

PRESS RELEASE

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Care Network Cambridgeshire celebrates 40 years of changing lives – with ambitious plans to support even more local people



From a small village initiative to a countywide charity helping thousands of people every year, Care Network Cambridgeshire celebrated its 40th anniversary last week, bringing together the people, stories and partnerships that have shaped four decades of community support.

Staff, volunteers, clients, partners and supporters gathered at the William Collyn Community Centre in Girton on Tuesday 6 October to celebrate the charity's achievements, reflect on its remarkable journey and look ahead to the future.

Since becoming an established charity in 1986, Care Network has supported thousands of people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough through some of life's most challenging moments – helping them overcome loneliness, rebuild confidence, access essential services and maintain their independence.

The celebration brought that impact to life through personal stories, reflections from the charity's founder, a special anniversary film and tributes to the staff, volunteers and partners who have helped shape its work.

A powerful reminder that anyone can need support

One of the most moving moments of the afternoon came when Alisha, a woman in her 20s, shared her experience of receiving support from Care Network following major brain surgery.



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Having recently moved to an unfamiliar area, Alisha found herself living alone, recovering from a second brain operation and struggling with isolation, financial difficulties and serious health challenges.

Care Network helped her access financial support, improve her safety at home and build connections within her community. Through practical assistance and consistent emotional support, Alisha has gradually rebuilt her confidence, independence and optimism for the future.

Her story also challenged a common misconception – that care and community support services are primarily for older people. Alisha explained that, as a younger adult, she had initially been hesitant to seek help because she associated care and support services with older generations.

Her experience highlights an important message: life's challenges can affect anyone, at any age, and knowing where to turn for support can make an enormous difference.

From humble beginnings to supporting thousands

The event also welcomed Care Network founder Sheila Stephenson, whose original vision of helping people through compassion, dignity and practical community support laid the foundations for the charity's development.

What began as a small initiative in Comberton in the 1970s grew into a network of community services, including volunteer car schemes and support for people returning home from hospital.

Reflecting on the anniversary celebrations, Sheila said:

"I am over the moon as to where things have got to."

She also paid tribute to the many people who have helped develop her original ideas, describing how they had taken her principles of care, dignity and compassion further than she could ever have imagined.

Today, Care Network operates across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, providing personalised support through its Help at Home, RISE and Community Support services. In 2025 alone, the charity supported 2,479 people, with 94% reporting feeling less isolated and 90% reporting improved independence.

Looking ahead: strengthening communities for the future

While the anniversary celebrated four decades of achievement, it also marked an opportunity to look ahead.

Speaking to BBC Radio Cambridgeshire following the celebration, Lynda Phillips, Chief Executive of Care Network Cambridgeshire, highlighted the charity's ambitions to expand its reach and strengthen support within local communities.

"One of the things that we are really good at is that we build the support around the individual needs," she explained.



Lynda described how the charity works closely with communities to identify gaps in existing services and develop support that responds to local needs.

With increasing pressures on individuals and families, Care Network plans to significantly expand its volunteer network over the next three years, recruiting people from within the communities where support is needed most.

The charity is also looking to raise greater public awareness of its services, helping more people understand what support is available and how to access it.

People at the heart of everything

The anniversary celebration recognised the dedication of the people who have made Care Network what it is today - from its founder and early volunteers to the staff, community partners and supporters who continue its work.

Guests enjoyed a special anniversary film, a journey through 40 years of the charity's history, personal stories and an opportunity to celebrate together.

Forty years on, Care Network Cambridgeshire remains committed to the values that inspired its beginnings: supporting people, strengthening communities and keeping people at the heart of everything it does.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Care Network Cambridgeshire

Care Network Cambridgeshire is a registered charity dedicated to helping adults across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough improve their health, wellbeing and independence.

Through three core service areas – Help at Home, RISE (Resilience, Intervention, Support and Empowerment) and Community Support – the charity provides practical help, personalised guidance and community-based services.

Its origins date back to the 1970s, when founder Sheila Stephenson established a village support initiative in Comberton. The organisation became an established charity in 1986.

40th Anniversary Celebration

The charity celebrated its 40th anniversary on Tuesday 6 October 2026 at the William Collyn Community Centre, Girton, Cambridge.

Media opportunities

Professional photographs from the anniversary celebration are available.



Interviews with representatives of Care Network Cambridgeshire may be arranged on request.

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