

Carers groups launched in Trowbridge/BoA and Melksham

A fledgling carers group is underway in the Trowbridge and Bradford on Avon area.

The group has been set up by care co-ordinator Jackie Ransome to meet the needs of existing carers. It will meet on the same day as the well-established ex-carers group, so both groups can get together to share experiences and socialise.

Jackie said: "The new group will have a speaker one month and a social occasion the next, and we will get together with the ex-carers from time to

time as everyone knows each other."

The ex-carers group, which meets for lunch once a month, is now being co-ordinated by Chris White. Both groups meet on the first Wednesday of each month, and venues vary.

- A new group is also being set up in Melksham, as a spin-off from the training course for carers described below. Ex-course members will be invited to monthly events with speakers on alternate months.

'Sharing experiences made us feel less alone'

*Carer **Bev Thompson** attended Alzheimer's Support's recent Training Course for Carers at the Leigh Park Hotel in Bradford on Avon. Here she gives her verdict on the course*

CARING is the one job for which there is no formal training. So a training course for carers two hours a week for six weeks seemed a good way of finding out more about what has become my full-time job.

At the first session consultant *Dr Jill Emerson* explained the different types of dementia and what to expect from each. She also answered questions about the methods of diagnosis and procedures used locally.

On week 2 dementia consultant *Elizabeth Bartlett* gave useful tips on dealing with unusual behaviour. We all had our own examples! She stressed that people behaved differently according to their personalities and the type and extent of the dementia. As well as responding to individual queries her general advice included not to confront or criticise the person, to maintain eye contact, to keep calm, reduce demands and focus on positive behaviour and achievements.

On week 3 solicitor *Elizabeth Webbe* explained some of the financial and legal aspects of caring, including powers of attorney and the importance of wording in wills. Earlier, *Rhian Bennett* from Wiltshire Council did her best to explain the complex world of carer's entitlements, including carers assessments and direct payments.

The following week clinical psychologist *Paul Whitby* showed us a relaxation exercise which had the required effect as we nearly fell asleep! He also explained the importance of keeping fit and well as a carer, keeping stress levels low and above all not trying to be perfect.

Safer Moving and Assisting on week 5 turned out to be an unexpected highlight of the course. Trainer *Chris Brownfield* explained how to move people without injuring ourselves in the process. His humorous delivery made for an entertaining and informative afternoon.

On Week 6 a longer meeting opened with *Sue Hunt* from Wiltshire Farm Foods who let us taste some sample menus.

Next, *Gill Frere-Smith*, services manager of Alzheimer's



The Leigh Park Hotel

Support, explained the many forms of support the organisation provides before the final speaker of the course, *Jill Mitchener*, of the Order of St John's Trust care homes.

She is leading a push to make the trust's homes in Wiltshire more dementia-friendly, with innovations including a dementia conference for staff and outward bound holidays for residents with dementia.

At the end of the course we were all presented with a certificate.

None of us knew what to expect when we walked into the course on that first afternoon. But it was so welcoming. We all made some good friends and sharing information and experiences made us feel less alone.

Due to high demand we are running another course from June 10 to July 15.

For details please contact 01225 776481.

Our Carers' Training Courses are funded by Wiltshire Council.