

TONI, MAKING NATIONAL VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR

“ Without the flexibility from work, I probably would’ve had to go off sick. Support made all the difference.”

Toni has been part of the Making Space for over 12 years. Her passion for care began early, caring for her nan after a stroke during the school holidays and volunteering with St John Ambulance sparked her lifelong commitment to helping others. “We used to look after each other,” she recalls. “She gave me wisdom, and I helped her remember to take her medication.”

Today, Toni supports her dad, who lives with several ongoing physical health challenges, including diabetes, vertigo, and the use of a urinary catheter. After the devastating loss of her mum to Covid-19 in 2021, Toni took on a larger role in her dad’s care, helping with appointments, adapting routines, and supporting him emotionally through anxiety related to his fear of heights, especially when medical appointments are above ground floor levels.

In March 2025, her caring responsibilities intensified when her dad’s catheter caused complications. After a hospital visit, he collapsed getting out of the car. The fall resulted in two broken ankles, one leg fractured in three places, along with a dangerous heart rhythm and a kidney infection.

Toni stepped in immediately, taking emergency carer’s leave and providing essential support during her dad’s treatment and surgery. She also served as his advocate, ensuring he wasn’t moved to a ward above the first floor, a known trigger for his anxiety.

Returning to work part-time allowed Toni to manage her responsibilities both at home and professionally. “Without the support and flexibility from my manager, I probably would have had to go off sick,” she says. “Work has helped keep a sense of myself, and having colleagues who understand and offer advice has made such a difference.”

Her dad is now back at home after a period in a residential home receiving physiotherapy to help him regain his mobility and independence.

Toni is aiming to return to full-time work in the summer, but only once she’s confident her dad is safe, mobile, and fully settled back at home.



VICKY, MAKING SPACE BIDS MANAGER

“Getting the right support for my family is the only motivation I’ll ever need.”

Vicky, 41, has been a carer since she was 25. Today, she cares for her two children - both diagnosed with autism - and her husband, who was recently diagnosed with a rare form of progressive, degenerative arthritis.

Her caring journey began in 2009 when her son was born. From the very start, Vicky and her family knew he had additional needs, including physical challenges that required surgery, followed by an ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) diagnosis. Just a few years later, her daughter also received an autism diagnosis, following a period of poor mental health aged just eight.

At that point, Vicky made the difficult decision to leave her full-time role in finance to become a full-time carer. The isolation and loss of identity were difficult to manage, but her drive to advocate for her children never faltered.

“When you have a baby, you just want it to be healthy, and if it isn’t, you want the best support possible. But people don’t realise how hard you have to fight to get even the basics. It’s exhausting.”

After seven years at home, Vicky decided to retrain. She attended night school, then pursued an undergraduate degree in Health and Wellbeing, using her lived experience as a foundation to build a new career. During the pandemic, she secured a placement with Age UK, supporting people living with dementia.

After graduating in 2023, she joined Making Space as a Dementia Advisor in Rotherham. Within a year, she had progressed to Team Leader at the Doncaster Carers Wellbeing Service, and by January 2025, she moved into the Business Development team.

In June 2024, her caring responsibilities grew again when her husband received a life-changing diagnosis. With the support of Making Space, Vicky was able to access flexible working, counselling, and help arranging the care her husband needs.

“Making Space has been amazing. The flexibility and emotional support I’ve received have allowed me to keep going, both at home and in my role.”

Balancing work and caring is never easy, but for Vicky, having a job that understands the pressures of being an unpaid carer has transformed her life.

“I felt lonely and isolated when I was a full-time carer. Now, I have my identity back. I’m not just ‘mum’ or ‘carer’, I’m me.”

Vicky is clear about what needs to change: more understanding, more respect, and more value placed on unpaid carers by society and government.

“People treat you differently when they find out you’re working age but a full-time carer. It’s systemic, and it needs to change.”

For Vicky, the motivation to carry on is simple: making sure her family can live full, meaningful lives.



DAISY, MAKING SPACE PEOPLE & WELLBEING CO-ORDINATOR

“ To me, it’s just being family, but that doesn’t mean it’s easy.

Daisy is the People & Wellbeing Coordinator at Making Space and has worked with the organisation for nearly three years. While she didn’t always identify as a carer, her personal experience tells a different story - one of long-term, quiet dedication that began when she was just 11 years old.

Daisy and her family began fostering her younger sister Meisha shortly before her second birthday. Now nearly 17, Meisha has multiple diagnoses including ADHD, Autism, Global Developmental Delay, and Personality Disorder. Although not biologically related, Daisy has never seen Meisha as anything other than her sister.

As Meisha grew, her needs became more complex and her behaviour increasingly challenging. The family once had regular support from a Family Support Worker, but over time, due to funding cuts, this dwindled to nothing. Daisy now plays a significant support role, not just for Meisha, but also for her mum, who is Meisha’s main carer.

“Being a carer doesn’t really feel like being a carer to me...she’s my sister. I love her and want to support her no matter what.”

Over the last 4–5 years, Daisy’s caring responsibilities have grown. Alongside working full-time in a demanding role, she helps manage the emotional and practical demands of life at home. It’s not always easy to balance.

“Caring can impact your own wellbeing. I’ve learned to take rest breaks when I can, and I’m currently training for a half marathon, which gives me some downtime.”

Daisy’s journey into the care sector was partly inspired by Meisha and her family’s mental health struggles. She studied mental health nursing at university but had to step away to support her stepdad through his own mental health crisis.

Her story is a reminder that caring is not always about one individual, it often involves the whole family.

“It doesn’t just fall on one person. We all have a part to play.”

Despite the challenges, Daisy draws strength and motivation from her mum’s resilience. She also urges others to check in on those who care for others:

“Sometimes we suffer in silence, we’re used to giving support, not getting it. Please remember to check in on those around you with caring responsibilities.”



AMANDA, TEAM LEADER, ROTHERHAM DEMENTIA SERVICES & CARER SUPPORT

“ Caring is my purpose.

Amanda, 50, is not only a dedicated carer for her father but also a passionate professional in the social care sector, supporting other carers through her work with Making Space. Her life revolves around family, care, and compassion.

Amanda has spent the last six years caring for her parents. She supported her mum through COPD until her passing in 2023 and now cares full-time for her dad, who has Alzheimer's and Oesophageal Cancer. His diagnosis didn't come easily, Amanda fought for three years before finally receiving confirmation of the condition.

Balancing personal and professional caregiving, Amanda is Team Leader for both the Rotherham Dementia Carer Support Service and Sandalwood Day Centre. Her career in care began at age 16 and spans residential homes, mental health services, prisons, and more.

Her role as a carer extends beyond job titles - it's rooted in love. **“My mum and dad looked after me when I needed them, so I'm repaying that now,”** she says. Despite her own health setbacks, Amanda continues to coordinate her dad's care with the help of family.

Life isn't easy. She juggles family responsibilities, including four children and five grandchildren, alongside demanding professional duties. She cherishes time at her Lincolnshire bungalow as a rare chance to rest and recharge.

Amanda urges greater recognition for unpaid carers:

“The government should be more grateful for carers who save them money. Unpaid carers should receive more support, regardless of how many hours they work.”

Her advice to others is simple but powerful:

“There is always someone out there to help. Don't be afraid to ask.”

