

Link up to friends, family and carers through Brixham Does Care

FRIENDS, FAMILY AND CARERS, lend me your ears! (With apologies to Shakespeare.) It is almost a year now that, since the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, none of us has been able to attend any of the regular groups and activities normally provided by Brixham Does Care from their Office, rooms and Café in the Town Hall, owing to the ongoing temporary closure. Fortunately, the staff were able to move up to The Friends Centre, (situated on the Brixham Hospital site off Greenswood Road), which BDC manages on behalf of the Torbay & South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, and they have worked tirelessly manning the phone lines to take calls from those requiring help and support, and co-ordinating staff and volunteers collecting prescriptions and shopping, etc., for those unable to venture out themselves. Regular 'phone calls have been made to those requiring a friendly ear and morale support.

The biggest irony, however, is that the majority of people who would normally attend activities in order to benefit from face to face social interaction with other people, are difficult to reach, at present. Prior to coronavirus, every couple of months, together with my wife Josephine, I would co-host Singalong parties in the BDC Café. People would travel from as far as Newton Abbot to attend and we all had a great time, chatting and singing together. I would also pay regular visits to entertain local Memory Cafes, Social Clubs and Residential Care Homes.

During lockdown, like many other people I have turned to the internet, and watched numerous How To... videos on You Tube in order to learn new skills. These include communicating with family and friends, especially over the festive period of Christmas and New Year, using Zoom meetings. What appeared to be daunting, at first, soon became incredibly easy to access, and I have since managed to join in with, and even host, Zoom Singalongs with various local Memory Cafes. Of course, I made mistakes at first, but we all had a laugh at my expense and people were very forgiving as we learned new things together. The feedback from the participants was amazing, with comments such as: "We never realised how easy it was to join the Zoom meetings." Others said: "I was quite touched to see familiar faces once again." Unfortunately, many people are afraid to try, like I was. But it occurred to me that, until we can physically meet up again in the same room, perhaps this new tool is the only one available to us that would replicate something like human interaction. I therefore implore carers, friends and family members to consider offering their help to link up their loved ones onto a Zoom meeting. (As the BBC might say: - "Other providers like Skype, Messenger, Microsoft Teams, etc., are available.")

The Brixham Does Care Office is open Monday to Friday 9.45am to 4.00pm.

Telephone Helpline for all General Enquiries and Support: 01803 857727

Website: www.brixhamdoescare.co.uk

If you would like details of how to join a Zoom meeting, contact me on **Tel: 01803 851438** or via **email: violetsrest@hotmail.co.uk** The next Scheduled Zoom Meeting is: - **Valentines Singalong on Monday 15th February at 2.00pm.** You will need a Laptop, tablet or ipad. I will send you an email which contains the <https://.....> Link for the next meeting. On the day in question you simply click on the blue link at 2.00pm and follow the simple instructions. After a Welcome Chat we sing for 30 mins. Chat, then sing again before final Goodbyes. No-one is forced to sing and nobody else can hear **you** if you do! All the song lyrics are on screen. You will hear the backing track music and my voice to sing along to if you wish. Hope you can join me.

In the meantime, Stay safe and Zoom into 2021.

Martyn Paddon. Chairman, Brixham Does Care.

7th February 2021

