

MBE for Rachel

A great grandmother who has cared for her disabled daughter for nearly 50 years and in later years her sick husband; has been awarded an MBE in the New Year's honours list.

Rachel Littlewood, 84, from Gillingham, has been recognised for her services to caring and for helping those with learning disabilities.

The mother-of-six has worked tirelessly looking after her daughter Lucy, 49 and her late husband Dr Mark Littlewood, 74, who lost his battle with cancer a decade ago.

Mrs Littlewood of Regent Road, said: "I am absolutely gobsmacked.

"To be honest I did not have much choice and tried to make something good out of it. In those days there was not the support there is now from social services. Looking after my daughter was a 24-hour job."

Nigel Stratton, managing partner, Berry and Berry, law firm in Tunbridge Wells

"It was the lack of help from outside organisations that prompted Mrs Littlewood to start the Kent and Medway branch of Carers First which helps and advises those in the same situation as herself."

She is also a member of the **Medway Faith and Light Christian group**, a worldwide movement set up to help family and friends of people with learning disabilities.

The group meets at St Mark's Church in Gillingham where she is a regular worshipper.

Mrs Littlewood lived in Aden and Cyprus where her husband worked as a doctor for BP specialising in tropical medicine. In his latter years he worked as GP for the Royal Engineers in Maidstone.

Mrs Littlewood, who has three great grandchildren, said: "We are very close family and it has been hard keeping quiet about this. But now the cat is out of the bag, perhaps we will celebrate with a party."