

Carers

in bedfordshire



**ANNUAL
REVIEW 2022/23**

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Welcome to this year's annual report, we hope it provides an inspiring insight into how our dedicated team of staff and volunteers have worked to reach our vision of *Every Carer feeling recognised, respected, and supported in their role.*

This year has been another year of growth as demand for our services continues to increase. The areas of need we see most are based around mental health, physical health, benefits and finances.

With growing demand, we continue to review how we work and what we provide to ensure that our services remain relevant, accessible, and responsive. We cannot afford to stand still in an ever changing climate and I would like extend my gratitude to our Board of Trustees and the Carers Panel, who have been unwavering in their support and constructive input over the past year.

It's been another successful year in which Carers in Bedfordshire has continued to adapt to the post-Covid world, particularly in making the most of technology. This has meant, among other things, that we've seen an increase of 60% in carers registered with us, since Covid, and staff now spend 33% more time on frontline services.

A particular highlight came when we won the Transforming with Digital Award in the UK Charity Governance Awards 2023. To receive national recognition, not just amongst carers' charities but across the whole charitable sector, is an indication of the way in which that adaptation I refer to has improved our services.

We still have much to do, of course, and we look forward to working ever more closely with other organisations to improve the whole system for carer

Carers in Bedfordshire is not an island, we are part of an important and sometimes complex system of organisations that come into carers lives and whilst we come in all different shapes and sizes, our successes and challenges are shared. Without the support of the Local Authorities, Integrated Care Board and our voluntary sector partners we could not achieve what we do.

Of course, none of our achievements would have been possible without our dedicated team of staff and volunteers who continue to go above and beyond in their commitment to improving the lives of carers across Bedfordshire.

CHRIS STELLING

Chief Executive Officer



support in the next few years. No one organisation can do it all alone.

As always, I would particularly like to thank all our funders, donors, partners, members and volunteers without whom we simply couldn't operate as we do.

We're delighted to have welcomed Mercy Canning, Jagdeep Ahluwalia, Joanne Preston and Michelle Evans-Riches as new trustees. Their combined knowledge and experience will help to ensure that we continue to grow in future years.

PHIL TAVERNER

Chairperson



OUR VISION

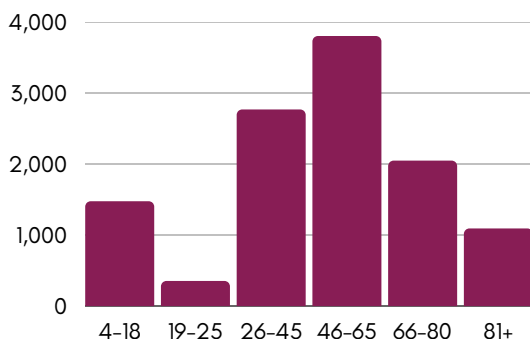
Carers will feel recognised, respected and supported in their role.

OUR MISSION

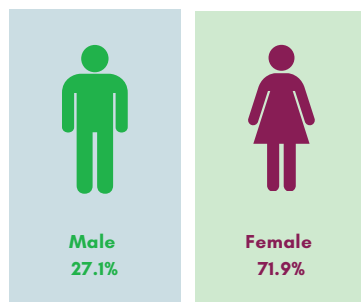
To give carers access to the support, information and skills that enhances their wellbeing and enables them to remain in a caring role for as long as they choose.

WHO WE SUPPORT

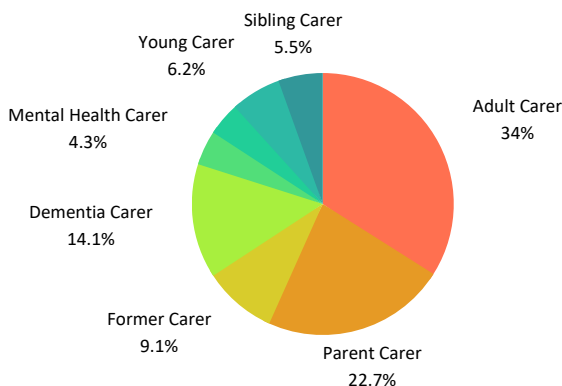
Age of carers



Gender of carers



Carer Types supported



We support more than **11,500** carers across Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire that's a **21%** increase from last year

We're a local charity which has supported unpaid family carers of all ages since 2004. They might be an older person looking after a spouse with dementia, a young person caring for a disabled sibling, a parent supporting a child with additional needs, or an adult looking after a partner with a mental health condition or addiction.

Our compassionate and knowledgeable Support Workers give a listening ear and practical advice. They help carers navigate the health and social care system, or reassure someone dealing with a difficult situation at home.

We are regulated by the Charity Commission and comply with Company Law. We're a Network Partner of Carers Trust, and also work closely with Carers UK, the UK's two national carer charities.

We have a busy program of peer support groups and activities to bring carers together. We run regular social groups, one-off activities and wellbeing events.

We help carers have their say on caring matters in Bedfordshire, and beyond, working with the NHS, local councils, and influencing government, local and national.

Our services include counselling, wellbeing sessions, coping with hospital admissions, grants, benefits advice and information such as the Carers magazine.

We are well connected locally with many health and social care organisations and have strong links with businesses, schools and employers.

Our Memory Navigation Service is for people living with memory loss and dementia, and their carers.

We work closely with local and national agencies and can signpost carers to specialised sources of support.



We only do what makes life better for carers – carers are at the heart of our values.



We have 40 members of staff (29 full-time equivalents) and 83 volunteers working across Bedfordshire to give carers access to support, information and skills which enhance their wellbeing and enables them to remain in a caring role for as long as they choose.

**66,000 interactions
with carers**

an increase of 38% from last year

**20,224 telephone
conversations**

an increase of 44% from last year

**133,000 unique website
page views**

an increase of 33% from last year

**£216,080 carers grants
awarded**

decrease of 12% from last year

**1097 unique carers
attended our groups**

decrease of 21% from last year

**5070 hours donated by
volunteers**

an increase of 23% from last year

As a charity supporting so many people with a diverse range of needs the Board of Trustees set strategic priorities to guide the charity in what it chooses to do and for whom. Otherwise the charity can be pulled in a number of different directions and end up working towards goals that are not rooted in its core vision and mission. In 2020 the Board published its strategic plan for the coming years; within that plan it committed to five key objectives.

OUR FIVE KEY OBJECTIVES:

**Reach more
carers**

**Be transparent,
efficient and effective**

Work in Partnership

**Invest in high
quality support**

**Advocate with
carers**



HOW WE REACHED MORE CARERS

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We supported professionals to identify carers

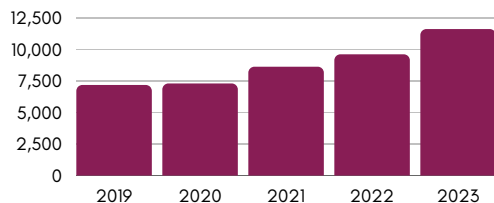
We ran a programme designed to increase carer awareness with GP's.

Supported by Dr Simon Lowe we worked with every practice across Bedfordshire to identify Carer Champions and embed our referral form into the GP's System so that GP'S could refer carers far easier than before. We also developed a digital carer awareness training package for GP's so that they can access training at their convenience. We aim to push this out to more GP's over the coming year.

“ I really liked it; it doesn't feel like training which is nice because it's so informative but also with the videos gives it a very 'real' feel rather than having to go through slides and slides of information. I think the videos and the 'to the point' information makes it a lot easier to digest.”



The number of carers registered with us has increased by over 40% since 2019

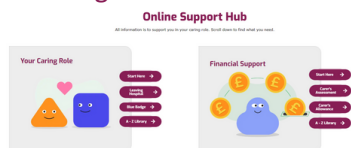


Digital Advances and Re-Branding

We worked to modernise our Branding and build new digital resources

We designed and built our new Online Support Hub which gives carers an easy way to find useful information.

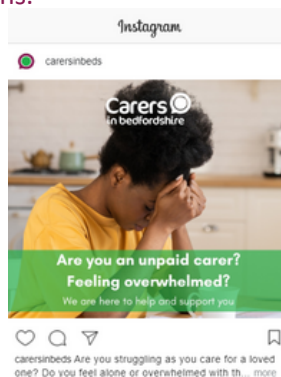
We also rebranded all our printed literature and online presence making it more engaging, eye catching and modern, we introduced our “Blobs” to help communicate our message to our diverse range of carers.



Social Media Strategy

We changed the way we engaged on social media

We decided to use the platforms to highlight more broadly “Who we are and what we do” and reduce our specific event posts. Our events are too numerous and far reaching, and are already advertised to carers via our bulletins. By adopting a more clear focus about our service we have been able to use social media to increase brand awareness and registrations.



HOW WE REACHED MORE CARERS

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Identifying Gaps in Carer Demographics - While we understand that there are thousands of carers who may require our support, we also recognize that there are certain carer demographics that we fail to reach as effectively as we would like.

This year we prioritised reaching out to male carers as while they represent 42% of the carer population, they only represent 27% of those registered with us.

We got funding from the Heads Up Community Fund to trial some new ways of engaging carers with great results.

Heads Up Community Fund helped us:

- Deliver a media campaign to encourage more male carers to register with us.
 - Leaflets were delivered to 7,500 households
 - A banner was displayed in Kempston Rovers Football Club and we were featured on their website
 - A Men Care Too postcard was inserted into our parent carer guide. Copies of the guide were distributed at this year's River Festival in Bedford and via local schools.
- A new dedicated web page was designed for male carers

The campaign **increased** our male carer registrations by **88%**



MEN CARE TOO

Did you know that more than one carer can register with us for support, even if they are not the main carer in the family?

Only 8% of our parent carers are men - we know there are more out there!

Carers in bedfordshire

National Lottery Funding

The success of the Men Care Too campaign gave us the confidence to expand this approach to reach more carers. We were delighted that the National Lottery saw the value in this work and agreed to fund us from next year. This allows us to continue our work to reach those most currently significantly underrepresented.

These groups include:

- Young Adult carers (aged 18-25)
- Ethnic minorities
- Males

We look forward to seeing and reporting the results next year.

Thanks go to all of our generous grant funders for helping us achieve our goals

Here are a selection:



“ Thank you, I don't want to cry but you have been so reassuring and helpful. ”

“ I honestly don't know what I would have done without having someone like you to talk to. ”

“ We are extremely grateful for what you have offered us so thank you so much it means every thing to us! ”

“ Thank you for the support that you give for carers. ”

“ It has made a big difference to me to be able to come into the hub and see you, thank you for everything you do, all of you. ”

“ “That's amazing thanks so, so much!! I have booked us on for a holiday at Butlins, we are all super excited! ”

We invested in high quality support by securing a number of new and existing roles integral to supporting carers. In addition to staff training to ensure our workforce is delivering the best support possible for carers.

Wellbeing

Our adult wellbeing service has continued to flourish. 89% of carers who accessed our wellbeing service reported stable or improved wellbeing following sessions.

Individual and group support was accessed and our Wellbeing Practitioner dealt with 337 referrals.

Our Practitioner also regularly contributes wellbeing articles to our magazines and e-bulletins. From July to September 2022 she ran a 10 week social media campaign around the wellness wheel.

Demand on our counselling service has reduced significantly since we introduced our Wellbeing Practitioner.

We have seen increased demand for our young carer wellbeing service. This service focusses on one to one support for Young Carers in Bedford Borough. Funded by Bedford Borough Council's Youth Empowerment Fund, she also contributed regularly to Young Carer e-bulletins giving tips and wellbeing advice.

Benefits Advice

We saw a need, carers were not receiving the awards they were entitled to. Carers told us that they didn't know what they were eligible for, found the forms confusing and often difficult to complete alone.

The Benefits service was introduced on 1st April 2022 with one welfare rights adviser three days a week. In that time we have assisted more than 318 carers and generated **£172,265.09** for carers.

The requirement to close support plans within 90 days ensures that the work is focussed on advising on benefits entitlements and supporting with applications.

Two volunteers have supported us this year helping carers applying for Attendance Allowance, Blue Badges and giving benefits advice.

Community Nurse

In February we recruited a Community Nurse to offer Health Checks for people caring for someone with a Severe Mental Illness. Health Checks are completed at home or another place where the carer and cared for feel comfortable. The results are shared with the clients GP and other healthcare professionals. Since we began 22% identified that the person has high blood pressure.

- 24% identified that the person is prediabetic.
- Among patients diagnosed with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or prediabetes during their health check, 70% had not previously received a professional medical assessment to detect those conditions.

HOW WE HAVE BEEN TRANSPARENT, EFFICIENT, AND EFFECTIVE

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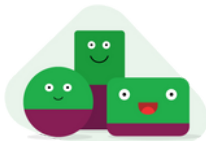
We continued to look at how we can improve services and the way we do things to ensure the charity was running as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Digital Advances

We continued to invest in our digital infrastructure and automated processes, to direct more of our resources into frontline support for carers. Examples of these initiatives are:

- Continued to develop a responsive **registration form** and enhanced database efficiencies. Due to increased demand we continued to be efficient by enhancing our registration process for carers and professionals through fundraised income. The re-design now enables Carers in Bedfordshire to make the carers journey more streamlined by identifying carers needs. The specifically designed questions mean that we can now provide bespoke support plans, intervention based around key areas that impact a carers life. The impact of this is that we can prevent, reduce and delay further needs more efficiently.
- We are now able to **text** to a carer individually through our CRM system. We can also text a whole group and people that will/have attended a session. The reply comes to the support worker individually and is recorded on interactions. Reminders for groups via text and email is now achievable, which makes it more efficient for support workers to send reminders about events.

This has impacted waiting times and allowed us to disseminate information more quickly. These advances allow staff to concentrate more time on front line services.



Excellence for Carers Award

We were awarded the national Excellence for Carers Award by the Carers Trust, for the support the charity gives to family unpaid carers in the county.

The award follows a rigorous assessment of the support services we provide, including the quality of our leadership, staff, internal processes and engagement with key local partners and stakeholders.

Overall

To date, both small and big changes to how we work has enabled us to work with a growing number of carers within a broadly similar budget. This year we have mainly focused on embedding those changes into our everyday practice and monitoring the impact of those changes.

A key challenge for us this year was to recruit Trustees who would not only meet gaps in skills and experience but also ensure the Board has a broader representation of the people we support. We were delighted to welcome Mercy Canning, Jagdeep Ahluwalia, Joanne Preston and Michelle Evans-Riches each of whom come with a wealth of experience to help ensure the charity remains well led.

Goals for the year ahead:



- Continue to invest in digital services to help us manage the demand on services
- Embed a young carers voice in Board level discussions

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Income			
Statutory bodies	953,809	975,284	820,052
Grants and trust foundations	294,295	345,460	518,687
Donations	21,981	33,255	22,725
Service Charges	8,928	12,360	7,973
Misc.	983	4,013	462
	<u>1,279,996</u>	<u>1,370,372</u>	<u>1,369,899</u>
Expenditure			
Carer Services	823,754	836,621	987,033
Dementia Services	171,178	188,821	92,084
Carers Grants	189,307	232,669	247,870
Fundraising	36,198	39,255	26,071
	<u>1,220,437</u>	<u>1,297,366</u>	<u>1,353,058</u>

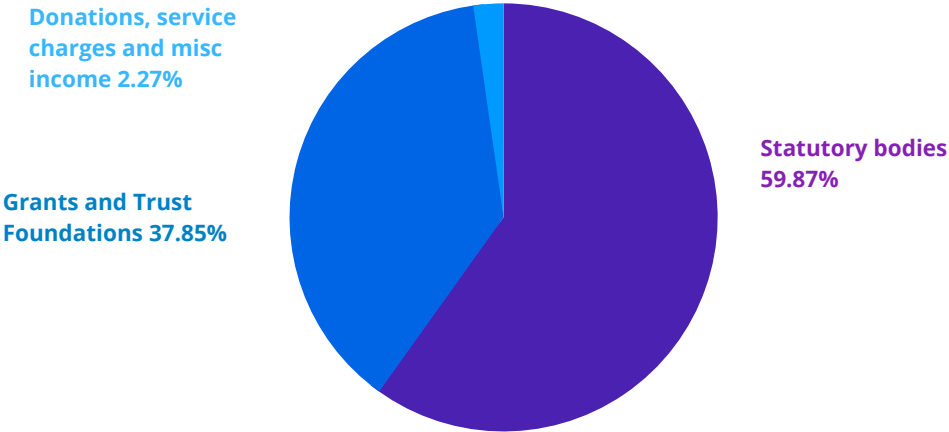


Income

We have seen our statutory income take a significant decrease, but hard work within our grants and trust team has bridged the gap as income grew in this area by approximately £173,000, allowing us to continue to meet demand on services. As well as, allowed us to enhance our core offer, develop our infrastructure and pilot new ways of working.

Our donation and service income decreased by 31% and 49% compared to the previous year, and continues to remain well below pre-Covid levels.

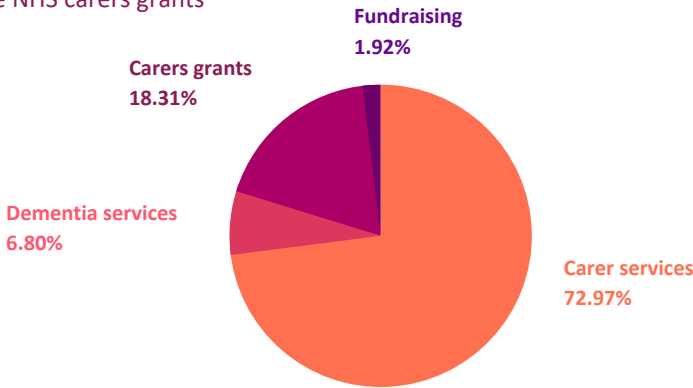
Overall, total income decreased by 0.7% on the previous year.



Expenditure increased by 3.8% excluding NHS Carers Grants (4.29% including NHS Carers Grants) compared to the previous year. This was largely due to:

- Investment in digital infrastructure, such as our website and database
- Staff training

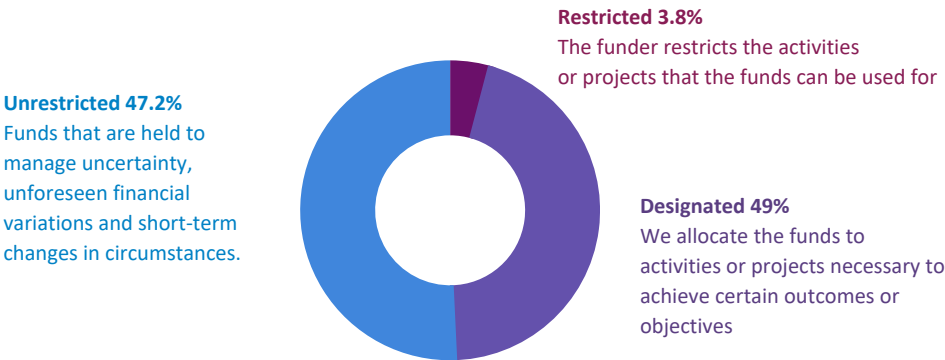
We were delighted to end the financial year with a surplus of £38,133. This includes the funds we hold for the NHS carers grants



Funds in Reserves

At the end of the 2022-23 financial year the total reserves of the charity stood at £430,320. These are funds that we hold to provide resilience for the charity against any unforeseen circumstances. Our policy is to hold a minimum of 4 month’s salary costs of all staff on all projects and three months’ central organisational costs, and a maximum of 150% of this amount in unrestricted reserves. The total reserves figure is lower than the policy as we are currently working towards targeting a minimum of 4 months salary costs and 4 months central organisation costs.

The total funds that we hold in reserves are in three categories for future activity:



“

I just wanted to thank you
so much for the lovely food
parcel, it was so kind.
Have a lovely Christmas
and stay safe

”

“

Many, many thanks for the
opportunity to have all
the yoga classes and
reflexology sessions. It's
made my January.

”

“

That's a very long winded way
of saying I really do want your
help and I value it so much and
couldn't believe there was
someone who could offer the
assistance that you kindly
proposed.

”

We worked with many partners to deliver sessions and groups, as well as team up on special projects to support carers.

Young Carers National Voice

We continued our work with Young Carers National Voice which is a growing network of local organizations that are committed to promoting the voice of young carers. The aim of the network is to bring together young carers from across the country to campaign collectively on the issues that are important to them.

Sue Ryder

Caring for someone with a life limiting illness with Sue Ryder St Johns Hospice and ELFT Macmillan Specialist Psychotherapy developed a 6 week programme for carers offering a mix of emotional and practical support for 2 hours a week. Carers able to attend in person or via Zoom. The course covered self care, coping with loss and change, managing worries, legal and financial matters, what to expect in the last days of life, organising funerals and future planning. Each session concluded with a mindfulness or relaxation exercise . Our first programme was delivered during February and March 2023 with further programmes planned for later in the year.

“ I found the course enormously helpful during a terribly stressful time of my life. I feel the course prepared me well for what was to come. ”

Tibbs Dementia

Since April 2022, we have increased our partnership working with Tibbs, to include regular team meetings, an internal referral system incorporated into an MS Teams channel, co-hosting groups to offer additional services and guidance to more carers. We continue to work together with them to provide service information at the Moving Forward groups and regularly promote their groups and encourage carers to attend.

Memory Assessment Service

We continue to work together with the Memory Assessment Service, providing information for those recently diagnosed at their Moving Forward groups. We also receive referrals from the Memory Assessment Service, on average this is 44 referrals per quarter.

Conference

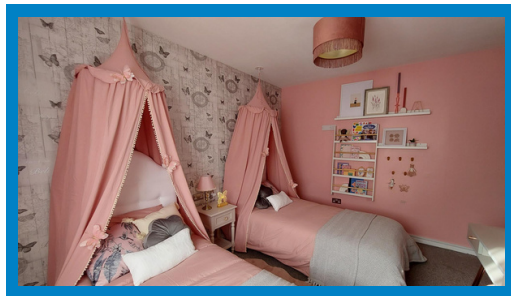
In November 200 carers from across Bedfordshire attended an in-person and online conference aimed to help them learn from each other, make sense of and manage change, and deal with modern challenges.

There were also dozens of organisations with information stands from partner agencies and different teams within Carers in Bedfordshire, with other talks about care homes, mental capacity, power of attorney, deputyship and advocacy also taking place.

Young Carers Alliance

The Young Carers Alliance is a growing network of over 150 organisations and 350 individuals committed to changing this and improving the support available for young carers, young adult carers and their families. They bring together representatives from research, policy and practice, all of whom are committed to bringing about improved outcomes for all young carers.

The Young Carers Alliance provides opportunities for collaboration, sharing best practice and a strong, collective voice for young carers.



Young Carers Bedroom Makeover

Two Bedford young carers, aged 4 and 9, were nominated for a bedroom makeover to celebrate national Young Carers Action Day (15 March 2023). This was in recognition of the amazing care they give to three of their family members who have physical health conditions. We teamed up with **bpha**, **Baileys** heating company, **Bellgroup** and **Bedford Repair Café** to transform the bedroom which the sisters share.

Goals for the year ahead:



- **Improve carer awareness amongst health and social care staff**
- **Improve carer awareness with employers**
- **Support partner organisation to deliver support in condition specific areas**

Here are some of the partners we've been working collaboratively with over the last year to provide a high quality service to carers

We are grateful to the Integrated Care Board (NHS), Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council who have supported Carers in Bedfordshire both financially and with key projects. Whilst Carers in Bedfordshire is an independent charity we would not be able to have the impact we have without their support.



We are also grateful to these organisations who have worked with us to support carers:



“

Since I lost my wife this July
the group has been so good,
helped me move forward

”

“

Thank you for the walk
and chat yesterday. I
really enjoyed it. Thank
you for your advice too.

”

“

Thank you for today honestly
makes a difference when you
feel someone gets it and
listens, so I don't feel like I
should be over this by now.
So, thank you for listening.

”

We advocated with carers in a number of ways helping them to get their voice heard and be the instrument for change. This included in how we run our services, how partners run theirs. This year we identified three priority areas that carers have said were most important to them:

Carer assessment process

What were carers telling us?

That the Carers offer in Bedford Borough did not give enough choice to carers about how they could access additional support.

Many carers who would benefit from an assessment were either not aware that this was an option, had been waiting for a long time or did not want the hassle of more forms to complete.

What did we do?

Discussed these concerns with the local authorities to identify a way forward. Updated our literature and guides to better emphasise when an assessment might be useful to carers.

What has changed?

Bedford Borough has now changed their offer so carers can now have the freedom to arrange and pay for support services of their choice through direct payments. We remain in dialogue with both councils as to see how we can better work together so that carers who would benefit from an assessment can access one without going through an onerous process.

Increase Respite Options

What were carers telling us?

That their health and wellbeing was being adversely affected by not feeling able to take a break from their caring role. Carers reported that the lack of choice and access to finances were the principal reasons behind this.

What did we do?

Raised those issues with the local authorities and carried out a survey with carers to help quantify this need. We supported carers to raise these issues themselves through engagement exercises with the local authority and continued to identify this as a central barrier to carers wellbeing.

What has changed?

Central Bedfordshire have published a carers strategy which includes a commitment to review respite options.

Given the limited progress and the fact this remains a central barrier to carers wellbeing, Carers in Bedfordshire's board have taken the decision to investigate the viability of opening a respite service either by ourselves or in partnership with another organisation.

Young Carer Support in Central Bedfordshire

What were carers telling us?

That support for young carers in Central Beds wasn't comparable to the support offer in Bedford Borough

What did we do?

Raised those issues with the council, detailing where the gaps in their provision were. CBC's Healthwatch also investigated and published [a report on their findings which mirrored our concerns.](#)

What has changed?

Central Beds have updated their website so their offer is more clear and are working to recommendations from the Healthwatch report.

We continued to listen to carers, hearing about their lives and their concerns. We are grateful to the carers who are willing to share their stories and give their time to help us and other carers.

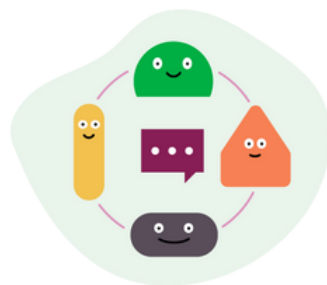
Carer Stories

We continued to grow our list of Carer Stories. Six carers stories were published this year to highlight the coping mechanisms used by carers facing many different types of struggles. Powerful messages – other carers can relate to, service providers can learn, informs our strategy; two of them part of the GP learning package. We thank those that were willing to share their stories and would be keen to hear from any other carers who would be willing to tell their story to help other carers and professionals alike.

Carers Panel

This year we introduced a Carers Panel, as a formal governance measure to give trustees a direct co-produced channel of dialogue with carers. After an introductory session, two formal meetings were held this year – all are hybrid. The Panel now takes place a fortnight before the Board meeting and up to two Carers Panel members attend those as observers. Discussions have focused on accessibility and inclusion and consulting with carers. We'd like to thank all those who serve on the Carers Panel for their commitment and support

Carer Stories on our YouTube channel



Future Goals:



- We will continue to advocate on those priority areas as we have not yet made the progress we would like to.

“

Everyone at Carers in Bedfordshire is wonderful/ kind and very helpful. I will be making a donation to say thank you.

”

“

I am blown away with everything you have told me and offered today. the whatsapp group sounds amazing and made me quite emotional thanks

”

“

Thank you for listening I hadn't realised I would be able to have support whilst my mum was in the Nursing Home receiving end of life care or afterwards when she passed away - didn't think I was still a carer.

”

There is little doubt that the past few years have created many challenges for both carers and us as an organisation. The effects of Covid and the rise in the cost of living have had a detrimental impact on carers physical and mental health. As we move forward, we need to be prepared to support a growing number of carers, allowing them to survive and thrive in their caring role, however, we know that this will not be straightforward.

Over the past four years the number of people we have supported has grown by 76% yet our income has only grown by 12%. This has meant that the amount we can spend on each carer has reduced significantly while service delivery costs are continually increasing. To date, changes we have made in how we work, and support carers has

enabled services to cope with demand, however, looking ahead, we expect demands to increase and the costs to deliver those services will also rise. Securing additional investment into those services is always difficult. Many charities around the country are facing a similar situation.

Recognising these challenges, the Board of Trustees and the Carers Panel have begun to think about how Carers in Bedfordshire positions itself in the coming years so that we remain mission focused in these ever challenging circumstances. We hope to share those plans with you in the early part of 2024.

If you are a carer or a former carer and want to help shape how we meet these challenges, then please consider joining our Carers Panel.

Rising Demand

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
No. of Carers Registered	6500	8000	9,500	11,500
Income	£1,216,402	£1,279,993	£1,370,372	£1,369,899
Available expenditure per carer	£187.14	£160.00	£144.25	£119.12

Carers in bedfordshire

We support unpaid carers across Bedfordshire.
Carers are at the heart of everything we do.
Would you like to help?

SUPPORT US

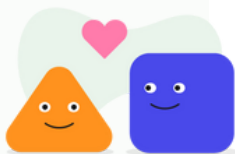


VOLUNTEER



DONATE

BE HEARD



CARERS VOICE

www.carersinbeds.org.uk

Registered charity no 1135507
Company registered no 07140432



**EXCELLENCE
FOR CARERS**
Carers Trust Quality Award