

Issue 92 | Spring 2022 | carersinbeds.org.uk

Carers

the magazine for carers

International Women's Day

Black Carers Forum

Alleviating Stress

Physical Health

Technology Can Help



Carers 
in bedfordshire

Useful Contact Numbers

Social Services

**Bedford Borough Council
Carers Assessment
& Social Care Team**
01234 267422

**Central Bedfordshire
Carers Assessment
& Social Care Team**
0300 300 8036

**Safeguarding Team
Bedford Borough**
01234 276222

**Safeguarding Team
Central Bedfordshire**
0300 300 8122

**Emergency Safeguarding
Duty Team for Bedfordshire**
Out of hours support
0300 300 8123

Mental Health

**Bedfordshire
Wellbeing Service**
01234 880400

NHS 111
Option 2 for
mental health crisis

Samaritans
116 123

NHS

**Advice on a non-emergency
medical concern**
NHS 111 - open 24/7
In an emergency always
dial 999

Bedford Hospital
01234 355122

**Bedfordshire Community
Health Service Single
Point of Access**
0345 602 4064

**Luton and Dunstable
University Hospital**
01582 497990

**Non-emergency
Patient Transport
(East of England
Ambulance Service)**
0345 605 1208

**Red Cross Home from
Hospital Free Transport**
01234 341503

Local Charities

Advice Central
Advice service in Central Beds
0300 303 6666

Age UK Bedfordshire
01234 360510

Alzheimer's Society
0333 150 3456

Autism Bedfordshire
01234 350704

**The Bedford Rural
Communities Charity (BRRC)**
01234 838 771

Citizen's Advice
Amphill 01525 402742
Bedford 01234 867944
Biggleswade 01767 601368
Dunstable 01582 670003
Leighton-Linslade
01525 373873

Tibbs Dementia Foundation
01234 210 99

If you need our support contact:

0300 111 1919

and for dementia carers:

0300 111 9090

Carers in Bedfordshire, Emerald Court, The Pilgrim Centre, Brickhill Drive, Bedford MK41 7PZ
Offices also in Leighton Buzzard, Bedford Hospital and Luton & Dunstable University Hospital

0300 111 1919

contact@carersinbeds.org.uk
www.carersinbeds.org.uk

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Central Bedfordshire Council, grants and trusts,
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Editorial

Welcome

The theme of this edition is carer wellbeing. From haircuts to health checks, cancer screenings and eating disorders, to mental health, walking groups and respite. We also celebrate International Women's Day, but recognise that men care too, as we try to rid the stigma around male carers getting the support they need.

We hope you like our front-page photo? It's from one of our young carer events taken by carer Chiara MacCall, who is a professional photographer. She has been helping snap new images for our website and publicity materials, working alongside carer John Markham, who also runs his own business, DA Photography. We are in the process of updating our website with the new images of real carers, to truly represent the people we support.

Helen Hutchinson
Editor

communications@carersinbeds.org.uk



Bedfordshire
Carers' Guide



Dementia
Handbook

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Carers in Bedfordshire News | 4 |
| I'm not just a carer | 6 |
| Black Carers Forum | 7 |
| International Women's Day | 8 |
| Rid the taboo about poo! | 9 |
| Eating Disorder Awareness Week | 10 |
| Alleviating Stress Month | 11 |
| Men care too | 12 |
| What's On | 13 |
| Are you looking after your wellbeing? | 14 |
| Physical health is important too | 15 |
| Young Carers School Awards | 16 |
| How signing saved our family | 17 |
| How technology can help you | 18 |
| Taking care of you | 19 |
| New Dementia Nurse | 20 |
| Continuing to support you | 21 |
| Working women who volunteer | 22 |
| Fundraising | 23 |
| Carers Voice | 24 |

Update on your magazine

This is the last edition of the Carers magazine in its present format. As a charity we continue to manage the resources we have with limited funding (see page 4 for further info about our funding) and the Carers magazine will now be printed twice a year in June and December, for those of you who are not online. It will still be packed with information, carers' stories and tips. Remember if you can't access the internet and want to know about groups and activities taking place, just give us a call, our number is free phone.

We'll be sending shorter targeted e-newsletters every couple of months to those of you with an email address, relevant to your caring needs. If you would like to be part of our Readers Panel to help shape the content of our communications, see the opportunity on the back page.

Carers in Bedfordshire News

Welcome our New Staff Members



Karen Coupland
Dementia Nurse



Liz Noel
Young Carer
Sessional Worker



Aisha Khan
Adult Wellbeing
Practitioner



Hafizur Rahman
Young Carer
Sessional Worker

We're still here for you

I am delighted we have been successful in our bid to run carer services for you over the next three years. Every few years we need to reapply to the local authorities through a tender process and it's great news we can continue to support you and the thousands of other carers across the county with information, help and advice to enable you to continue in your caring role.

Our priorities are to:

- Reach more carers.
- Be transparent, efficient and effective.
- Work in partnership.
- Advocate on behalf of carers
- Invest in high quality support.

Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group provide approximately 75 per cent of the funding we need to run our services. As a charity, we fill the gap and run additional projects with grants and donations from our generous local community.

With both costs and demand for our services rising, we will be focusing on fundraising in the coming months and you can read about our efforts on page 16 and 23.

You can find out how we are continuing to work in partnership with Tibbs Dementia Foundation, to deliver dementia services in Bedfordshire, on page 21. You can also see further information on what we have been doing to advocate for carers on page 24.

We are extremely grateful to all our supporters, volunteers and partners for the part they play in helping to support unpaid family carers who look after their loved ones, often with little or no respite.



Chris Stelling
Chief Executive Officer

Carers in Bedfordshire News

Online bookings for haircuts, massage and footcare



You can now book an appointment on our website for our monthly Wellbeing Care Sessions, at venues across Bedfordshire.

The advantages to you are:

- You can see which slots are available on the calendar.
- You get a text confirmation and reminder of your booking.
- You can go on a waiting list and receive a notification if a slot becomes free.
- You can pay online.

The sessions are for haircuts, massage and footcare at Bedford, Biggleswade, Eaton Bray and Leighton Buzzard. Visit www.carersinbeds.org.uk/wellbeing-care-appointments then just choose your venue

and time. Our staff can also do this for you over the phone.

We are still offering these at discounted prices, but in line with inflation we will have to increase these slightly on 1 April. Haircuts will be £7, foot care and massage £12 each.



Changes to Carers Grants

There will be some changes to how you can apply for the Carers Grant from the 1 April and the amount you can apply for.

We are reducing the grant slightly to enable as many carers as possible to benefit from this valuable resource. We're also making it easier for carers in the same household to apply for one grant, rather than families having to fill out multiple forms.

The changes are:

- Individual carers are eligible to apply for up to £275 every 12 months.
- Carers living at the same address are

eligible to apply for up to £375 every 12 months and will need to apply jointly on one application. Each carer can apply for their own items.

- Fast track grants are no longer offered.

There's no change to the grant criteria. The grant is not means-tested and does not affect your benefits. It is kindly funded by the NHS and our independent panel reviews each application and makes awards against the criteria.

For further information see our [Carers Grants webpage](#), email grants@carersinbeds.org.uk or ring 0300 111 1919.

I'm not just a carer...

Mark Love talks about caring for his 18-year-old son Zachary, who has an intellectual disability and autism, and how he manages to pursue his passions.

I've been home schooling Zach since he was 14. He's happier, calmer and healthier than he ever was during his last years at school. But, we are more tired and limited in what we can do, as we have been forced to become a single income family. I've been his full-time carer since he was three and consequently any of my professional ambitions had to take a backseat. Although the world might be secretly grateful for this!

I would describe myself as a very proud carer, but I'm not just a carer. I've also been a performer, journalist, editor, author and TV sketch writer. Caring has annexed a very large portion of my life, but I do all I can to keep the rest of me alive and Carers in Bedfordshire has been a parachute, always there in an emergency. I would recommend applying for the carers grant – to help keep your soul alive and connected to the 'you' within the carer.

The grant has enabled me to maintain a link to creating and playing music, which was such a big part of that much bigger world I used to inhabit. It has kept me sane through the ongoing challenges of caring.

Today at 57 I collaborate with friends and professional musicians via the wonder of the internet and file sharing. My most recent collaboration is with my oldest writing partner who now lives in Valencia. We're called Foster and Love and provide a slice of 90s-style accessible, alternative pop.

I'm also working on a final edit of a fantasy novel and revisiting a speculative TV series,



about the damage to relationships caring can cause, which I co-wrote with the novelist Chrissie Manby.

Check out Foster and Love's latest tracks, at www.soundcloud.com/fosterandlove which will be released later in the year as an album. Mark is also starting a blog about caring which you can find on our website.

We'd be interested to hear how others manage to stay creative and pursue their passions whilst caring. Email us at communications@carersinbeds.org.uk

Black Carers Forum

The forum has been meeting since July last year, to give black carers a space to connect. Member Samantha Gay tells us more.

Who is the Black Carers Forum for?

It's mainly for carers from African, Caribbean and mixed heritage communities. Around 25 people have come along to the Zoom sessions since we first met. They are from all walks of caring life - caring for children, parents with dementia or relatives with other conditions.

Anyone who thinks they may benefit is very welcome. For example, a white parent caring for a black or mixed heritage child may find it helpful, or anyone who wants to know about the kind of issues we face.

Why is it needed?

Some of us go along to other Carers in Bedfordshire groups, but we've found a connection at this forum. It's based on shared experiences, such as around family backgrounds, the role of faith and our sense of community. I know some carers don't like to tell people they are struggling - there's a strong sense of duty, so we just get on with it. At the forum, we don't need to explain all that to each other. To me, it feels like an extended family.

We also learn about other services Carers in Bedfordshire offers. I think we also inspire each other - Patricia talked about how she used her grant to kit out her sewing room and also mentioned a book she had contributed to in lockdown. In Black History Month, we talked about our role models. Usually, a CiB staff member comes along and the Wellbeing Practitioner even gave us a mini-meditation at one session!

Some members have participated in consultations and given feedback to external agencies.



Sam volunteers to keep the forum running. You might also see her helping at the arts and crafts table at some groups.

How can I join?

It can be daunting to come along for the first time - but be brave and take that step.

**Email
contact@carersinbeds.org.uk
and ask to join the group**

Or look out for the next forum on the What's On page of the website.

International Women's Day

To celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March we've chosen to put the spotlight on our former chair Dr Anne Grant, who has now received her MBE medal from The Prince of Wales for services to the charity.



The investiture was made in recognition of Anne's unwavering commitment to the needs of unpaid family carers across Bedfordshire. She attended the ceremony at Windsor Castle, after it had been postponed in 2020 due to Covid.

Anne joined Carers in Bedfordshire soon after it was founded by Yvonne Clark in 2004, volunteering as a telephone befriender and a trustee. Anne went on to be chair of the charity from 2010 to 2017, and she oversaw a period of great change as the organisation evolved into becoming the well-established and respected charity it is today.

On receiving her medal Anne said:

"I finally made it. Two years ago I was overwhelmed to be awarded an MBE, after being nominated by Carers in Bedfordshire and I've finally received it. The interior of Windsor Castle was stunning and as we progressed from one amazing room to the next, a string quartet played to create a lovely atmosphere.

"Finally, the moment came when my name was called – 'Dr Anne Grant for Services to Charity in Bedfordshire.' I walked forward to stand in front of Prince Charles and curtsied.

"He fastened my medal to my jacket, and asked me what my link with caring was. I explained that my husband had been severely disabled by a stroke and I had got involved with a local charity to support unpaid family carers, like myself, for whom there was little or no support. He asked if, after I stepped down, the charity was still running. I told him absolutely, the need is greater than ever.

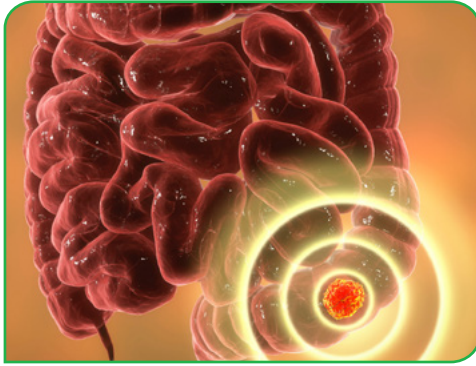
"It was an amazing experience never to be forgotten. Thank you, Carers in Bedfordshire, for nominating me, though I feel it should be shared by the Board and my two children without whom I could not have survived and of course my husband Forbes."



International
Women's Day

**See page 23 for our female volunteer stories
to celebrate International Women's Day**

Rid the taboo about poo!



According to Bedfordshire Primary Care Trust, carers and those they care for have a low track record of taking up cancer screening opportunities. Bowel cancer has the lowest take up of all.

The PCT wants to rid the taboo about poo and here explain what the screening test involves and how to get one. They are urging carers to take the test and encourage those they care for to be tested too.

FIT or faecal immunochemical test, is a free bowel cancer screening test for those aged over 60.

This simple, lifesaving test is easier than you may think; most of us are able to do this independently, and in the privacy of our own bathroom. You can't always see the signs and tests can detect early signs of cancer. When spotted early, treatment

is more likely to be successful and most will survive bowel cancer when an early diagnosis is made.

The statistics can be difficult to read; around one in 15 men and one in 18 women will have bowel cancer in their lifetime; with over 42,000 people being diagnosed and 268,000 living with bowel cancer in the UK each year.

Although more commonly found in those aged 50 and over, around 2,500 people under 50 are diagnosed each year.

For those aged 60-74, a FIT kit will be sent automatically by post, and repeated every two years; those older can ask to be tested by calling the free NHS helpline 0800 707 6060.

If you have symptoms which can include blood in your poo, a change in your normal bowel habits, a pain or lump in your abdomen, weight loss or tiredness for no obvious reason, then make an appointment with your doctor or nurse practitioner without delay.

To request a free FIT kit or for more information about bowel screening, visit www.nhs.uk/conditions/bowel-cancer-screening or call the NHS bowel cancer helpline free on 0800 707 6060.

Quiz Time

The answers are all found within the articles and also printed on page 20.

1. As a charity, what percentage of funding do we need to find to run additional projects with grants and donations from our generous local community?
2. How many people in the UK are estimated to have an eating disorder?
3. What percentage of unpaid carers in the UK are men?

Eating Disorder Awareness Week



Eating Disorder Awareness Week is the first week of March. Here are some tips if you are caring for someone who has an eating disorder.

It's a serious mental illness that affects all ages and genders. The eating behaviours may have developed as a way to cope with difficult situations or feelings. They could include restricting intake of food, bingeing or purging (self-induced vomiting), extreme exercise or laxative misuse.

Beat, the leading eating disorder charity, estimates 1.25 million people in the UK have an eating disorder.

How can you help someone with an eating disorder

- Be patient and listen - you may not agree with what they are saying or doing and you don't have to. However, it is important they feel supported and

Visit www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk for further information. You can also call our support workers who are here to help you.

- able to talk and listening may help you to understand what it feels like for them.
- Offer support – ask them what support they want. Do they need someone to come to appointments with them and check in?
- Include them in plans – they may not want to attend a family lunch or go out for dinner, but keep including them where you can. If they say no, maybe ask them if there is something they would like to do together instead.
- Build up their self-esteem – give them compliments that aren't focused on their visual appearance. Tell them how kind they are or share a time you have laughed together.
- Notice what their triggers are – are there words, topics of conversation, places or times of day they find hard? Once you identify them think about if you can put things in place to support them when they meet these hurdles.

How to get professional help

- Arrange an appointment with their GP. They will ask them about their feelings and behaviours, and carry out a health check (see page 15 for further details).
- The support they get will depend on the diagnosis and severity of the problem, but it will often include talking therapy to supplement a plan for them to get back on track.



Alleviating Stress Month

Stress – a word and feeling we are all familiar with. Stress is a hardwired physical response that travels throughout our entire body in times when we may feel challenged or overwhelmed. Each of us will have things we find stressful and some of these may be part of our daily lives.



In the short term, stress can motivate us to reach a new personal best, increase our productivity to meet a deadline or prepare us for a new challenge.

However, in the long term it can have damaging effects on the health of our brains and bodies. Stress signals in the brain send messages to your gut which can cause a butterfly type sensation, affect your digestion and impact your overall health. The stress hormone, cortisol, is released and can increase your appetite making you crave energy dense food. Chronic stress can also cause acne, hair loss, headaches, muscle tension, difficulty concentrating and irritability.

You will never be able to eliminate stress entirely, but what matters is how you respond. Look at your current response and see if you can try one of the following to look after your brain and body:

- Reframing thoughts – see stress as a challenge you can control and master rather than as an unbeatable force.
- Use gratitude - focus on things you are grateful for and highlight the pockets of joy in your life.
- Rest - get a good night's sleep where you can (we know many of you care during the night and it's not easy).
- Engage with your senses - what can you see, feel, hear, touch or taste?
- Pause - take a moment and a couple of deep breaths.
- Create a plan or a schedule - prioritise the most important or urgent tasks and say no to the things we just don't have time for.
- Look after your body – stay hydrated, feed your body nutritious food and get some fresh air.
- Slow things down – use meditation or mindfulness.
- Give yourself a break – take part in hobbies, be creative, listen to music.
- Build your support network – talk to others about how you are feeling.

Find out further information on page 14 about looking after your wellbeing, as we raise awareness this April for National Stress Awareness Month.

Stress Awareness Month 2022

What's On

Men care too



stigma around mental health and self-reliance. We want to break down these barriers and show male carers that men care too and it's OK to ask for help.

The next events coming up, thanks to funding from Carers Trust, are:

- 🕒 Bletchley Park Tour - home of the WWII codebreakers – 23 April and 14 May
- 🕒 Family bowling – 14 May

Past activities aimed at male carers have been really well attended and we've received some great feedback. They included a brewery and tasting tour, watching rugby, an autism talk for dads, clay pigeon shooting, a cookery workshop and bird handling.



Did you know 42 per cent of unpaid carers are men? Yet the number of men who register for support is just a fraction of this.

We're running a series of events aimed at male carers to get valuable respite from their caring role. We also hope to encourage them to use our services for information, advice and support.

If you're a male carer check out what we're offering, and if you know a male carer not yet signed up to our support, please encourage them to do so via; www.carerineds.org/register.

Research reveals men find it more difficult to seek support, with barriers such as

Mick is a former carer and volunteer, who runs our monthly Men's Walking Group in Silsoe (group pictured left). He said: *"The walking group has given the members a chance to get away from their usual caring regimes and to meet others on a social basis. We have bonded well and it's much easier to talk whilst walking. The conversations have been about people's shared interests, the pandemic and family issues, as well as caring."*

"The group have helped each other with concerns and a range of difficulties. I feel I have helped the carers too discussing possible actions to take and have encouraged some of them to seek further help and support from professionals both at Carers in Bedfordshire and other agencies."

"I love walking and after each session I feel a great deal of satisfaction, as I know the group have valued the experience too. We're always on the lookout for new members. Join us the last Friday of each month at Silsoe Church, at 11am. Further details are on [the website](#)."

These boots are made for walking



Now spring is on its way, we wanted to remind you of our monthly walking groups at some of the most beautiful parks across Bedfordshire.

Walking in a group is a great way to stay fit and healthy, get out in the fresh air, make new friends, meet other carers who understand what you're going through and improve your wellbeing (see more about how we look after carers' wellbeing on page 14.)

Saturday Socials

The haircuts, footcare and massage therapies we offer carers at a discounted rate, are now being run alongside our Saturday Socials. You can book your treatment and then meet other carers to socialise and have refreshments with, in a fun family-friendly atmosphere. Find out more on page 5 about how you can now book your appointments online.

We have some special events coming up at our socials, including:

Crafting Fun - 19 March

Get creative and join craft expert Samantha Gay at Eaton Bray

Virtual Reality - 2 April

With Darren Coleman at Priory Methodist Church in Bedford - 2 April

Put on a headset, sit back, look around and enjoy. Watch the magic come alive. Anyone who isn't using the equipment can see what's going on via the TV. Darren from Escape2VR explained: *"It's like a big pair of glasses that swaps what you can see in real life and transports you to a world of immersive imagination. For some travelling to these places in the real world may not be possible, it can take you on a bucket list experience without leaving your chair."*



To book onto any of the activities or find out what other events and groups are available visit www.carersinbeds.org.uk/whats-on or call 0300 111 1919.

Are you looking after your wellbeing?



We're putting on a number of courses and groups for carers feeling the pressure, who need some help with their wellbeing.

Looking after someone else can often lead to letting your own needs slip and maintaining your wellbeing as a carer can be difficult.

Wellbeing is all about being happy and healthy both physically and mentally. You may experience feelings of exhaustion, stress, anxiety, frequent worries, or feel low, irritable, restless or overwhelmed. Or this may be how you feel a lot of the time as a carer supporting someone else. We are here to help and have dedicated services to ensure you're taking care of your own needs too.

Coming up this spring, face-to-face, or on Zoom:

- A monthly Wellbeing Drop-in, the first Friday of the month
- A Weekly Wellbeing group, every Tuesday

- An eight-week course for Anxiety starting 16 March (you can also join on 23 March)
- A wellbeing group for Low Mood, starting 12 April for eight weeks
- Art for Wellbeing starting 22 April for six weeks
- A Stress Busting Course for four weeks starting 8 June

Sign up to any of the courses or groups by visiting our What's On guide at www.carersinbeds.org.uk/whats-on or phone 0300 111 1919.

You can also view resources on our [Wellbeing page](#) on our website to help you to look after yourself both mentally and physically.

Remember

If you're struggling in your caring role or if you need help with energy bills, transport, isolation, benefits our dedicated team of support workers are on hand to help. Just pick up the phone.



Caroline Carter
Wellbeing Practitioner

Physical health is important too



If you're caring for someone struggling with their mental health, it's important to encourage them to keep on top of their physical health too.

The NHS recommends people with certain mental health conditions should have an annual health check with their GP to support them to be as physically well as possible. The check will examine:

- The level of cholesterol in the blood
- The level of glucose (sugar) in the blood
- Blood pressure
- Smoking
- Alcohol intake
- Height and weight

Most people will get a letter or a text message from their GP practice to remind them when it is time for their annual physical health check, but you can always ask to have these tests done at other points of the year, rather than wait for the invitation.

Rethink Mental Illness has launched new resources designed to support people affected by a severe mental illness (SMI) and their carers before, during and after their physical health check. They were co-produced with those with lived experience of SMI and are designed to encourage people with SMI to access their annual appointment.

Visit www.rethink.org/physicalhealthchecktool for answer to common questions about what's involved and why the checks are important. It looks at:

- What to do if you are afraid of needles?
- What's involved in taking a blood test for cholesterol and what the results mean
- How much glucose in the blood is within a healthy range and what does it mean if it isn't
- Why a blood pressure test is important
- What are the best ways to quit smoking and what help is available
- Your relationship with alcohol
- Managing your weight

Further detailed advice and information for those living with SMI is available via www.rethink.org

Visit the [Health and Vaccine Information](#) section of our website for further information about caring for someone with an SMI. There is information about caring for someone with an eating disorder on page 10.

Young Carers School Awards



Oakley Primary Academy became the first school to be awarded our Young Carer Schools Award.

Alongside young carers, we devised ten standards for schools to meet, to enhance young carers' education and participation in school life. Oakley Primary Academy achieved all the criteria in January and Wixams Academy followed last month to also be presented with the award.

On average, there are two young carers in every classroom who manage a lot of responsibilities and pressure at a young age. They may experience isolation, difficulties coping at home, problems at school or lack of social experiences.

Janice Styles, Young Carers Coordinator, said: *"We were so pleased to present our first Young Carer Schools Award to Oakley Primary Academy, to recognise the staff as young carer-friendly. The teachers at Wixams have also been wonderful in developing a culture of acceptance, understanding and support for young carers."*

"For young carers, school can be a place where they are under extra pressure or where people do not understand what their life is like outside of school."

"We developed the Schools Award, as there are lots of ways schools can help young carers. Examples include being allowed to use a phone during breaks to check on the person they're looking after or running a support group for young carers."

To find out more about the Young Carer Schools Award visit www.carersinbeds.org.uk/schools-award



Young Carers Action Day

To celebrate Young Carers Action Day on 16 March and to follow the theme of 'Taking Action on Isolation', we will be joining forces with MK Young Carers and Bucks Young Carers to take part in a fun-filled quiz.

We will also be holding a Dress Purple Day to raise awareness of the challenges faced by young carers. Wear something purple and text PURPLE to 70560 to donate £2*. Or encourage a school or business to take part. Visit www.carersinbeds.org.uk/dress-purple for further information.

**Texts will cost the donation amount plus one standard network rate message, and you'll be opting into hearing more from us. If you would like to donate but don't wish to hear more from us, please text PURPLENOINFO instead.*

How signing saved our family

Sarah's Story

In 2014 I was no longer Sarah; I became a parent to Russell and a year later his little brother.



After endless paperwork, meetings, appointments, tears, diagnoses, I suddenly evolved from Russell's mum to Russell's (pictured left) carer.

I felt lost, we tried to continue as usual. I was working part time as a primary school teacher. I felt like I was failing at everything. Something had to give. So, I became Russell's full-time carer. As he is non-verbal, communication has always been our biggest hurdle. Most behaviour issues and meltdowns stem from his lack of ability to communicate and our lack of understanding. I spent time carrying out different therapies and even created a picture exchange file for him.

Then lockdown came and as a family we really struggled, Russell's mental health especially. But through home learning I watched in amazement as a teacher used sign language to read a book and Russell copied the actions. I didn't even know he knew how to sign.

For Russell's sake I needed to learn. The more communication skills we could give him, the better. When he went back to school, I completed the sign language program Makaton, levels one to four, as

well as safeguarding, signing for babies and singing courses. In just a few months I could see improvements. Russell was able to sign objects and feelings. Learning Makaton was a game changer for my family and my youngest can now talk to his brother. I decided I wanted to help others experience the calm we felt and I am now a licensed Makaton Tutor.

I would urge any parent with a child with any form of communication need to try Makaton. The programme uses both signs and symbols, so it's accessible to all. It promotes speech development and can develop a child's vocabulary regardless of whether they are verbal or non-verbal. Most importantly, it gives the child a voice, letting them be 'heard', making them feel included and valued.



Visit

**www.read-the-signs.co.uk
for further information and
remember to pick up the
phone and get in touch with
our Parent Carer Team if
you're struggling with any
issues or concerns to
do with your child.
We're here to help!**

How technology can help you

Technology can help people such as those with dementia, disabilities or the elderly to gain greater independence.

These devices can help lighten the load for carers as well as help the person you care for. We are starting a series of articles to show how technology can help you.

Two wonderful volunteers Pauline and Marion have searched the internet for you.*

Video technology

If your plan is to keep an eye on who you're caring for remotely when you're not around and speak to them, then you can pick up indoor cameras for under £40 with motion detectors.

These are reasonably priced, but the person you're caring for won't be able to see you, only hear you. They also require Wi-Fi and an app on your phone or an Alexa:



Blink Mini Compact Indoor Plug-in Smart Security Camera

Motion detection, night vision and two-way audio, work with Alexa - £24.99



eufy Security Solo IndoorCam P24

Two-way audio, night vision and when motion is detected the camera automatically tracks and follows the moving object - £37.99



netvue Indoor Security Camera

Two-way audio, night vision, works with Alexa and when motion is detected the camera automatically tracks and follows the moving object - £37.99

If you want to see someone on a video call and speak to them, but using a mobile phone or computer is too complicated for the person you care for, there are many devices out there. These are two of the best Pauline and Marion found:



Call Genie - allows the person to accept video calls directly through their TV, without them needing to press a button. Requires Wi-Fi - £480.



Komp - a one-button computer, simpler to use than any tablet or smartphone, linked to an app for family members to use - from £39/month.

Other cheaper devices for video calls are Google Nest, Amazon Echo Show and Facebook Portal, costing around £200. But reviews highlighted they are often complicated and hard to operate when using for caring needs. The Genie and Komp are easier for the person you care for to use, but they are more pricey.

**We are not endorsing any of the products, just giving you an idea of what is available.*

Taking care of you

Joanna's Story



My mum, Jean, is 92 and has vascular dementia. Although she is lucky to remain in her own home, providing familiar surroundings, she can't live independently. Far from it. I am her primary carer 24/7 and have been for the last three years.

The practicalities of caring for my mum with dementia are easier to deal with than the emotional aspects. Watching mum struggling with her deteriorating memory has been very difficult to accept.

Last year I was at a particular low point and registered with Carers in Bedfordshire, which I've found most helpful and beneficial to us.

My Support Worker has been a great listener and sounding board. She made me realise that I needed to look after myself or I was in danger of being no good to anyone.

I was also encouraged to apply for a Carers Grant, which at first I was reluctant to do. However, she was very persuasive about the importance of self-care. I was awarded a grant to pay for a Nordic Walking Course and a pair of poles. This was an activity I

had always wanted to try. Knowing I had been awarded the grant made me more determined to succeed and not drop out half way through.

It has been truly life changing, I have got fitter, feel less stressed and have met a lovely bunch of like-minded walkers, who I meet up with for a weekly walk. At the same time as starting my exercise regime I re-joined Slimming World and with a combination of healthy eating and exercise, I was proud to be voted Miss Slinky 2021, having lost a stone and a half.

I am grateful to Carers in Bedfordshire for making me stop and put myself first for a change. Yes, I still have ultimate 24-hour responsibility for mum and her care needs, but taking care of my own well-being has made me better able to cope with my caring role.



To apply for a carers grant visit www.carersinbeds.org.uk/how-we-help/carers-grants or contact 0300 111 1919. See information about changes to grants on page 5, walking groups on page 13 and self-care on page 14.

New Dementia Nurse

We have welcomed a new Dementia Nurse to the Carers in Bedfordshire team to provide specialist clinical advice and information to dementia carers.



Karen Coupland is helping to support carers who are struggling with clinical issues for the person they care for, such as eating and drinking, behaviour challenges and medication. If it's an issue our dedicated support workers cannot answer, they will refer you to Karen who can use her medical expertise to help answer your queries.

Karen has 38 years' experience as a nurse. For the past 17 years, she has worked with people with neurological conditions and she also works as a specialist for the Parkinson's Disease Service, within Bedfordshire Health Services.

Karen has extensive dementia knowledge and experience and is well connected to the Memory Assessment Service in the local area, as people with Parkinson's have a 60 per cent chance of developing memory problems and dementia. She is also in

regular in contact with the consultants and Dementia Specialist Nurses we work with.

Karen said: "Joining the team at Carers in Bedfordshire is a great honour and I recognise the important role carers play in looking after their loved ones with dementia. I understand most families want to try and cope at home, therefore it is vital timely information and knowledge is given to ensure the person they care for remains healthy."

"I know caring can be challenging and stressful. I support carers by guiding and advising to ensure they receive the correct support and discuss nutritional, medication and behavioural treatment options, so the caring role can be as rewarding as possible. As well as making sure the person with dementia gets the right help."

Karen will attend our Memory Gateway group the first Monday of the month, 11am until 12pm, on Zoom, if you want to find out any clinical information and advice, or ask her any questions. You can also call our support workers on 0300 111 9090, who can put any questions to Karen for you.

Answers To The Page 9 Quiz:

1. 25%
2. 1.25 million
3. 42 %

Continuing to support you



Carers in Bedfordshire and Tibbs Dementia Foundation are pleased to be able to continue to work closely together as we enter into a new contract with Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedfordshire Clinical commissioning group, from 1 April 2022.

We look forward to deepening and strengthening our working partnership to offer the support, information, services, and opportunities to enable people affected by dementia to live as well as possible.

Our joint mission across Bedfordshire is:

- To provide a joined up, integrated and seamless service, for people affected by dementia throughout their journey.
- To listen and be guided by the voices of the person with dementia and their families, who will remain at the heart of all we do
- To ensure people with dementia have the opportunity to enjoy a range of meaningful and accessible services and activities.
- That those affected by dementia have access to specialised support and information through an understanding and welcoming service.

Tibbs Dementia Foundation will continue to offer a full range of services within the Bedford and Potton area and are pleased to have the opportunity as sole providers of groups to work with local communities across Central Bedfordshire, to develop local services, activities and opportunities.

Carers in Bedfordshire's Memory Navigation Service will continue to be the first point of contact after a diagnosis to provide relevant and timely information to signpost and navigate people to the services and support that will enhance their lives through life with dementia.

Don't forget

We run our All Sorts Groups every Wednesday for those with dementia and their carers, at different locations across the county, 2pm - 3.30pm.

Join us for a social session of fun activities, speakers, singing, entertainment and general discussion. Refreshments are provided.

Visit www.memoryinbeds.org.uk and go to the What's On section for further information or call 0300 111 9090.

Working women who volunteer

Many people volunteer, as well as having a paid job or while studying. To celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March, two women tell us why they combine the roles.



Syeda

My choice to volunteer came from wanting to enhance my career prospects. I chose Carers in Bedfordshire as I am a carer myself and I know how it feels to be overwhelmed with caring duties, alongside my daily responsibilities/chores.

I have landed a training position at Chums, following completing my higher education studies and I've been a volunteer in the past with Sandwell Youth Forum and the Tipton Muslim Community Centre. I decided to start volunteering again alongside my new role, to gain as many skills and experience I can, to help with my current and future employability.

One of the best aspects for me about volunteering has been meeting new people and gaining a support system which really helps with my wellbeing. I also enjoy supporting other carers and hope I can help make a difference to their lives.

Lorraine

Lorraine has worked more than 30 years for BT, now as a manager. She started off volunteering for us as a dementia befriender, then helped on Saturdays with the children's activities at the cafes.



"I get an allowance of three days a year from my employer to volunteer, so I am giving them too to Carers in Beds".

If you have time on your hands, whether you work or not, think about volunteering for us and get in touch. We have a range of opportunities and can be flexible, including home-based roles. Some evening or weekend volunteering is possible.

See our spotlight on Former Chair Dr Anne Grant on page 8 for International Women's Day.

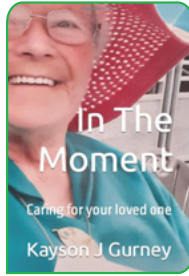


Carol Solaiman

Volunteer Coordinator

volunteering@carersinbeds.org.uk

Star Supporter



A big thank you to John Gurney – dementia carer and published poet!

John has been caring for his mother for the last seven years. He's very generously splitting the profits of his poetry book about his caring experiences, *In The Moment*, between Carers in Bedfordshire and Alzheimer's Society.

He said: *"With my mother's mind and memories continuing to fade, as she began losing the battle to stay in the same reality as me, I got into writing poetry as I had to try and express how I felt."*

[The book is available on Amazon](#) – search 'In The Moment' by Kayson J. Gurney.

How fundraising helps carers

Although we receive some funding (see page 4 for further information), fundraising allows us to do more for carers, including:

- Trips and activities for young carers
- Exercise groups for people with dementia and their carers
- More groups and activities for former carers

What's coming up this year?

- Skydive this summer - our thrill seeking supporters will take part in a sponsored skydive! Get in touch if you or someone you know would like to take part.
- Cake for Carers - fundraise any time of the year. Bake or buy some tasty treats. Then gather your friends, family or colleagues for a mouth-wateringly delicious bake sale.
- Find out more about Dress Purple Day to support Young Carers Action Day on 16 March, on page 16.



To find out more about fundraising for Carers in Bedfordshire contact me or visit www.carersinbeds.org.uk/fundraising



Jolene Macnaughton
Fundraising Manager

fundraising@carersinbeds.org.uk

Carers Voice

We've been talking to carers about our services and issues affecting you. We're always keen to hear your views!

Carers forum respite options



Our consultation about respite identified this as a major concern for so many carers. More than 100 of you filled out our survey and 20 joined our carers forum. We learnt that most of you just want some down-time, a break from the responsibilities of caring, some freedom. And some of you are so tired. You said:

"I find it very difficult to ask for help and don't really know how to. By the time I do I'm in a sorry state."

"I'm too exhausted to ever focus on my needs, I'm drowning but feel I can't swim to sort it."

"I am very fussy, but wouldn't you be if you were looking for help with your own family?"

44% of carers said they get no respite at all. Closure of facilities due to covid had a real impact.

58% of carers have had no financial help towards a break or respite care.

What happens next?

We will use the information we've gathered to call for improved respite options for carers from funders. The report will be published on our website. Email communications@carersinbeds.org.uk if you'd like a copy.

Readers Panel

Are we getting the message right for carers? Sign up to our online readers panel to give us feedback on our leaflets, guides and other information resources.

We'll contact you now and again when we're planning a new item or updating our resources. You don't need previous knowledge – just give us your general impressions.

Contact Helen at communications@carersinbeds.org.uk or telephone 07462 153060

Carers comments

Here's what you've said about our services:

"It was so nice to have some me time. I came out feeling amazing for the first time in a long while."

"It has been really helpful sharing our stories and experiences. It's made me feel that I am not alone."

"You're the only people that have helped me."

"I didn't feel like coming out today and nearly turned the car around, but I am so glad I did."