

carer

Meet Ups



**A toolkit to help you organise fun, informative get togethers
for family, whānau, and aiga carers.**

VISIT: www.meetup.com (search for 'carers' or 'Carers NZ')



Get together for laughs, sharing, and fun



Spend time with other carers, discover helpful services, and receive information from Carers NZ and other community organisations



Gain new skills, understanding, and knowledge



Find new friends!

Often family carers become socially isolated because they find it difficult to attend events outside their homes. Yet many carers tell us they would like to connect with each other at informal events to receive information, hear about available help, and maybe meet a new friend. After all, no one understands a carer like another carer!

Over the years Carers NZ has tried all kinds of carer get togethers. Feedback indicates that informal socialising and learning opportunities are the preferred ways for carers to interact

with us and with each other. We hope this toolkit provides all the information you'll need to organise a MeetUp that carers will enjoy. This could be on a one-off basis, or you may wish to host regular MeetUps.

Whether you are a carer wanting to connect with other carers, or an organisation wishing to host a carer gathering, this Toolkit aims to help you plan and hold a successful event.



A MeetUp for carers can be whatever you want it to be!

They can be held anywhere: at a private home, a quiet café, a church or community hall, or any gathering place that is convenient for carers.

Organise a MeetUp Yourself

You can organise a MeetUp informally by 'spreading the word' via phone, email, and post. Or you can promote your MeetUp by creating an account and sharing details about the event at www.meetup.com

If you do organise your own MeetUp, let us know so we can tell other carers in your area about it. You can do this by phoning 0800 777 797, or email the details to centre@carers.net.nz. We connect with thousands of carers across the country who will like to know about upcoming MeetUps in their communities.

Get Carers NZ to Help!

Another option is to ask Carers NZ to create a MeetUp. We will be promoting our MeetUps, and any others we are aware of across New Zealand, at www.carersair.net.nz. Visit regularly to learn about upcoming MeetUps in your community!

Carers NZ 0800 777 797 centre@carers.net.nz
www.carersair.net.nz

 We look forward to helping you plan a great MeetUp for carers! 

Find a MeetUp?

To find out about upcoming events in your area

VISIT: www.meetup.com
(search for 'carers' or 'Carers NZ')

Hosting a MeetUp?

Carers NZ can help you promote your event

CONTACT: centre@carers.net.nz



0

Background

Information about carer MeetUps and who might want to attend or organise one

5

Who Are Carers?

5

Meet Up FAQ's

6

1

Planning

Tips and advice to help you or your organisation plan a carer MeetUp

8

Planning Your MeetUp

8

Case Study

12

2

Promotion

Suggestions about how to promote your MeetUp so it's well attended

13

Promoting Your MeetUp

13

Sample Media Release

14

Sample Invitation

15

3

Hosting

Ideas for hosting a MeetUp, including ideas to ensure your event runs smoothly, and **sample discussion topics** carers might enjoy

15

Hosting Your MeetUp

15

Discussion Topics

16

If you have questions after reviewing the toolkit, please phone the National Carer Resource Centre during business hours, 0800 777 797. We'd be happy to provide further assistance to help you organise and promote an enjoyable MeetUp for carers!



According to Census 2013, there are more than 430,000 family, whānau, and aiga carers in New Zealand supporting someone who has ill health, a disability, a mental illness, an addiction, or who requires assistance in old age.

A carer's effort, understanding, and compassion enables those they assist to live with dignity and to participate more fully in society.

Family members or friends might provide modest help with shopping, housework, transport, and finances, or they may be caring 24/7 for someone who has very high or complex support needs.

No matter how much or how little assistance is provided, carers need to feel recognised and valued for the important role they carry out in society.

Everyone in New Zealand can expect to give or receive care in their lifetime. Carers face unique issues, many of which vary depending on their caring role.

By hosting a MeetUp for carers you will be raising awareness and recognition, and equipping them with the support, information and resources they need to sustain their own wellbeing while assisting others.

Thank you for working with Carers NZ to support family carers, and for putting your time and energy into hosting a special event for them.



What is a carer MeetUp?

A MeetUp is an opportunity for family carers to have some special time out, to meet new friends, learn about available support and information, enjoy some nice food, and have a bit of fun.

These gatherings may also provide an opportunity for training and learning for carers. And if your organisation is hosting a MeetUp, carers will be able to learn more about the information or services you provide.



Who can organise a MeetUp?

A MeetUp can be organised by carers for other carers in their community, or by a community group or organisation.

This toolkit is for anyone who wants to organise a get together for carers but isn't sure how to go about it.



Why should you host a MeetUp?

A MeetUp will help carers feel recognised and valued. We know that, for many different reasons, carers often feel isolated.

Some of these reasons could be geographical, financial, or because the carer simply finds it difficult to leave home due to their commitments. By hosting a carer MeetUp, you will be helping carers have a break from their daily routine and connect with others in similar situations.



Who will you invite to your MeetUp?

MeetUps generally should be open to all family carers regardless of their age or caring situation, but you may wish to host a MeetUp for a specific purpose. Who you invite or promote your MeetUp to is up to you!

Ideally MeetUp attendees will be limited to family carers, and not professionals or 'observers'. Carers often feel uncomfortable with 'officials' being present and may not open up or talk as freely as they would if they were in the company of other carers only.

If you do have professionals present, make sure they are there to give information and to inform carers about the services they provide, or to give assistance of some kind. Ensure that carers have time to themselves for sharing, learning, and fun.



Should you allow guests who aren't carers to attend your MeetUp?

A key idea of a MeetUp is for carers to have some quality time out with each other, but sometimes carers will ask if they can bring along the person they support. Assess this on a case by case basis.

Bear in mind that other carers attending the MeetUp may not feel comfortable with this, as a goal of the outing is for them to have respite from caring. They will have arranged relief care for the person(s) they support and will be looking forward to spending a few hours with other carers. It can feel awkward to exclude non-caring guests from your MeetUp, but most people will understand if you explain that the event has been organised just for carers.

A graphic for 'Step One Planning'. It features the words 'Step One' in a blue, cursive font inside a white circle with a dotted border. Below this, the word 'Planning' is written in white, bold, sans-serif font inside a blue rectangular box with a dotted border. The background consists of several overlapping circles in shades of blue, green, yellow, and pink.

Planning a carer MeetUp doesn't require a lot of time or energy. Here are some key things to think about!

A decorative icon for the 'Date & Time' section, consisting of several overlapping circles in shades of blue, green, yellow, and pink.

Date & Time

The best date and time will be guided by carers' availability. Ideally you would want 4 or more carers attending to make the event worthwhile.

Consider these questions:

Should you hold your MeetUp in the morning, afternoon, or evening?

What would best suit the carers in your area? We have found there is no perfect time that suits every carer, but avoid stressful times like early mornings, when carers are often busy assisting the person(s) they support, and late afternoons when heavy traffic, evening preparations, and after-school commitments may be an issue.

Would a weekend be more suitable than during the working week?

For working carers, weekends and evenings are easier.

How many MeetUps would you like to host?

You may decide to host a MeetUp once a month, once every two months, annually, or at intervals that work with your schedule and availability. Or, your MeetUp may be a 'one off' organised for a special purpose (such as a celebration of caring in your community).

Attendance may vary at your MeetUps; this is absolutely fine as long as numbers are sufficient to make it worthwhile for your organisation and for the carers who attend.

A decorative icon for the 'Duration' section, consisting of several overlapping circles in shades of blue, green, yellow, and pink.

Duration

2 to 4 hours is a good timeframe.

Do your best to start and finish on time, as often carers have arranged relief support for a specific period and need to stick to these timeframes.



Venue

This could be an external meeting venue, a café, or a meeting room within your own organisation.

Consider the following when looking for a venue:

- How many people can comfortably fit into the venue?
- Is it easy to find?
- Is it quiet enough to encourage good discussion and participation?
- If you plan to have your MeetUp at a café or public venue, talk to the manager to ensure seating is in a quiet position; organise the MeetUp for an offpeak time of the day when the venue is not crowded.
- Is there adequate parking? Is the parking free or will there be a charge? If the latter, can your organisation pay for or subsidise the cost?
- Is the venue handy to public transport for carers who might not drive?
- Is there a kitchen, or at least tea/coffee making facilities? Are crockery and cutlery available?
- Is the venue accessible for people with mobility needs?

Catering

Carers enjoy having special food, so consider having some outside catering for your event.

Don't ask carers to 'bring a plate' or contribute financially; your MeetUp is a chance for them to be spoiled for a few hours. Food should be easy to eat (finger foods or single portions of items are ideal). Consider also if you should provide vegetarian and gluten or sugar-free items. Ideas of what to serve at your MeetUp include:

- Club sandwiches
- Wraps
- Mini spring rolls
- Mini quiches
- Specialty sausage rolls
- Fruit kebabs
- Savoury muffins
- Sweet items e.g slices, cookies
- Tea/coffee, juice, water
- Small chocolates or treats scattered on the tables, or in bowls
- Some MeetUp organisers serve fruit 'mocktails' with special garnishes, or even bubbles (alcoholic or non)

Carers who are self-organising a MeetUp may agree to assist with refreshments or to pay for these if the MeetUp is held at an eatery. Be clear in your MeetUps invitation and promotions about any costs to carers.



Speakers

Consider whether you will have a guest speaker or not. Speakers should be fun or informative (ideally both!) and their presentations should be brief rather than the focus of the whole MeetUp.

Leave plenty of time for carers to mix and mingle, and relax in one another's company. Keep speaker timeslots short (15-20 minutes). Ideas for speakers include:

- A life coach or other motivational speaker
- A wellbeing practitioner
- A journaling workshop leader or other 'craft' type speaker
- A St John Ambulance representative (to learn more about the various services they provide)
- Government department person (such as Work and Income)
- Representatives from other organisations in your area who provide helpful services that could be of interest to carers
- Pampering/treats

Me time at MeetUps

Past experience shows us that carers value having special 'me' time at MeetUps. As carers arrive, ask them to jot their name beside a timeslot so you can coordinate the flow of 'appointments' during your MeetUp. Following are some ideas that have worked well at carer events.

Basic wellbeing checks

10-20 minute checks (blood pressure, pulse/heart rate, weight, and a general chat with an experienced nurse) are appreciated by carers, who often often put off these checks because they are so busy.

Ask your District Health Board community nursing team, a home care services provider in your area, or a local GP if they can provide a nurse to carry out these wellbeing checks.

There may be a cost involved, or they may be willing to provide checks free of charge as a good community cause. Allow carers a little time with the nurse to discuss any health concerns they might have. Screen off a private space at your MeetUp with several comfortable seats and a table. Ensure it is located away from other attendees so conversations cannot be overheard.



Me time con't...

Mobile massages & manicures

These only need to last for 10 – 15 minutes but are a real treat!

Many polytechnics and beauty institutes offer their students as practitioners (at either a reduced rate or possibly free of charge) to carry out simple massages, facials, manicures etc.

They would need to provide their own equipment so make sure you know exactly what can be provided when you make inquiries. Ensure there is a private area where carers can enjoy their pampering treatment out of sight of other MeetUp guests. You can also Google search for 'mobile therapists' in your area, or local services may be willing to donate a therapist for your MeetUp. If your organisation can afford to pay for pamper treatments as a MeetUp cost, usually you can negotiate a good rate for such a worthy cause.



Resources

Think about what resources or information you would like to have available on the day.

These could include:

- Free carer infopacks from Carers NZ, which include copies of the Government's useful *Guide for Carers* and the latest issue of *Family Care* magazine (to request packs for your MeetUp phone Carers NZ's National Resource Centre, 0800 777 797, or email centre@carers.net.nz) and brochures or information displays promoting your own organisation.
- Information about helplines or other helpful organisations/services of interest to carers in your area.
- Anything else you'd like to give carers attending your MeetUp! Goodie bags with vouchers and small gifts from local companies will be well received.
- A pamper-themed basket for a gift draw is always fun; source gift baskets from local retailers or manufacturers, or phone the National Carer Resource Centre (0800 777 797) for suggestions.



CARING FOR CARERS
The Carer Pamper Day

Being Pampered A Rare Treat for Us Family Carers

For family carers, having the time or the energy to pamper ourselves is a very rare thing! Often we don't have enough 'fuel in the tank' to look after our own needs. The Carer Pamper Day, a Presbyterian Support East Coast social service for Hawke's Bay family carers, was a very special treat for us.

Many family carers in Hawke's Bay were lucky to attend this recent half-day event, which was about pampering unpaid family carers.

The 50 attending carers received bubbly on arrival, a yummy morning tea and lunch, and a choice of back and hand massages, Bowen therapy, hand spa or reflexology sessions. What we liked the most besides all the lovely pampering was the opportunity to have some time out, to meet others in a similar situation, and to share our stories.

The day helped us feel validated, recognised, and supported. We all won a spot prize on the day ranging from hand crèmes to lunch vouchers, another way to extend the pampering after the event. We felt excited about our goodie bags, which were filled with various treats and additional vouchers for more pampering sessions such as makeup.

What made this a true pamper day was the great support from dedicated, community minded practitioners who provided the bodywork

sessions for us. These lovely people have been supporting the event for the last four years; a big thank you to them from all the carers who enjoyed their fantastic, therapeutic sessions. A big thank you also to the individuals and businesses who donated items for our goodie bags and spot prizes.

We all look forward to the Pamper Day as one of the highlights of the year, a day with the focus on us ... OUR wellbeing. For some it is a very scarce opportunity because of the demands of our caregiving responsibilities.

Some of us also attend the monthly support group meetings in Hastings or Taradale. If we can't make it to meetings we are still connected by the monthly Caring for Carers newsletter.

All family carers are welcome to come along to a monthly meeting to experience the support of the group. Caring for Carers is a wonderful free service with no official joining process. Feeling the need for support and time out from your daily chores as carer is the only criteria.

As carers we understand at depth the journey and the challenges individuals go through as family carers. Caring for Carers supports those who are on this difficult journey.

Please contact Taradale group representative Norma on 06 876 8865 or Ingrid on 06 877 8193 ext 730 to find out more about our Hawke's Bay support groups for family carers!



Let everyone know!

Ways to promote your MeetUp

Ideally you should start promoting your MeetUp three to four weeks in advance so carers have ample time to arrange respite or alternative care if needed.

There are numerous ways to promote your carer get together:

- A media release emailed/sent to local newspapers and radio stations
- A photocopied or printed poster
- Notices put on local noticeboards
- Community newspaper Public Notice advertisements (ask your newspaper to do this free or for a reduced rate)
- Announcements by your local radio station(s)
- Promotion by your local library, chemist, or GP surgery
- Email campaigns to your members
- Posting invitations/posters to members or friends who don't have access to email or the Internet
- Promotion via your own website or Facebook page
- A notice in your organisation's newsletter
- At other meetings already happening (e.g. local support groups)
- Organisations or professionals in your area may be willing help promote the MeetUp to their members and clients
- Ask your local chemist, medical practice, hospital, therapy clinics, supermarket or 4 Square, dairy, marae, library, RSA and other gathering places to display your notice in the weeks before your MeetUp. Most will do this at no charge or for a gold coin donation.
- Carers NZ can help promote your MeetUps at www.carersair.net.nz and at its Facebook page if the event is open to all carers within the wider community. Contact the National Resource Centre to provide details about your upcoming MeetUps and how to RSVP (0800 777 797 or email centre@carers.net.nz)



Sample media release to complete or edit to showcase your MeetUp

[Your Logo
Here Optional]

Phone:

Email:

Website or Facebook address (if any):

..... **[Who]** to host special get together for family carers in **[Area]**

..... **[Who]** will host a MeetUp for family carers at **[Where]**

at **[Time]**

The MeetUp is open to anyone who supports a person with ill health, a disability, mental illness, an addiction, or who needs family assistance in their old age.

..... **[Spokesperson]** says the MeetUp is an opportunity for carers to have some special time out, meet new friends, and learn about available support and information.

"Family carers often get so caught up in their caring responsibilities they become isolated socially. The MeetUp is an opportunity for them to connect with others in similar situations for learning, sharing, and fun."

Carers who attend the MeetUp will have a chance to mingle and chat and listen to a presentation by **[Whom]** from **[Organisation]** about **[Topic]**

A nurse from XYZ Medical Centre will also be on hand to give carers a free health check.

"Often carers find it hard to make time for themselves and neglect their own wellbeing," says **[Spokesperson]** *"Carers may appreciate having a free blood pressure check and to discuss personal health issues they are worried about with an experienced practitioner."*

Refreshments will be served and all carers will be given a free goodie bag and have the option of a free 15 minute massage from (name of local massage therapy provider)!

Family carers wishing to attend should contact **[Name and Contact Details]** by **[Date]**



Sample carer MeetUp invitation to distribute, post, and for community notice boards

[Your Logo or illustration Here Optional]

Phone:

Email:

Website or Facebook Address (if any):

Do you assist a friend or family member who is ill, disabled, frail due to ageing, or has an addiction?

Often family carers often find it difficult to attend events, but perhaps a fun get together might tempt you to join us for a short break during _____ (Month) _____ ?

You'll meet other family carers... learn about available kinds of help ... receive a free carer infopack ... have a basic wellbeing check and other pamper treats ... enjoy some nice food ... and make new friends!

Spaces are limited so reserve your spot early!

_____ (Name Of Organisation) _____ **welcomes all family carers to come along and enjoy our special carer MeetUp!**

DATE _____

TIME _____

VENUE _____

RSVP _____

For further information call _____ or email _____

A graphic for 'Step Three Hosting'. It features the words 'Step Three' in a teal, cursive font inside a white circle with a dotted border. Below this, the word 'Hosting' is written in a white, sans-serif font inside a teal rectangular box with a dotted border. The background consists of several overlapping circles in teal, green, yellow, and pink.

When hosting a MeetUp it's important to have a leader or facilitator, who will 'set the scene' for the event and ensure it flows smoothly.

A graphic for 'Facilitator Script'. It features the words 'Facilitator Script' in a teal, sans-serif font. To the left of the text are three overlapping circles in teal, green, and yellow.

We've developed a sample facilitator script which you can adapt for your own MeetUp.

Ensure your facilitator has a copy of this script well in advance of your MeetUp, so they are comfortable with its messages and can practice what to say!

Your script should thank carers and speakers for attending, and also any sponsors or supporters. It should include information about the location of toilets, fire exits, and other details about your MeetUp venue.

Above all, it should inform carers about the purpose of the MeetUp (even if it's just to help them connect and socialise with each other), and what will happen during the event.

Sample carer MeetUp script for facilitators

Hi everyone, and welcome to our special MeetUp for carers.

My name is _____ from (organisation, if any) and I am our facilitator today.

Thank you for joining us, we know how difficult it is for carers to attend events and are so pleased you can be with us.

Before we proceed too far, we need to do a little bit of 'housekeeping'. (mention where the toilets are, emergency exits, and any other safety information that should be relayed to the group). We hope you enjoy our MeetUp, which has been organised to give carers an opportunity to meet with each other for sharing and learning, to receive information, and to have a bit of time out. (Note other reasons why you have organised the event, if there is a special purpose, mention/introduce any speakers or special guests, and talk about what will happen during the morning/afternoon).

Let's start by introducing ourselves, then we can talk about the different resources and supports that are available to carers today and enjoy some yummy food and pampering (SAY this IF there are pamper things organised).

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Step Three

Hosting

A graphic consisting of several overlapping circles in shades of teal, yellow, and pink.

Facilitator Script con't....

Who would like to make the first introduction? (Proceed through the plan or agenda for your MeetUp, keeping an eye on the clock to ensure that it starts and finishes on time.)

Closing comments for the facilitator

Thank you everyone for being with us today. We have enjoyed your company and hope you have found our MeetUp interesting and worthwhile. (Make comments about some of the highlights of the morning/afternoon and mention when the next MeetUp will be held, if any. Some groups may wish to open or close their meeting with a blessing or karakia.)

A graphic consisting of several overlapping circles in shades of teal, yellow, and pink.

MeetUp tips for facilitators

If there is a discussion element to the event, it's a good idea to include something along the following lines in your introduction:

"Emotions often run high at events like this, so if you feel overwhelmed or need some time out then please let us know. Don't be embarrassed, it's very common and we're here to help if it happens."

If there is space or your venue is suitable, you may wish to have a special 'Carer's Corner' screened from view of the wider group.

A Carers Corner could have a chair, a small table, jug of water and glasses, and a box of tissues; carers who feel overwhelmed or emotional can retreat to this spot for a few minutes until they feel ready to rejoin the MeetUp. Carers appreciate this option, especially if they don't know each other well.

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If you are confronted with a question you don't know the answer to, acknowledge this.

It's better to be upfront than to give out wrong or misleading information. It's okay to ask others who are present for their thoughts. And you can take notes about the question and get feedback to the person as soon as you can.

You'll find that some carers are quiet, while one or two others are very outspoken the meeting.

Ensure the conversation flows evenly during the MeetUp and encourage everyone to contribute.

Keep the MeetUp interesting by making sure people know about displays, refreshments and other things on offer.

Throughout the event, encourage MeetUp guests to browse available information displays, enjoy refreshments, and select a timeslot for special treatments or wellbeing checks (if these are offered).

If you notice a carer sitting or standing alone, spend time chatting to them and introduce them to another carer or group of carers.

You may wish to give each MeetUp guest a feedback form to return before they leave the event.

Ask them what they liked best and least about the MeetUp, and whether they'd like to attend any future get togethers.

Invite them to provide their contact details so you can follow up. Feedback from your guests will help you to plan your next MeetUp!



Even if you're hosting an informal get together, it may help to 'break the ice' to start a discussion on a topic of interest to family carers, depending on your MeetUp audience. Here are some ideas to get you thinking! No doubt you will find common ground about these and many other topics at your MeetUp.



First steps for new carers

As a new caregiver, it's very easy to become overwhelmed.

- Where should a new carer start?
- What would more experienced family carers suggest?
- Distribute Carers NZ's infopacks and share advice/ideas.



To move or not to move?

Shifting after a health trauma, diagnosis, or changing support needs can be a big decision.

- What have others done or considered when faced with this issue?



Changing family/whānau relationships

Families often pull together when someone needs support, but tensions can surface, too. All kinds of issues arise when a loved one needs ongoing help.

- What are some of the issues that have needed discussion in your family, and how did you resolve any problems?



Medications & how your chemist can help

- How can carers safely administer and dispose of medications at home?
- How can they prevent over or under dosing?
- Is a local delivery service available?



Planning for breaks and respite

- How often do you have time out from caring?
- Discuss any barriers to having regular breaks. How can carers ensure they have opportunities to recharge?
- What works better, small breaks every day or a longer break every so often?
- How do the family members they support feel about respite breaks?
- Are carers getting enough breaks? If not, why not? If so, what breaks do they most enjoy?



When to ask for the keys

Our vehicle represents freedom, control and competence. It's natural to want to continue driving for as long as possible. Sometimes though it's no longer safe to continue driving. This can result in strong feelings of grief, loss, and perhaps anger. Whether and when to ask for the car keys is a popular discussion topic for carers of older people who may be worried about a relative's ability to continue driving.

Talk about how to broach this subject and visit the 'Senior Road Users' section of the NZ Transport Agency website www.nzta.govt.nz or the 'Out and About' section of Age Concern's website www.ageconcern.org.nz for discussion points about transport for your MeetUp.