

Support for carers

Caring for someone living with MND is physically and emotionally challenging. Many carers have found themselves thrown into the role soon after receiving the news of their loved one's diagnosis, with little or no time to plan ahead.

We recognise and value the vital role played by families and unpaid carers of all ages and are committed to doing all we can to support them. As a branch or group, you play a crucial part in providing local support to carers, as well as signposting to other support that is available.

Carers Meetings

Some branches and groups run specific separate meetings or sessions for carers only, who often find it difficult to talk about their feelings and concerns in front of the person with MND they are caring for.

The Cleveland Branch began holding monthly carers meetings after they saw that many carers were not having their own support needs met anywhere else. "The aim of the carers support group is to give carers the opportunity to talk about their feelings, share their experiences with other carers, and generally to discuss things they may not want to talk about in front of their loved ones" says Branch Chair, Luke Rutter.

"The group has been a great success with good support from carers. The format is informal, to encourage people to open up and discuss anything that is on their mind. The feedback from them has been encouraging".

Linda McNally who cares for her husband Tom, regularly attends the carers meetings and says, "We're a well-run group, all pulling in the same direction to make life that little more bearable. To any other branches or groups who don't have a carers group or are thinking of forming one, then do it. The rewards are many".

The East Surrey Branch brings together former partners and carers for an annual reunion. Simon Edmands, Branch Chair, says: "This very simple but effective event enables former carers to keep in contact not just with the branch, but also with each other.

"Without events such as this, it would be very easy to lose touch completely. In fact, former carers are now also invited to our monthly get-togethers as they have a wealth of knowledge and experience to pass on to current carers and people living with MND."

More information about organising a successful meeting can be found in the Support through Meetings guidance in the Support section of the Volunteer Zone.

Forum

Our forum (<http://forum.mndassociation.org>) has a specific section for carers. You could promote this useful resource to carers through your branch/group:

- website
- newsletter
- support meetings
- social media channels

Signposting to local carers organisations

There are a number of voluntary section organisations that specialise in support to carers. By developing a directory of local services in your area for carers, which can be made available at support meetings, you can help carers to access these existing local services and get the support and information they may need.

A directory could include:

- local carers organisations
- local sitting service
- volunteer driver schemes
- gardening schemes

If you have your own branch/group website, you may also wish to include links to organisations such as those above.