



# MEDWAY ASTHMA SELF-HELP NEWSLETTER — JULY 2020

## WELCOME AGAIN TO THE MASH NEWSLETTER,

We hope you are coping well with the continuing crisis and that you have all been able to stay safe and well. It is particularly important for our friends with asthma that you feel you have the support you need. I'm really pleased to say that MASH has been able to operate successfully over the past few months, thanks to the brilliant work of our nurse, Julie, and our coordinator, Angela. Julie has been able to continue consultations over the phone and Angela has been working hard keeping in touch with our partners.

While all charities face a worrying time in the long term, we are pleased to have had some really valuable support that will keep us going over the next few months. We would like to say a big thank you to them all! We particularly thank our volunteer, Wendy, who has undertaken to raise a brilliant £1,000 for MASH!

As we gradually move out of lockdown, it is really important that you all stay safe and look after yourselves and your families. MASH stands ready, as it has done for over twenty years, to provide support with asthma management.

**Clive Johnson. Chair of MASH Trustees**



### LOCKDOWN TESTIMONIAL

'MASH has helped me to manage and control my asthma, as well as giving me peace of mind.'



### LOCKDOWN TESTIMONIAL

'What a wonderful service. The advice was very helpful and spot on.'

## ASTHMA DOESN'T HAVE TO STOP YOU GETTING ON WITH YOUR LIFE

Good asthma control for most people means:

- **You get no daytime symptoms**
- **You get no night-time waking due to asthma**
- **You don't need to use reliever inhalers (usually blue)**
- **You don't have any asthma attacks and don't need emergency treatment**
- **Asthma doesn't limit your daily life (including working, school and exercising)**

However, good asthma control is often not achieved despite effective treatments being available. Why might this be the case?

In my experience, it is very common for patients to become so used to experiencing asthma symptoms on a daily basis that they no longer question them – just accepting symptoms as normal for them. This shouldn't be the case. With appropriate management, most people with asthma are able to enjoy a good quality of life with no limitation on daily activities. Whether you have had asthma for a long time or have recently been diagnosed, there are always ways you can improve your chances of staying well and symptom free!

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## ASTHMA DOESN'T HAVE TO STOP YOU GETTING ON WITH YOUR LIFE CONTINUED...

There are seven key points to good asthma control:

1. **Use a Personalised Asthma Action Plan (PAAP)** – these can be completed with your practice nurse, GP or the asthma nurse in one of our MASH clinics. Asthma UK produce a clear PAAP that can be downloaded and printed off. A PAAP has all the information you need in one place, it reminds you what medication you should take and when to take it, and it also tells you what to do if your asthma symptoms get worse. There is evidence that people who are given a written PAAP are four times less likely to need hospital care for asthma.
2. **Use your preventer inhaler every day even if you are feeling well** – the benefit of your preventer inhaler builds up over time and protects the airways from getting inflamed, and you are then less likely to react to your triggers.
3. **Always carry your reliever (usually blue) inhaler with you** – just in case you have symptoms.
4. **Get your inhaler technique checked** – using your inhaler in the correct way can make a big difference to how much medication gets into your lungs and may reduce side effects from medication. Don't assume that because you have used an inhaler for many years that your inhaler technique can't be improved!
5. **Use a spacer if you use a metered dose inhaler (press down inhaler)** – using a spacer (large, empty device or tube, usually made out of plastic) makes it easier to get the right amount of medicine straight to your lungs, and this applies to adults as well as children. If used with your preventer inhaler, a spacer can also reduce the risk of side effects such as oral thrush or voice changes.
6. **Make sure you have an annual asthma review** – during the review you can update your PAAP. If you are currently well, still attend your appointment – it may be that your medication may need changing or even reducing.
7. **Keep track of your peak flow measurements** – peak flow is a measurement of how quickly you can blow out air from your lungs. Measuring your peak flow along with noting your asthma symptoms is a simple way to help assess asthma control.

If you are unsure whether your asthma is well controlled, make an appointment to talk to our asthma nurse. You could also check out the Asthma UK – Asthma Risk Test: <https://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/manage-your-asthma/risk/>

**Julie Millest, MASH Asthma Nurse**



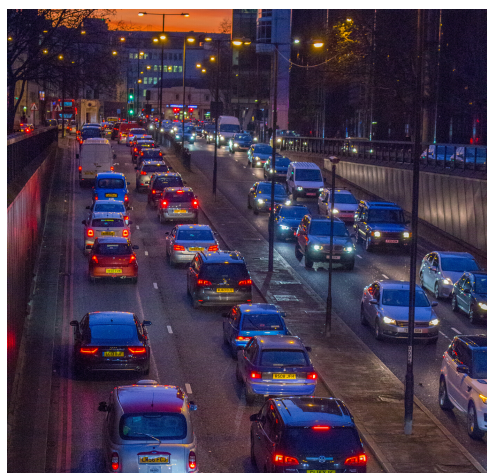
### LOCKDOWN TESTIMONIAL

'MASH really helped me to explain more about asthma to my daughter and helped her understand the importance of having a good asthma regime.'

### LOCKDOWN TESTIMONIAL

'Very good, had an asthma assessment very quickly and the advice given by the nurse was helpful to me. I now have an asthma plan and it is under much better control.'

## COVID-19 LOCKDOWN, AIR POLLUTION AND ASTHMA



It is now well recognised that increased levels of air pollution worsen many lung conditions. In particular the number of sufferers from asthma increases with increasing air pollution, and for those with asthma the frequency and severity of symptoms increases. This is especially associated with increases in oxides of nitrogen, and in small particles, a lot of the latter coming from diesel engines.

In south-east England, London has particularly high levels of toxic pollution, which often exceed the EU limit values. Outside London, North Kent, including Medway, also frequently has high pollution levels. One of the features of the Covid-19 lockdown has been a marked reduction in road traffic, with large falls in average and peak pollution levels.

Public Health England report a very large reduction in attendances at Emergency Departments for asthma since the lockdown began on 23 March. This might be partly due to reluctance of asthmatics to expose themselves to the risks of attending hospital during the pandemic.

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**COVID-19 LOCKDOWN, AIR POLLUTION AND ASTHMA CONT.**

However, the dip for some other conditions (for instance, heart diseases) had ended by the end of May, but the reduction in asthma had not, suggesting a true decrease in asthma problems.

The British Lung Foundation (BLF), a close partner of Asthma UK, has surveyed more than 14,000 sufferers from lung disease during the lockdown. One sixth (16%) of lung disease patients reported an improvement in symptoms. But one quarter (24.6%) of asthmatics noticed an improvement, with less wheezing and less coughing, and less need to use a reliever inhaler. This was associated with an average 40% reduction of atmospheric nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) due to less road traffic, with up to a 50% reduction in big cities.



As a result, the BLF are calling for measures to permanently reduce air pollution levels, and they found that this is backed by 83% of parents of children with lung problems. Measures around schools are especially called for; these include building new schools away from main roads, putting barriers such as hedges between roads and schools, and reducing traffic outside schools, especially when children are arriving or departing.

Following this evidence, many local authorities are looking at ways to make the reduction of pollution levels permanent as the Covid-19 lockdown eases. London is working on improvements to walking and cycling routes in the hope of a long term reduction in car use. The Times on Saturday 13 June reports that a number of local councils are planning to restrict traffic outside primary schools during drop off and pick up hours. They report that a recent study showed that parents driving their children to school caused a trebling of pollution levels near by, and that some of the resulting toxic particles got into classrooms. Councils with such plans include Leeds, and the London Boroughs of Westminster, Waltham Forest, Wandsworth and Camden. The latest, Hackney Council, plan to ban more parents from dropping children off at school gates from September. We understand that Medway Council are bidding for Government money now being made available for cycling facilities.

In connection with this, I am pleased to announce that MASH has now contracted with Good Energy for their electricity supply from September 2020. Good Energy supply 100% renewable electricity, reducing air pollution, and reducing CO<sub>2</sub> production which contributes to global warming. This will cost MASH less than the present contract.

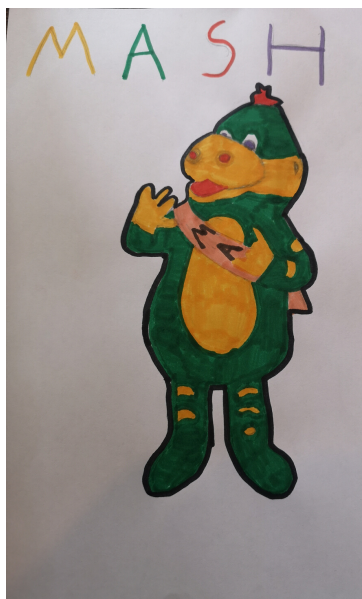
**Martin Farebrother, Vice-chair of MASH Trustees**

## ASTHMA POSTER COMPETITION WINNERS

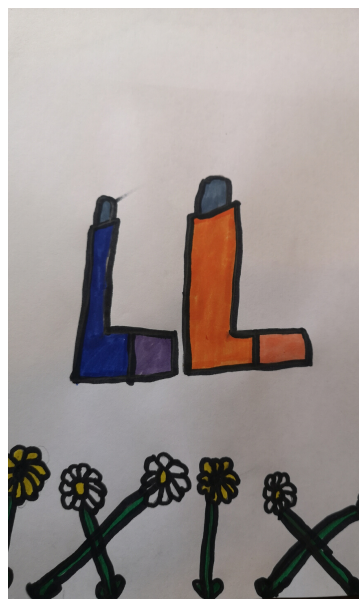
In May, MASH held an asthma poster competition to raise awareness of asthma in the Medway towns. We had some amazing entries and it was very hard for our judges (the MASH trustees) to decide. Below you can see the designs of the winners (each winning £10 book vouchers) and some runners up (each winning £5 book vouchers). Well done everyone!



**'Up to 8 yrs' Category Winner**  
Iylah, aged 8.



**'9 to 13 yrs' Category Winner**  
Louise, aged 11.



**Runner up posters: Ethan, aged 6; Stephanie, aged 9; and Rosa, aged 12.**



# WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE A MASH TRUSTEE?

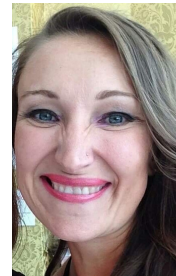
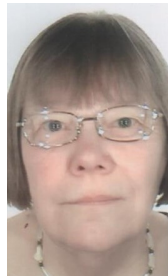
Hi, Maggie here. I am the newest member of the Trustees here at MASH and I just wanted to share my experience with you all and that being a trustee is really rewarding! Being a trustee is a great way to help you develop your own professional experience, I have now learnt more about being in a governance role and sitting on a board. Years of experience is not a requirement, I have never done this before, I would say you just need a passion for the charity and the desire to share your skills. My professional background includes managing staff, policies & procedures in relation to Health & Safety, Safeguarding, Equality & Diversity, and contract management. All these skills have been of use since I started as a trustee with MASH.

There are so many reasons that you should join charity boards. It is an excellent opportunity to give something back to society or do something meaningful outside work, or perhaps you are retiring / have retired and would like a new interest, I can assure you it is also an opportunity to develop new skills and learning opportunities. I have learnt a huge amount from my trustee role already, ranging from understanding a different organisational model and pressure, to learning from the other expertise and perspectives around the table, as well as the importance of being able to focus on strategy instead of interfering with day-to-day operations. I have also been given the opportunity to get to know and work with people from all walks of life, which has made it even more enjoyable.

Charities can gain so much from having people with skills and experience that their board may lack such as finance, Human Resources, marketing or legal knowledge, and many individuals can gain board-level experience earlier than they might do in their job. My employer has benefited too, as being a trustee has brought new skills and experiences back to my organisation, including exposure to how a board operates, strategic thinking, an awareness of risk management and governance experience.

If you are reading this and thinking 'I'm not sure...', get in touch, I'm more than happy to chat to you about what the role entails.

**Maggie Cane, MASH Trustee**



**MASH Trustee Board: Clive Johnson (Chair), Martin Farebrother (Vice-chair), Judith Pender (Treasurer), John Dickinson and Maggie Cane.**



## VOLUNTEER'S VIEWPOINT

Hello, my name is Wendy, and if you have ever wondered who helps to bring the MASH mascot to life, then look no further!! Along with Sean, I occasionally don the green and yellow so that Deano the Dinosaur can entertain at MASH's outreach events. Sean regularly lets Deano take part in Medway Mile's Mascot Race!!

I have been volunteering for MASH for about six years. I have previously worked at MASH and I do have asthma – though this is not a necessity to become part of the MASH family. I have also made use of MASH's FREE asthma clinic. My asthma once became a bit difficult to manage, so I booked an appointment with Julie. Here in Medway we are so lucky to have an asthma dedicated clinic.

Volunteering can be anything from answering the phone, helping to start a new asthma project, attending outreach events to let the public know from where they can get excellent asthma advice.

My favourite outreach is the Hempstead Village Fayre. We take our hook-a-duck to raise money, and the canines think the paddling pool is a huge water bowl. So, the ducks get ducked whilst the doggies quench their thirst!!

My volunteering has taken me to many places in and around Medway; schools, supermarkets, public events and even the local magistrates court. But, I hasten to add, this was to collect a fundraising cheque from one of our supporters who was in the legal profession!!

I also enjoy MASH's annual sponsored swim. We are supported by a local health club, ROKO Gillingham, who let us use their pool. An afternoon of swimming and raising money for this awesome charity is an excellent way to introduce you to the benefits of gentle exercise.

### LOCKDOWN TESTIMONIAL

'My asthma had got worse after a throat infection... This had then made me have panic attacks, thinking I couldn't breathe. After chatting to the nurse and getting some advice on how to cope I found myself able to control my breathing a little better.'

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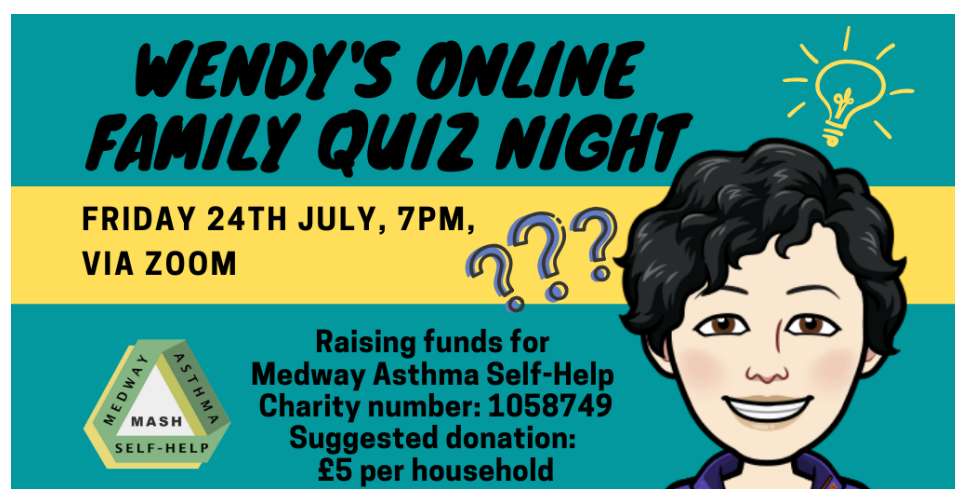
## VOLUNTEER'S VIEWPOINT CONTINUED...

Through my volunteering at MASH I met a wonderful lady who became a dear friend. We once had the pleasure of meeting Kris Akabusi. A sporting personality who was giving an inspirational talk at a local event. We queued for ages to get our photograph with him - just for MASH's archive, honest!! I also met Michael and have become good friends with his family. Michael and I have a shared interest in Bargain Hunt. We have applied a few times to be contestants, but are still waiting for our chance to earn the Golden Gavel.

Talking of earning, I know MASH is dependent on grants and donations to sustain its vital services. Therefore, I have set myself a £1,000 challenge. As our outreaches have had to be postponed, I am keen to somehow raise funds for MASH. So, each month from July, I will be hosting an online quiz. There is a minimum donation of £5 per household, and I hope to have raised the £1,000 before the end of this year. The quizzes are family friendly fun, and I really hope you can join us.

If you have time to spare, even once or twice a year, then please know this can be put to good use at MASH. We are very innovative and readily accept any support.

**Wendy Palmer, MASH Volunteer**



**WENDY'S ONLINE FAMILY QUIZ NIGHT**

**FRIDAY 24TH JULY, 7PM, VIA ZOOM**

**Raising funds for Medway Asthma Self-Help**  
**Charity number: 1058749**  
**Suggested donation: £5 per household**

**LOCKDOWN TESTIMONIAL**  
 '[MASH] was instrumental in getting me an emergency course of steroids and antibiotics, as well as on the NHS register for vulnerable to shelter, via my GP.'

## MASH'S VIRTUAL COFFEE MORNINGS

While we can't meet up in person right now, we can still meet virtually and MASH invites you to join us as our next virtual coffee morning on Tuesday 26th July at 11am via Zoom.

Our coffee mornings are open to anyone with an interest in asthma and/or MASH. The morning is hosted by Angela (our coordinator) and Julie (our asthma nurse). You can come along and chat to us about asthma, Covid-19, MASH's work or even your favourite biscuit! If you need some advice about asthma, want to meet the team or just need some company – we would love to see you there.

## SUPPORT MASH FOR FREE

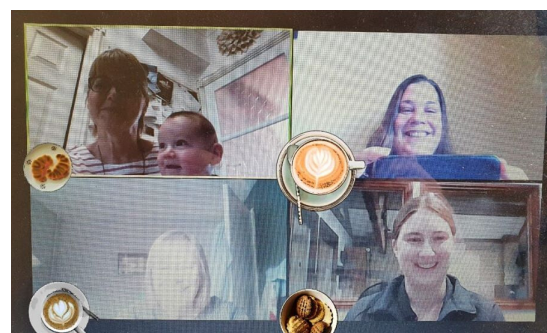
When you are shopping there are a few ways that you can support MASH at no cost to yourself.

Please remember to use easyfundraising every time you shop online! Over 4,000 shops and sites will donate, so you can raise FREE donations for us no matter what you're buying. These donations really help us, so please sign up if you haven't. You can get started at:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/medwayasthma/>

We are also supported by Co-op members through the Co-op Local Community Fund. If you are a Co-op member, then you can select MASH as your cause and then you will earn donations for MASH just by doing your shopping! You can sign up here:

<https://membership.coop.co.uk/causes/38801>



## Virtual Coffee Morning



Join Medway Asthma Self-Help and our asthma nurse by Zoom  
 Tuesday 28th July at 11am



**Choose us as your Co-op local cause**  
 Go online [coop.co.uk/membership](https://membership.coop.co.uk/)



## FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MASH DURING COVID-19

MASH is very grateful to the many organisations who have supported our work this year, both before and during the Covid-19 lockdown. Thank you to everyone at the Upper Gillingham Conservative Club for supporting us via their Charity of the Year scheme and fundraising for us at their events. Thank you to MotoNovo Finance, who picked MASH to receive support in their charity drive event. And thank you to those organisations shown below that have provided funds through emergency COVID-19 schemes to support us through this tough time of lockdown and beyond when our fundraising activities have been cancelled and delayed, and the way we work and support people with asthma has changed. Thank you from everyone at MASH.





### ASTHMA?

## We are still able to help.

Get in touch to book a FREE telephone consultation with our asthma nurse.

## HOW DOES MASH HELP PEOPLE WITH ASTHMA?

MASH supports people and families affected by asthma in Medway. We aim to improve awareness and understanding of asthma, its triggers and treatment, and to empower people with asthma to self-manage their condition. During Covid-19 telephone consultations, our asthma nurse can provide advice and support with asthma – discuss medications, asthma reviews and personalised asthma action plans. Letters containing the advice given and any recommendations will continue to be sent to clients to forward to their GPs.

When face-to-face appointments are able to safely resume, we will again be able to offer spirometry and FeNO testing for asthma diagnoses and monitoring, and airborne allergy testing. **All of our services are free and open to all.**

**Please help us to tell anyone with asthma in Medway that we are here to help them. If you have groups that you could share our information with (online and off), if you have somewhere where you can display leaflets or posters, if you have events that you would like us to attend – then please get in touch.**



Julie Millest  
MASH Asthma Nurse

## KEEP IN TOUCH...

**Telephone: 01634 855844**

**Email: [medwayasthmaselfhelp@btconnect.com](mailto:medwayasthmaselfhelp@btconnect.com)**

**Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/medway.selfhelp>**

**Twitter: <https://twitter.com/MedwayAsthma>**

**Website: [www.medwayasthmaselfhelp.co.uk](http://www.medwayasthmaselfhelp.co.uk)**

The MASH trustees are grateful to our coordinator – Angela Stokes – for putting together and editing this newsletter.



Angela Stokes  
MASH Coordinator