

FamilyCarersNet - Making a Mark - Social Enterprise Story

Social Need

FamilyCarersNet is a social enterprise founded in April 2016 providing support for unpaid carers. It was founded by Simon Brown an unpaid carer receiving no support.

At the beginning of FamilyCarersNet we spoke to 879 carers living in Suffolk and discovered that 69% of them were experiencing feelings of depression and that 82% were interested in the idea of receiving support digitally. This confirmed to us the need for an online community that could help carers who were isolated at home and unable to get out.

Regionally, in Suffolk there are up to 78,000 unpaid carers, Norfolk up to 100,000 and Devon up to 85,000.

Nationally, 1 in 8 adults, around 6.5million people, are carers and by 2037 it's anticipated that the number of carers will increase to 9 million. Over 3 million people juggle care with work and 1 in 5 carers are forced to give up work altogether. Carers save the economy £132 billion per year.

FamilyCarersNet support anybody who is caring for a family member or friend. This could be related to their physical, emotional or mental health. It could be that they have a learning disability or problems with substance misuse. We support Adult Carers, Parent Carers, Young Carers and Young Adult Carers.

At FamilyCarersNet we acknowledge the fact that not everybody sees themselves as a carer; you may feel you are just helping out a family member. We are there to offer support whenever people need it, however big or small their requirements.

In Response

In response to this need, FamilyCarersNet offer the following services for Carers:

Advice Line

Our Advice Line is run by experienced Carer Advisers who are trained to provide emotional wellbeing triage and can help people to navigate and understand local services, benefits, housing and navigate health and social care systems, as well as provide emotional support. The Carer Advice Team can assess their needs and those of their cared-for and help them access the support which will benefit them most; this may involve signposting or making onward referrals to other helpful statutory and voluntary organisations. We can also refer people internally to our free counselling service. We offer signposting and research. Above all our advisors can offer emotional support and a non-judgemental listening ear. Through the advice line we have 1,400 carers registered in Norfolk alone.

Our Advice Line is open seven days a week 8am-8pm. As well as support over the telephone we can also be contacted through our Live Chat Facility.

A Carer will visit a GP 5.5 times a year due to their caring role this costs the NHS £45 a visit, we aim to reduce this by one. Nationally this is a potentially saving the NHS £270,000,000 per year.

Counselling

We offer Free Counselling to people whose emotional wellbeing is affected by their caring responsibilities. The counselling is provided by our in-house professional counsellors and can take place face to face, over the telephone or skype, 7 days a week 8am-8pm whatever works best for the carer. Our counsellors regularly reach a 60% recovery rate from depression and anxiety, the national average is 50%. Our counselling provides a chance to work through complex emotions, develop coping strategies and process changes in your life. Counsellors can offer up to eight sessions free of charge.

Digital & Technology: The Pod

We've created a support hub named The Pod, a mobile app: that is an online community for carers to chat, share experiences and get advice. Providing a social network just for carers and peer to peer support 24/7, giving carers a place for support at 3am in the morning or anytime they need it. Soon The Pod will feature Live Messenger and Video Chat service for carers. The content on our website covers everything from quick (and tasty) recipes to top tips for looking after your mental health. We also offer events and activities that carers and their family can attend, quite often for free!

We also have an active Facebook page and Twitter account. We are keen to explore and debate topics and issues, which are relevant to carers and for people to feel their voice is heard.

Carers TV

Carers TV is a magazine talk show which discusses many different issues; relationships, food, holidays, health and carer issues. This show has been designed that it can be viewed by a wider target audience, than just carers. However, a lot of the topics will surround Carer issues. Carers TV has had around 1000 views, and we have partnered with various organisation including Glasswell's and Jimmy's Farm, and we plan to continue filming the great and needed content of Carers TV.

Quick Food for Carers

Our other web-based videos is quick food for carers. We realised that one issue many carers were having was they simply didn't have the time nor energy to cook dinner every night, thus, many carers were resorting to take aways or ready meals and consequently were quite unhealthy. We created quick food for Carers to illustrate that you can cook healthy and delicious, quickly and easily. This show has had a real impact on carers across the country, with several videos having over 10'000 views. We additionally plan to continue creating this content so we can help more carers stay healthy.

In the Community

We work with both statutory and voluntary services to reach people in the community. This may be by attending existing groups as well as having stands at relevant events and conferences. To date we have connected with Steel Bones, Rural Coffee Caravan, Meet Up Mondays, PACT, Priory School, West Suffolk CCG, St. Nicholas Hospice and both their Hospice Neighbours and Compassionate Communities schemes.