

## Maidenhead Care Commissioning Service – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018



I was invited to join Care as Chairman in August last year, so I am coming to the end of my first year. This was after meeting and attending an interview with the Trustees which was quite nerve racking – not because of the fierceness of the Trustees, quite the opposite, but because it was the first time that I had been interviewed since 1980. However, all went well and here I am.

I was asked to speak tonight about my first year and the impression that I have gained about Care. Firstly, I can say what a wonderful welcome I have received from everyone and, in particular, the support and encouragement that I have received from the Trustees. I am fully committed to Care and want to help the organisation meet the challenges that we currently face and which will only increase in the years ahead.

Maidenhead Care was started in 1985 at the instigation of the Reverend Peter Hudson from the Methodist Church. He succeeded in drawing together a committed group from different churches in Maidenhead and created a Management Committee formed of all churches in the area which were enthusiastic and keen for the concept to succeed. The concept was simple yet brilliant. It was to become good neighbours to all in our catchment area and operate as though those we were helping lived next door to us. We are not professionals, we have no specific trained skills, we are ordinary people with a desire to help others and to follow God's commandment to love thy neighbour. I am told that originally Care operated a 24hour, 7 day a week, 365 days a year service with telephone calls coming at all times of the day and night – even on Christmas day. All records were on paper with carbon duplicates and numerous record books which had to be transferred from Duty Officer to Duty Officer with some system for transferring the Care telephone number from one Duty Officer's home land line to the next via an arrangement with BT. Help in the Home Heavy played in greater part in Care's operation then than it does now and it was not unknown for us to help to decorate in client's homes – often with the help of the Lions Club. It was only in this last year that we have wound up HHH mainly because of Health and Safety requirements and insurance issues but we must never forget the wonderful volunteers who undertook this work. HHL - Help in the Home Light, (you see that I have got a grip of some of the acronyms we use) continues with shopping expeditions and friendly visits for a chat but we seem to have morphed into becoming mainly a transporting organisation operating nine to five, five days a week.

Now we are lucky in having so many dedicated volunteers who all give their time so willingly to help others less fortunate than themselves. I have met many through the excellent Christmas and Summer parties and, on behalf of the Trustees and Management Committee, sincerely thank them all for their work. Since becoming involved in Care I have been staggered by the number of organisations operating in the voluntary sector not only in this area but throughout the country. All are seeking more volunteers as workloads increase. Local authorities and especially the beleaguered, but brilliant, Health Service are relying more and more on the voluntary sector to cope with an ageing population and Government funding cuts. I doubt whether the promised extra NHS money will alleviate its problems without some radical overhaul on the expenditure side of its operation. In many years of business I have never experienced a problem being solved simply by throwing money at it. Care is at the forefront of recognised voluntary organisations on which the Health Service depends. Even my own GP, on my latest annual MOT visit, which I passed by the way but the

bodywork is beginning to show signs of age and I can't drive it as fast as I used to, admitted that she does not know how their practice would cope without Maidenhead Care. So, one of our more pressing tasks is to find more volunteers – but how? Well, we can start by looking at our origins. Although our Management Committee comprises representative from a number of churches, are there any other churches in our area to which we can make an approach? Do the congregations of participating churches know enough about Care - there have been many changes in ministers and congregations since 1985 and are they fully aware of what we do and that the movement began amongst them? How many churches have dedicated space on their notice boards for Care and how many publicise our activities through magazines or even pulpit announcements? Maybe we should look at this at our next Management Committee meeting.

We must get out and about in the community – we have a great opportunity to approach potential recruits at CAMRA's Real Ale Festival at the end of this month. Maybe not the ideal gathering to attract volunteer drivers, especially as the evening wears on but non the less, and joking aside, the attendees there will be local people with an interest in their community. I am willing to visit any organisation which invites speakers to its meetings, to talk about Maidenhead Care and the unique way in which we operate, and also to throw in a few words on the other charity in which I am involved deeply, the Louis Baylis (Maidenhead Advertiser) Trust.

Thirty three years have passed since people with vision set up Maidenhead Care. Many are still around and I know that we have some very long serving volunteers here tonight and many who will continue to be involved for as long as they can. The obvious point is that those people with their vision, enthusiasm and commitment were considerably younger then than they are now. To paraphrase the prophet Joel – “your old men have dreams and your young men have vision”. This is not to denigrate or overlook in any way that which has been achieved in the past, but to emphasise the need for the recruitment of younger people with newer ideas to carry on the magnificent work of Care into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although we can learn so much from history, I believe that we must focus on what we can do rather than on what we used to do. Great strides have already been made with the use of mobile telephones and computerisation – no longer do Duty Officers have to lug nine or so ledgers with accompanying copy and carbon paper between themselves – and I am sure that more will come. For example, are there other voluntary organisations with which we can share links and information in order to do the best we can for our clients? Will our clients be able to book appointments with us on line rather than by telephone? I recognise that many of our current clients do not have computer access or skills but that will change. Look at the increase in on line shopping and the so called new initiative of the NHS app to book appointments on line – my own, and many other surgeries are already doing this and have been for some time.

All this is for the future. For the present please let me thank all our volunteers once again and thank them and the Management Committee and Trustees for all the work they do for Care and for making me so welcome. I look forward to continue working with you in the coming months and years.

May God bless you all and those whom we help.

**John Roberstson MBE**  
**Chairman**  
**Maidenhead Care**