BY FORMER CARERS, FOR FORMER CARERS: NEW RESOURCES

CARING AND EMPLOYMENT

CARERS DISCOUNT CARD’S 3RD BIRTHDAY

DEMENTIA: THE IMPORTANCE OF DIAGNOSIS

THE POSITIVES OF CARING
Welcome to the Autumn edition of Carers. A huge thank you to former carers Lionel, Doreen, Irene and John (pictured on the front cover with Sandra) who, with Norma (not photographed) produced the fantastic Life After Bereavement resource to help other carers adjusting to life after caring. Find out more on p. 6.

This edition we have the theme of caring and employment. Read about Trevor's difficulties finding work after caring on p. 8.

If you are finding your employer unsympathetic or are struggling to find carer-friendly work, come along to our partnership meeting on 25th September and share your views. We've got two organisations funded by national government to support carers in work attending, Timewise and Employers for Carers. See p. 11 for more details.

Thank you for sending in your requests, tips, articles and photos. Please keep them coming.

Aren’t Keith’s craft skills extraordinary (p. 7), and John’s poem is particularly moving (see back cover). We’re very grateful to be able to share them.

We hope you also enjoy our regular features. There are lots of tips and hints on p. 14-15 as well as the forthcoming workshop programme in the centre pages. The dementia section on p. 18-21 is packed full of information on the latest courses and activities.

Happy reading!

Helen

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National Carers Action Plan launched

The Government published a Carers Action Plan on 5th June. It captures a range of commitments to carers and their families to be achieved between 2018 and 2020.

There is potentially lots of good news in this plan:
- It has been signed by six government departments signalling an intention to work together. These include the Department of Work and Pensions, Department of Health and Social Care and the Department of Education.
- Each action has a target deadline.
- It has clearly been informed by the views expressed by carers in the call for evidence consultation, launched by Alistair Burt at Carers in Bedfordshire back in 2015.

Here at CIB we particularly welcome:
- Guidance and training for social workers on best practice working with carers.
- Best practice guidelines on identifying and supporting young carers.

We’re less pleased about there being precious little mention of parent carers in the Action Plan. We’ll keep on working with the Carers Trust and Carers UK to draw attention to and improve this. We’ll provide updates in this magazine and the website as we hear how delivery of the plan is progressing.

Carers Week 2018

It was another busy Carers Week in June! Thirty Chiltern Vale carers enjoyed a cream tea, while hospital staff and visitors looked at our Carers Lounge information stands in Bedford and Luton Hospitals. We were out and about in Ampthill and Flitwick and networked with discount card businesses in Biggleswade. Partners from ELFT joined volunteers and carers on a beautiful evening tour of Bedford Park while many families learnt about the activities for young carers at an open evening. Thank you everyone who participated.

It won’t be long before we start planning next year!

Carers UK national conference

Support for carers living in Bedfordshire was showcased nationally in July when Helen, Sandra, and our Chair, Emma, attended Carers UK’s annual conference. Sandra gave a presentation on hospital based support for carers, informed by the five years the Bedford Hospital Carers’ Lounge has been open and the Luton Hospital Lounge. Helen attended a session delivered by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) on the Carers Action Plan (see p. 5) and asked the DHSC representative to urgently improve recognition of the rights and requirements of parent carers in national policy and practice. Many of the event participants agreed. We’ll keep you updated on national developments in this magazine.

NEWS

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Thank you to everyone who returned an Information Sheet with their contact preferences. We had so many back, we are still updating our records! That means those of you who haven’t been in touch in the last 5 years, are getting the magazine again. You can update your contact details at any time via our website. Visit www.carersinbeds.org.uk and follow the links to “Protecting Your Privacy”, where you can also read our privacy statement.

**Lunch time talks**

In response to carers’ suggestions, a new programme of lunchtime talks is starting on Mondays in Bedford and Tuesdays in Biggleswade. Featuring topics as varied as care homes, continence and Christmas, there is sure to be a topic that will be of interest to you in the coming months. And there’s the opportunity to meet and spend time with other carers who have similar experiences.

Find out more on p. 12-13.

**How Keith stays well…**

Keith’s love of art and craft started very early. He is photographed here with his model of Moggerhanger Park, an amazing piece of craftsmanship featuring guttering made from matchsticks and chimney pots made from cocktail sticks. Keith has painstakingly hand-painted the windows and other details. Keith says that his hobby has been a joy throughout his life, but has helped him in recent times as a break from his caring role. He said “when I focus on my model making I completely forget about other worries, and it helps me relax.”

**New booklet for bereaved carers**

A group of former carers have produced a booklet to help carers facing life as a former carer.

‘Life After Bereavement: By Former Carers for Former Carers’ will now be offered to carers who tell us their loved one has died. The booklet is packed with tips and information, including support available, suggestions on how to connect with others, look after yourself and try something new, when you’re ready.

Contact our Information Officer, Nic West, if you’d like a copy.

**Carers Discount Card turns 3!**

Were you one of the first 100 carers to have a Discount Card when it launched in October 2015? If you still care for someone, it is time to renew your card.

A representative from Central Bedfordshire Council said “We were delighted to provide funds to help launch this scheme to support carers to save money. It’s been a great success.”

100 businesses are now in the scheme, from cafes and hairdressers to solicitors and kitchen designers. Espère Healthcare offer 10% discount off their specialist bedding. Jo Fletcher, Operations Director, says “The Carers Discount Card has given us the opportunity to give something back to the community that we live in whilst helping those in need to sleep sounder and more comfortably”.

Check the expiry date on your card and let us know if you would like to renew it. You can send us a new picture with your name on the back or upload one via our website, or we can use your original one. Please allow 4 weeks for our lovely volunteer Helena to process your new card.

If you don’t yet have a card and are registered with us, email us at discountcard@carersinbeds.org.uk, ring on 0300 111 1919 or apply online at carersinbeds.org.uk.

Please do share with us how you maintain your wellbeing. We love to see your pictures and share your stories.

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The winner of the prize draw and lucky recipient of £20 shopping vouchers is… Rose Carslake. Enjoy the vouchers, Rose!
I gave up work in 2011, after spending six years juggling caring for my wife, Mary, with working in London as a financial controller. During Mary’s frequent stays in hospital, I would regularly spend a busy day at work, commute home to Leighton Buzzard by train, drive an hour to High Wycombe hospital along winding roads and lanes, visit Mary, get home at 11pm, gulp down a meal, and then do the same the next day.

When we discovered in 2011 that Mary would not recover from Guillain Barre Syndrome, I resigned from my job so we could have whatever time Mary had left together. I spent the following four years as a full time carer. Your life changes immediately when you finish work; your network of business friends and colleagues disappear overnight. I also found that visits from family and friends also diminished and Mary being a ‘people’ person certainly felt this.

Mary died in 2015. Over the following months and years, I moved on, and I am very happy to say I met my lovely wife Margaret and inherited a beautiful family and grandchildren. I also wanted to get back into work; not necessarily the position I had left, but I didn’t imagine it would be so difficult.

I visited a job club to revise my CV. I was told, “Don’t say you’ve been a carer, don’t give any dates in which you weren’t in employment.” I found that visits from family and friends also diminished and Mary being a ‘people’ person certainly felt this. I found that a little strange but went along with it. I took my CV to a local employment agency, and they said, “Where have you been for these missing years?”

Several times I submitted my CV, either nothing would happen or I would be told, “Sorry, it is the caring gap.” One agency who had been very keen to help me find work said, “The decision you made to care for your wife was admirable. I hope I would be able to make that decision if I was to face this problem. But you see it is because you took time out of work that it is difficult to find a position for you.”

Trevor has now changed profession and works locally. He also volunteers for Carers in Bedfordshire as a local ambassador.

Do you have an experience like Trevor’s?

Come along to the Carers Partnership meeting on Caring and Employment on September 25th and help us work towards making Bedfordshire a better place to care and work. You can also send us your story, any issues or questions that you would like raised at the Partnership meeting if you are unable to attend.

Find out more on p. 11
HAVE YOUR SAY...

**Department of Health and Social Care carers’ survey**

In November Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire councils will be sending out a survey to Adult Carers.

The national survey is carried out every other year and asks about quality of life, the impact of services on quality of life, and about general health and well-being.

You may receive a similar survey if you receive support from another Council.

It is important to note that if you receive a survey you do not have to complete it, and the services you receive will not be affected if you don’t. However the more people who take part, the more useful the results will be to help assess and improve local services.

Nationally this survey is very important in helping to understand the views and experiences of carers. The results are processed by NHS Digital and brought together with those of all other English councils.

After any information that could identify individuals has been removed, the findings are used by organisations such as the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS Digital, and are made available to the general public.

If you need any help completing the survey, do bring it along to a Carers in Bedfordshire group or activity, and we’ll be happy to help you.

The right carers’ group for you....

Thank you to everyone who completed our survey on group activities. You’ve given us lots of food for thought, suggesting late evening or Saturday sessions and sharing ideas for topics and activities. Some people who filled out the survey had not yet attended a group, whilst some who had said groups can be a “lifeline”, a reminder that you are not alone.

We’re busy collating the findings; keep an eye on this magazine and the website for updates!

WORKING AND CARING IN BEDFORDSHIRE

Do you juggle paid employment with caring?

Are you struggling to find suitable work after taking a break to care?

Are you an employer wanting to better support carers among your workforce?

Join other carers, local employers, representatives from the local authority and NHS to discuss challenges and find solutions to working and caring in Bedfordshire.

Representatives will include: Poornima Kirloskar-Saini, Operations Director of Timewise.

Employers for Carers has over 100 member organisations nationally across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

TUES 25TH SEPT 2018, 6-8PM

REGISTRATION AND LIGHT REFRESHMENTS FROM 5.45

Council Chamber (Ground floor), Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford.

Satnav postcode SG17 5XY.

To book your place or to send in comments or questions, contact Carol Solaiman on 0300 111 1919 or email contact@carersinbeds.org.uk
Workshop programme
October-December 2018

NEW
Monday talks at Bedford

• Planning a funeral – 1 Oct
• Understanding Mental Capacity, Power of Attorney and Deputyship – 15 Oct
• Continence Issues & Pressure Ulcers Prevention – 5 Nov
• Wills, Care home funding & Power of Attorney – 12 Nov

Take time out to plan ahead or learn about issues that might impact you or your loved ones. Mon, 12.15-1.15pm, Bedford

NEW
Talk & Lunch in Biggleswade

• Samaritans – 9 Oct
• Planning a funeral – 13 Nov
• Christmas Sparkle – 11 Dec

Take time out to lunch with other carers and hear an informative talk. Tues, 12.30-3.00pm, Biggleswade
£5.00 for a light lunch and drinks

Care Safely

5 Ways to Wellbeing
Sandra Rome

Learn practical steps to improve your emotional wellbeing. This approach has been proven to make a positive difference in boosting feelings of wellbeing and to help cope with life’s challenges. Tues 27 Nov, 10.30-12.30, Bedford

Understanding Stress
Arti Hakkad

When life is busy it is difficult to notice stress building until it starts to impact your physical and mental health. Take time out to learn the signs of increased stress and ways to prevent you from feeling its negative effects. Thurs 11 Oct, 10.30-12.30, Bedford

Balancing Negative Thoughts
East London Foundation Trust

Dealing with stressful situations every day can lead to negative thoughts which can be tiring. Learn how to recognise when this is happening and how to deal with them. Tues 16 Oct, 10.30-12.30, Bedford

Relaxation for Carers - Christmas special
Mel Reynolds

The build up to Christmas can be very busy and difficult when balancing it with your caring role. Take time out and learn some ‘carer friendly’ techniques to use in everyday life. Wed 5 Dec, 10am-12.00, Bedford

Understanding Conditions
Personality Disorder Talk

Aims to increase your understanding of the conditions in order to support you in your caring role. Oct 2018, Leighton Buzzard
Contact Anna Kidman for details

Caring for someone with a stroke talk
The Stroke Association

Covers stroke’s hidden effects, how to support someone with communication problems, practical tips for caring, and the importance of looking after your own health. Wed 7 Nov, 10am-12.00, Leighton Buzzard Scout Hut

Autism – A Dad’s story
Darran Youell

An informative and emotional account of caring for someone with Autism. Tues 13 Nov, 10am-12.00, Dunstable Fire Station

Wellbeing

Talk: A History of Whipsnade Zoo
Ann Ledger

Take time out and allow your mind to engage with an interesting and local topic! Hear about Whipsnade, its history, good and bad times and its outstanding success in breeding and conservation. Tues 9 Oct, 6pm-8pm Salvation Army, Dunstable

Ceramics
Mandy Caldon

Taking time out is important for carers. Spend time with other carers and develop a new hobby. Thurs 11 & 18 Oct, 8 & 15 Nov, 1.00-3.00pm, Bedford office
£20 for the course or £6 per session

Art for Wellbeing

Enhance your wellbeing by spending two hours totally absorbed in drawing and art with others. Bedford office - Anne Thompson
Starts 14 Sept, ends 9 Nov
10.30-12.30
£35 per course for 7 weeks or £6 per session

Biggleswade office - Deirdre Porter-Hanson
Starts 20 Sept for 12 weeks
10.30-12.30pm
£60 per course for 12 weeks or £6 per session

First Aid Certification Day

Helen Bell-Day
For carers wanting a recognised First Aid qualification. Certificate valid for three years. March 2019, 9.30-3.00pm, Bedford office
Free

To book:

Biggleswade, contact
Dawn Ray 01767 315079
Dawn.ray@carersinbeds.org.uk

Leighton Buzzard/Dunstable contact
Anna Kidman 07772 231208
Anna.kidman@carersinbeds.org.uk

Bedford, contact
Nicola West 0300 111 1919
Nicola.west@carersinbeds.org.uk
Carer tips and handy hints

We regularly receive requests to include tips and information on all sorts of topics, so on this page we’ve tried to include some of the ones that have been requested or suggested recently. We hope you find something you find helpful!

Where can we go together?

Did you know that we run 16 groups across the county which you and the person you care for can attend together? These include the Carers Cafes, and Drop ins in Bedford, Biggleswade, Ampthill, Dunstable Downs, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard. And for carers and their loved ones with dementia we have the Carers Rest in Bedford and Henlow Carers Group. And Memory Gateways in Bedford, Biggleswade and Houghton Regis.

For more details, call us on 0300 111 1919 or check out our Groups page on the website.

Enjoy visiting the National Trust or English Heritage?

If you care for someone who receives disability benefits they can register for a free carers card. This means that you can get in for free if you are accompanying them. For the National Trust’s Essential Companion Card, phone 0344 800 1895 or email enquiries@nationaltrust.org.uk. For English Heritage the person with care needs doesn’t need to be receiving benefits but it does need to be the same carer accompanying them every time. Ring 0370 333 1182.

The ‘Red Bag’ is a new scheme in Bedfordshire for people living in care homes or learning disabilities homes. It aims to help people who need to go to hospital to share their needs and medical history with ambulance and hospital staff.

The ‘Red Bag’ will contain: Information about the person’s general health, any existing medication conditions, medication they are taking, their current health concerns, and clothes for discharge. A copy of their discharge letter will be put in the bag when they leave the hospital.

Help after hospital?

If you need help after spending time in hospital, then the Red Cross might be able to help for a limited time.

They can provide transport home from hospital, support with shopping, collecting prescriptions and taking you to follow-up appointments.

For further information, call 01234 341 503 or email Bedfordhfh@redcross.org.uk

Look out for arthritis

Osteoarthritis is the most common type of arthritis in the UK with nearly a third of people aged 45 years and over having sought treatment for it. Common symptoms are joint pain and stiffness, swelling, tenderness or a grating sound when moving the joints.

If you are concerned then contact your GP.

Take care of yourself

Carers are more likely to neglect their own physical wellbeing whilst they are caring. This then means that your own physical health might become poorer as you age. Take action by:

- Telling your GP that you are a carer, so they can arrange regular health checks for you.
- Booking a health check at your GP surgery to reduce the chance of developing problems later.
- Getting a free flu jab so that you remain healthy this winter.
83% of carers view caring as a positive experience, according to research. But we so often hear about the difficulties carers face: problems with money and making ends meet, unsympathetic employers, mental and physical ill health. How do these balance? We asked some carers to tell us…

I asked the Monday morning Drop in group in Bedford whether they were surprised that 83% of carers view caring as a positive experience. They were not surprised at all! They said how much they had learned through being carers: how to navigate the health and social care systems, how to respond in an emergency, about wider society and other people’s needs, even about the person they care for and the history of the family.

The carers also told me that they had learned so much from each other sharing their experience and knowledge together. And what a sense of achievement they have, “I’m coping with it!” one said, and “my skills are better than the paid carers!”. Someone who is new to caring told me, “It’s a big responsibility. And daunting. But it’s good to find out you have the resilience to cope with it”.

Making new friendships is one of the special positives for carers who meet together in the group. Particularly meeting people very different from you - people you would probably never have met if you didn’t share that experience of caring. And for some carers the group had become a springboard to a new direction in life through volunteering.

Sandra says, “It is clear to me that these carers have gained great satisfaction through their caring role – even the satisfaction of seeing how the person they care for trusts them to care. As one carer said, “You find out what you are capable of, especially when it’s new for you”. How positive it is for a carer to tell me, “I feel I’m more emotionally rounded and empathetic. And more likely to help other people too”.

Food for thought…

Sandra
New evening Memory Gateway

Carers in Bedfordshire will be holding an evening Memory Gateway session at our Bedford office once a month.

The first one will be on Tuesday the 11th September from 6.30–8.30pm.

This evening event should be easier for carers who work, as well as carers and people with dementia who can’t come to the Bedford Saturday Gateway or the Gateways held during the week in Biggleswade and Houghton Regis.

Please do come along and let us know what topics you would like at this new meeting.

Memoryinbeds.org.uk

Did you know there is a website dedicated to dementia services and information in Bedfordshire? We’re currently updating the memoryinbeds.org.uk website and would love to hear your stories or tips that might be useful to others.

Unforgettable Dementia Services

Many of you who attend Carers in Bedfordshire dementia groups will have met Adam, the designer from Unforgettable, who has been keen to hear your opinions on designs for various pieces of equipment.

Unforgettable was established by two brothers who cared for their mother and found it difficult to find equipment and information.

Many carers and people living with dementia have found the products helpful.

Useful websites to check out for products:
unforgettable.org
shop.alzheimers.org.uk
active-minds.org

Unforgettable have now also joined our discount scheme offering 10% discount off your first order!

If you have any ideas on the website, or indeed on any aspect of Carers in Bedfordshire dementia services, please email me sally.petre@carersinbeds.org.uk.

The benefits of getting a diagnosis by Claire Day

If you’re becoming increasingly muddled or forgetful it is a good idea to talk to your GP. Memory can be affected by many things: stress, ill health, tiredness or certain medications. Dementia is not an inevitable part of ageing.

Here are a few possible early warning signs:
- Day-to-day memory problems
- Difficulty concentrating, planning or organising
- Language problems, for example, struggling to find the right word
- Difficulty judging spaces or distances
- Confusion about the day, time, place or people
- Withdrawal from work or social activities

Seeking help has many benefits for an individual and their family. It encourages individuals to plan and make decisions about their future and their treatment, giving them a sense of control.

Legal plans can be put in place relating to finance and future care, such as Power of Attorney and Advanced Statements.

Early diagnosis can also allow individuals and their families to get practical advice and appropriate support for future changes and challenges.

Those living with more advanced signs of dementia also benefit from receiving a diagnosis. It enables them access to the appropriate care and help to meet their individual needs. A diagnosis also assists staff to consider mental capacity issues and best interest decisions for those in their care. Carers can be given specific information on how best to care for someone with advanced dementia and what to do if any concerns arise in the future.

If you need support or advice in relation to a diagnosis of dementia or have other questions you can contact the Memory Navigation Service on 0300 111 9090.

Why diagnosis is so important:
- You can plan for the future
- It explains what’s been happening
- You can be in control of your future
- You can be given treatment to reduce your symptoms
- You can access support and advice

If you are worried about your memory or other symptoms, talk to your GP
Courses for carers

Support 4 Memory
Have you, or a member of your family, received a diagnosis of dementia or mild cognitive impairment? This free six week course could be the course for you! It will give you the tools and information to have a better experience of living with or supporting someone with dementia. Taking the positive step to learn about dementia and develop your understanding will enable you to build coping strategies, know where to go for help, support and advice, plan for the future and make positive choices to help you continue to live a full and fulfilling life.

“A great course, we learnt so much and discovered we weren’t alone” Family carer.

“If I can cope now, I can make choices and decisions that are right for me. I’m still in charge” Person with recent diagnosis.

Wed 5th Sept - 10th Oct: 11.00am - 1.15pm
Wed 24th Oct - 28th Nov: 11.00am - 1.15pm
Dame Alice Court, 19 Newnham Street, Bedford MK40 3NR

Flitwick Fitness Taster sessions
Throughout September and October we will be running taster sessions where people with dementia and memory concerns and their families can try out different activities including yoga and tai chi.

Thu 13th and 27th Sept and 11th and 25th Oct, 2pm-4pm. Venue to be confirmed.
All welcome but as places will be limited please contact us to book your place contact@tibbsdementia.co.uk

If you’re caring for someone with dementia and haven’t yet attended a CRISP course, now’s the time to go - there are courses coming up in Dunstable and Shefford.

CrISP 2: for people who have been caring for someone with dementia for some time
7 Sept - 28 Sept (4 weekly sessions)
Priory View, Church Street, Dunstable
9 Nov - 14 Dec (5 weekly sessions)
Southfields, Shefford

CrISP1: for people caring for someone who has a relatively recent diagnosis
12 Oct - 9 Nov (5 weekly sessions)
Priory View, Church Street, Dunstable

Understanding dementia
These bitesize information sessions are for anyone affected by dementia, including carers. Come and find out more - no need to book!

Wed 29th Aug, at the Houghton Regis Memory Gateway 11am-1pm
St. Thomas’ Meeting House, Lowry Drive, Houghton Regis L5 5SJ

Mon 8th Oct, at the Biggleswade Memory Gateway 11am-1pm
on the second Monday of each month
Sea Cadet HQ, Station Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8AL

Dementia Support Hubs
Dementia Support Hubs are available once a month in various locations across Central Bedfordshire. They give people living with dementia and carers the opportunity to talk face-to-face with a Dementia Support Worker about any dementia-related matters. This may include understanding a diagnosis, managing changes in behaviour, planning for the future or anything else that is of concern. Call 01234 327380 to book an appointment.

Ampthill: Day Centre, Tues 23 Oct, 27 Nov, 10am–12
Biggleswade: Day Centre, Tues 10 Oct, 14 Nov, 12 Dec, 10am–12pm
Dunstable: Priory View, Tues 2 Oct, 6 Nov, 4 Dec, 10.30am-3.30pm
Houghton Regis: Day Centre, Wed 17 Oct, 21 Nov, 19 Dec, 2pm-4pm
Leighton Buzzard: Day Centre, Thurs 11 Oct, 8 Nov, 13 Dec, 10am-12
Sandy: Quince Court, Tues 23 Oct, 27 Nov, 2pm-4pm
Shefford: Shefford Health Centre, Wed 3 Oct, 7 Nov, 5 Dec, 10am-12 pm
Woburn Sands: Asplands Medical Centre, Tues 9 Oct, 13 Nov, 11 Dec, 2pm-4pm

For more information on these services or to book your place please call
Tibbs Dementia Foundation on 01234 210993
Alzheimer’s Society on 01234 327380
The Memory Navigation Service on 0300 111 9090
Supporting Us Volunteering

Early response volunteering

Five people have now completed their training as early responders and have swung into action! Lisa Head, the Client Response Coordinator, who leads this new service said “the volunteers are ringing newly registered carers so we can work out how best we can support them”.

One of the new team, Marion said “The training was thorough, interesting and fun. I’m now meeting and working with a great bunch of people who are always happy to help if you’re not sure about anything. I felt the time was right to give something back and in doing so, it has given me the motivation and strength to step out of my comfort zone.

“Becoming a volunteer has improved my self-confidence, and allowed me to be part of the valuable team that helped me when I was a carer”

Supporting Us Fundraising

Every year, Carers in Bedfordshire needs to receive a minimum of £42,000 in donations to maintain our current range of services.

Every single penny makes a difference, and we’re very grateful for every donation we receive: from cake sales, home boxes, collecting tubs, to sponsorship for swims, runs, baking, silences! Here are just a couple of thank yous, and some ideas on how you could help.

A big thank you to....

Imelda from Biggleswade and Gemma from Bedford who raised £1600 through their tandem skydives in June.

Bedford Lions Club for their £2000 donation to our Young Carers Service, raised by raffling Easter Eggs in Bedford pubs. This brings their total to £2400!

The Water Wipeout team of four, including staff members Helen and Lisa ran a 5km course littered with mud, water and obstacles and raised over £500. Lisa said “we all worked together to encourage each other to brave the more challenging obstacles.”

New volunteers have also recently joined us at the Carers Rest, Biggleswade Memory Gateway, Tea & Toast and the Bedford office. Could you be our next new volunteer? Why not pick up the phone and speak to Carol to find out more.

Take a look at our website for ideas of challenges that you can do on your own or with a team.

Know a good place for our collecting tubs?

We are looking for great places to place our collection tubs. If you know of any shops or pubs that would be happy to have one on the counter or if you would like to take that extra step and keep an eye on a few tubs in your area then get in contact with Andrew for more information.

Could you give a regular gift?

A regular donation every month makes an extra special difference as we can plan services not just now but also in the future with confidence. It’s a gift that just keeps on giving!

And it’s really easy to set up.

To find out more about Regular Giving, or to discuss your fundraising idea, please call our Bedford office on 0300 111 1919 and speak to Andrew.

Ask a busy person: thank you volunteers!

What makes someone give up their valuable time to help others? Over 100 volunteers do that for Carers in Bedfordshire every week, month or whenever they can manage it. Many of them are carers themselves; many have busy schedules.

To say thank you, we held a pub quiz in Volunteers Week – run by Debbie, one of the office volunteers! Carol Solaiman, Volunteer Coordinator, said “It was lovely to be able to give something back to our volunteers who give us so much.”

New volunteers have also recently joined us at the Carers Rest, Biggleswade Memory Gateway, Tea & Toast and the Bedford office. Could you be our next new volunteer? Why not pick up the phone and speak to Carol to find out more.
The Carers Story

As I struggle each day to do my best for you,
I sometimes feel despair.
In the day to day trials, I felt I was alone
And did anyone really care.

With each day dawning, I opened my eyes in hope
For a light to show me all would be well
But as the day moved on, the light grew dim
And there was no magic spell.

What gives me strength, when I am spent
And wearied by each task?
I will struggle on and not give in
“How do I do it?” you may well ask.

I remember the times when all was well
The times of sharing joys and dreams
As a family of love, we held so strong
And knew all would be well it seems.

Then trials came in to test me as well
Illness, fear and grief
My life seemed forlorn like a leaf on the wind
As I searched for some relief.

And I opened my eyes and opened my heart
To others who needed my care.
It was not a job and nobody asked
But somehow my purpose was there.

Tested as gold in the midst of life’s fire,
I strive to conquer my doubt
And I take on the trials and face all my fears
To give help to the hand that’s held out.

You ask how do I do it, and how do I cope.
My answer’s before me. I give of my best.
Even I appear to lose hope
For all that besets me I must rise above
And remember what I do, I do it all for love.

John Smith, carer