centre

Dementia Training Fri 16th April 1.30pm – 3.00 pm

For more details on any of these events or courses please visit:
<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/wigan-and-leigh-carers-centre>.

Follow us on: **LinkedIn** **twitter** **facebook** **Instagram**

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Imagine...

A creative 11-year-old girl from Leigh is celebrating after being selected for publication in a young writers competition. Young carer, Abigail Fletcher, shares with us her thought-provoking piece of poetry which is centred around her life and her honest feelings as a young carer. Her moving verses *'Imagine if they could understand, what it's like to be me' 'they don't know who I really am'* expresses her story of life being very different to those of her peers, with deep and important social messages.

The Young Writers competition was open to those aged 11-18 and aimed to inspire young people to plan and write their own piece of poetry around the word **'Imagine!'**. Imagine if we were all equal... Imagine if you had one wish... Imagine if the world ended tomorrow. A simple thought that inspired Abigail to write this emotional and heartfelt piece of writing.

Chief Officer, Angela Allison said: ***"We are all very proud of Abigail for being selected in the competition, and it's a real achievement to have her work published. Entering competitions like the Young Writers is a fantastic morale boost for young carers, and helps to give them a voice in our community whose voices may otherwise not be heard."***

It is so important that children and young people feel represented as young carers and creative writing is a great way for them to reflect their personality and experiences through life. Huge congratulations from us all Abigail, it's hard to believe that you are only 11 years old. We are beyond proud of this incredible achievement.

Imagine if they could understand,
what it's like to be me.
No more "stop crying."
No more "you're such a geek."

Imagine if they could understand,
what it's like to be me.
No more "you're so annoying."
No more laughing everywhere I see.

You see,
They don't know me.
They don't know who I really am.
They don't know everything about my life.
They may think they do,
but they are so wrong.
The life of a young carer,
Is far from a cheerful song.

Imagine if they could understand,
what it's like to be me.
No more rolling of eyes.
No more insecurities.

Imagine if they could understand,
what it's like to be me.
No more hatred behind my back.
No more feeling so weak.

You see,
They don't know me.
They don't know who I really am.
They don't know everything about my life.
They may think they do,
but they are so wrong.
The life of a young carer,
Is far from a cheerful song.

So you see,
This world's so judgemental.
But try with all your might,
imagine if you were in my shoes.
What would you find?

A life with no light.

Your second vaccination will be given up to 12 weeks after your first. Your primary care team will contact you to arrange this. If you have not heard from them by week 11 please contact your practice.

If you have been to a national site e.g. The Etihad or local pharmacy this will have been booked when you received your first jab. In the meantime, please continue to follow government advice on social distancing even if you have been vaccinated.

COVID-19 VACCINATION INFORMATION



Waiting on
your 2nd
vaccination?

NHS
Wigan Borough
Clinical Commissioning Group

Easter wellbeing sessions with Koof

Over the Easter break in collaboration with the mental health charity Kooth we are running two sessions.

One on anxiety: how to distinguish it from stress and approaches to managing it.

One on general wellbeing: including five ways to wellbeing.

Both sessions will give young carers concepts to understand anxiety and wellbeing and tools to use in their daily lives.

Young carers can come to the centre for or if there is additional demand can attend online.

Young carers can attend one or both sessions.

Booking as ever is via ticketsource.

Anxiety: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/wigan-and-leigh-carers-centre/t-zrpmej>.

Wellbeing: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/wigan-and-leigh-carers-centre/t-drdamv>.

How To: Cope with Stress & Anxiety

Kooth on Stress & Anxiety

This session will cover the following:

- What's the difference between stress and anxiety?
- What is the Stress Bucket?
- How to develop coping mechanisms
- Anxiety myth busting
- Finding the right anxiety zone for you

Wednesday 7th April @ 3:30-4:30pm

If you are interested in attending this session, register by going to:
<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/wigan-and-leigh-carers-centre/t-zrpmej>.



Support for Wellbeing

Kooth on Wellbeing

This session will cover the following:

- What is wellbeing?
- Developing a selfcare routine
- Exploring the *Five Ways to Wellbeing*

Wednesday 14th April @ 3:30-4:30pm

If you are interested in attending this session, register by going to:
<https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/wigan-and-leigh-carers-centre/t-drdamv>.



COVID-19 VACCINATION INFORMATION



Please always be
aware of scams

COVID-19 VACCINATION INFORMATION



You'll never be asked for money
or bank details.

Covid vaccine feedback

Please share your experiences as a carer relating to the Covid-19 vaccination rollout in Wigan. We are urging local carers to tell us how it is working in Wigan so we can review the take-up of, how you have accessed information about the vaccine and if you require any further support.

What you have to say will also be important to the Wigan health and care system running our local programme, to know how the vaccine programme is working for unpaid carers.

Complete the feedback form here:
<https://tinyurl.com/CovidVaccineFeedback>.



Helping carers to improve their digital skills

Digital technology has made many aspects of our life more convenient and accessible. Being able to go online can be a life saver for carers.

Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre offer a range of training courses for 'digital support' and can provide carers with the skills required to help feel confident and safe when going online. That could be for banking, shopping, finding information about a condition or being able to connect with professionals for support.

Many thanks to Peter, WLCC volunteer for delivering our session in March and helping carers to develop their digital skills, using the internet with confidence.



Lewy Body UK - 15th June 2021

Join us to hear about the latest research into Lewy body dementia from global experts, and celebrate 15 years of The Lewy Body Society

Key speakers



Organisers: Rimona Weil (UCL), Claire O'Callaghan (Sydney) & John-Paul Taylor (Newcastle)



The Lewy Body UK - Online Research Conference is due to take place on 15th June 2021 and free tickets are available via the link below.

This conference is free of charge and will take place via Zoom. Most of the talks will be scientific, but the event is open to everyone - researchers, practitioners, people living with dementia and carers/family members.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lewy-body-uk-online-research-conference-tickets-140927709573>.

Can our Carers' Case Officers help?

If you think our Carers' Case Officers might be able to help you with advice on one-to-one support, advocacy or other general help or guidance relating to your caring role, why not email Catherine or Jill at carerscaseofficer@wlcccarers.com? They'll be happy to hear from you.

Company registered in England and Wales 07293521. 3-5 Frederick Street, Hindley, Wigan, WN2 3BD.

Are you struggling with your mental health wellbeing?
Experiencing home-schooling pressures?
Relationship breakdowns?
Feeling alone?
Need someone to offload to?
Caring responsibilities leave you with no time to talk to someone?
Scared to reach out for help/advice?
Have things just gotten too much?

Did you find yourself answering yes to any the questions above? Well, if so, this may be a perfect option for you. Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre are working closely with Emotional Wellbeing Group, a non-profit organisation based in the North West that offers a free, easy to use and confidential online live message chat service with a counsellor for adults 18+, either as a one off or continuing counselling.

EWG aims to offer support to anyone whose mental health wellbeing has been impacted by Covid 19 or by other individual needs. EWG also offers a multitude of helpful information and advice on their website, enabling you to create a bank of useful resources. This past year has highlighted the importance of reaching out and talking to one another, however, we understand that commitments as a carer can make it difficult to access the opportunity to talk to someone.

Alongside the existing counselling offered through WLCC, we have decided to work with EWG to offer you the chance to talk in a safe space with experienced counsellors, whenever you need them. 'It helps to talk!'

Our student volunteer counsellor, Yasmina says ***"I think EWG counselling is a great alternative for carers and anyone else who needs a friendly ear. Being able to access this easy, short term advice and guidance is very worthwhile. Not only do I think the live chat service will be extremely helpful for many, I also think the bank of helpful resources is very handy and accessible!"***

For more information visit <https://ewgcounselling.co.uk> to start a live chat with a counsellor or call the Carers Centre to discuss your counselling needs on 01942 705959.

Concessionary pass renewal extension

Following on from a story we ran in our January newsletter, it was recently announced that Greater Manchester concessionary pass holders will **not need** to travel to renew their tram and train add-on until late June at the earliest after the deadline for renewal was extended by nearly three months.

The extension is aimed at removing the need for more than 120,000 concessionary pass holders making unnecessary journeys to renew it, until Monday 21st June 2021 at the earliest. The extension date will be kept under review alongside the progress of the roadmap. To keep up to date with any future developments regarding concessionary travel visit <https://tfgm.com/>.



Wigan Council MyAccount – important changes



Important changes are happening to Wigan Council's MyAccount. Although you will be able to access your existing account until 31st March, after that date you will need to register for a new MyAccount which has been designed to improve the range of digital services on offer.

When you sign into the new MyAccount from April, you will be able to:

- View your Council Tax details
- View your Housing Benefit details
- Report a wide range of issues within the borough

The council recommend that existing users of MyAccount use the same email address to create their new MyAccount as this will ensure you can view previously submitted reports and existing bookings. **Register for the new MyAccount.**

Learning sign language and giving a voice

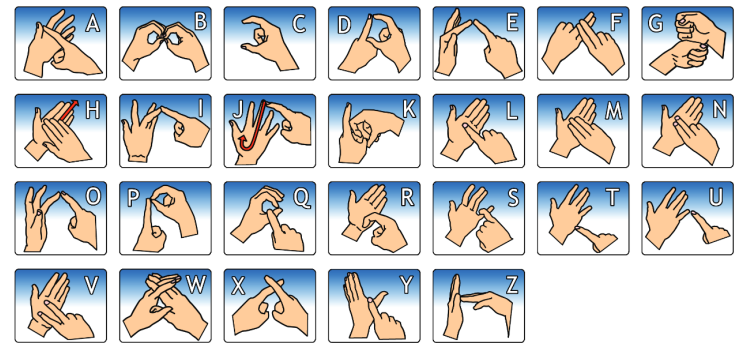
Our student social worker, Rowan recently led a team meeting and gave staff at WLCC an informal training session and introduction to British Sign Language (BSL). BSL uses a mixture of hand signals, body language and lip patterns to communicate so those with hearing loss can still get their 'voice heard'.

Sign language can benefit so many, not just those with hearing loss. If we all learned just a little bit of sign language, we could open the world up to so many and begin wonderful conversations we may have missed.

In this session, staff learned to sign useful words and greetings.

Thank you, Rowan, for your excellent first lesson, we look forward to putting the new found learning to good use. In the meantime, why don't you have a go and see if you can spell your name, or say hello? It might make the world of difference to someone.

BSL - FINGERSPELLING ALPHABET



SIGN LANGUAGE
FORUM

SHARE & PRACTICE BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE ONLINE
WWW.SIGNLANGUAGEFORUM.COM/BSL

Check 'em lads

Hello, I live in Wigan and I am a quadriplegic with cerebral palsy (I don't let it get me down) and I'm about to take you on my journey about the importance of health and self-checking, even if you are disabled and can't check yourself.

Due to my disability I can't check myself for any changes to my body so I rely on my mum to do it. My journey started because my mum was getting concerned about the size of one of my testicles because it was getting bigger. To be honest with you it didn't worry me at the time because I felt fine and it didn't hurt me but to put my mum's mind at ease I agreed to go and see the doctor. To cut a long story short I ended up going for a scan; a large lump was found, then I had an appointment with a consultant, then a CT scan, then an operation to remove the testicle. From my first scan through to the operation, it all happened very quickly.

I thought that after my op I'd be fine but it turned out the tumour was cancerous. I felt sick to the pit of my stomach and it made me worried and it made me cry (and boy did I cry). About a month after my surgery, I received a letter to say they had successfully removed the cancer but I still had to have follow-up treatment. I didn't know how much treatment I would be having or exactly what it would be, which left me feeling nervous at the unknown.

So, I'm now on the next stage of my journey - treatment at The Christie. I'm back from my follow-up appointment at the Christie. It didn't go quite as I thought it would because I thought I was just going in to give written consent to start treatment but I was told that I need another CT scan because one of my lymph nodes was looking a bit bigger than the rest on my last CT scan. I felt sick and worried and now I have to wait for a CT scan appointment then another follow-up appointment to discuss the results. It feels like it's now dragging on a bit but I just have to wait.

I've just come from my latest CT scan to check my nodes, now a long two week wait till my results.

I've just been to my latest visit at the hospital to get my results of the recent CT scan I had. It was such a relief to be told my lymph node had gone down to a normal size, which means I don't need chemo (consultant said it was due to an infection I had).

I will have to have regular checks at The Christie for the next five years so they can keep an eye on me and make sure I'm well. My next appointment is in three months' time, which will be the start of my five year check-ups and will include chest X-rays and blood tests. Fingers crossed all will be fine and that's briefly my journey that I wanted to share with you.

I'm very lucky I have my mum and that she was, and is, able to check me. If it hadn't been for her then it could have been a different outcome.

Finally, a message from my mum and carer: don't be afraid or embarrassed to speak to someone you trust or go to the doctor if there are any changes to your body that don't seem right, even if it's in a delicate area, because it's important and could save your life.



Get involved, help inform health and care services

Engage Britain is supporting people across the nation to share their health and care experiences with the aim of bringing about lasting change that benefits everyone. What do you feel is working right now? What could be better? And are there any ideas you'd like to put forward?

If you have views about any of these questions, why not get involved and have your say? You can:

Share your views online – answer four short questions online or submit a video response. To share your views visit: <https://engagebritain.org/be-heard-on-health-and-care/>.

Take part in an online community conversation – on 22nd April between 6.00-7.30 pm or 13th May from 10.00-11.30 am, join an open community conversation with other people from across England, Scotland and Wales to share your experiences of health and care. To take part or for more details, email healthandcare@engagebritain.org.

Host an online conversation in your local community – as a host, you'll get trained on how to organise and run a 'Community Conversation' online, get paid an involvement fee and join a network of like-minded hosts from all over the country. For more information visit <https://engagebritain.org/become-a-host/>.

Whatever your thoughts, have your say at <https://engagebritain.org/get-involved/>.



Exercise online for free

Looking for a free online exercise class? Toning Through Tension will continue for two weeks in April. This class will help you to build muscle and endurance through low impact exercises while increasing mental strength. One of their specialist level four personal trainers will be leading the lessons and are equipped to train individuals with long term conditions as well as lower back problems. This class is suitable for all ages and is also perfect for individuals who are beginning their fitness journey this spring.

Monday April 5th and 12th at 6.00 pm.

To register, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/237pfsvr>.



Participants wanted

Participants are required for a study about the effects of listening to a trauma story on the psychological wellbeing of mental health professionals who work in clinical practice.

If you would like to know more about the aims of the research or wish to take part in this study, please visit: https://mmu.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9RWiZMDQBwI98Y5.

Experiencing mindfulness in Bickershaw

Our recent Mindfulness Walk was fully sold out when we ventured to Bickershaw Country Park, a developing nature reserve located between Bickershaw village and Westleigh on the former Bickershaw Colliery site. It is a 247-hectare haven for wildlife, comprising of extensive grasslands, woodlands, and scrubland.

Bickershaw is home to an amazing variety of wildlife including, Willow Tits, Kingfisher, Heron and Jack Snipe. Highland Bulls and Roe Deer can also be seen hiding in the woodlands, and predators such as Buzzards, Kestrels and Sparrow Hawks can often be observed hunting over the grasslands.

Our next Mindfulness Walk for carers (and cared for) is Wednesday 7th April at Windy Bank (near to Bents), please book online to secure your place: <https://www.ticketsource.co.uk/.../2021-04-07/10:00/t-dzjpeo>.

