



**Central
Bedfordshire**

LIFE AFTER CARING

Carers 
in bedfordshire

If you look after a family member or friend, it is important you understand your rights as an unpaid carer, and where you are able to access support when you need it.

Caring doesn't always end suddenly

Some carers experience bereavement after their loved one passes away, where others face a major transition when their loved one moves to residential or respite care.

Both situations bring complex feelings and challenges

This session focuses on managing loss, rebuilding life, connecting, and using your experience.



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When the person you care for moves into care

It's very common for your relationship with the person you cared for to change, even though they're still an important part of your life. This transition can bring a mix of emotions, perhaps relief that your caring responsibilities have eased, but also feelings of guilt, sadness, or even grief, despite your loved one still being here. You might notice a sense of loss around your daily routine or purpose. Remember, your role doesn't have to end completely; you may continue to support your loved one in new ways, such as advocating for their needs, visiting, or simply offering emotional support.

Managing guilt and emotions

It's completely normal to experience a range of emotions when your caring role changes or comes to an end. You might feel relief that the pressure has eased, but also guilt, sadness, or even a sense of lost identity. These feelings are common—many carers wonder, “Did I do enough?” or “Have I let them down?” It's okay to grieve this change, even if your loved one is still with you. To help navigate these emotions, try talking openly with trusted friends, family members, or support workers. Local helplines can offer emotional support, and joining peer groups is a great way to share experiences with others who understand. Remember, you're not alone in how you feel, and reaching out for support can make a real difference as you adjust to life after caring.

Self Care tips

Here are the top 10 self-care tips from other carers after losing someone or when your caring role ends

-  Acknowledge your feelings – Give yourself permission to grieve and feel whatever comes up, without judgement.
-  Talk to someone – Share your thoughts and emotions with trusted friends, family, or a professional.
-  Rest and recharge – Prioritise sleep and downtime; your body and mind need time to recover.
-  Create a routine – A daily structure can provide stability and help you regain a sense of control.
-  Nourish yourself – Eat regularly and stay hydrated, even if your appetite is low.
-  Get outside – Fresh air, daylight, and gentle movement can uplift your mood and energy.
-  Be kind to yourself – Avoid self-criticism and allow yourself space and time to heal.
-  Reconnect with interests – Slowly reintroduce hobbies or activities that bring you joy or comfort.
-  Join support groups – Connecting with others who understand your experience can be very healing.
-  Mark your loss – Find a meaningful way to honour the person or role, such as writing, planting something, or creating a memory box.

Rebuilding your life

When your daily caring duties come to an end, it can feel like a big adjustment but it's also a chance to rediscover who you are outside of your caring role.

Start with small steps, like taking a walk, reconnecting with friends, or enjoying a favourite book. If you're interested in learning something new, Central Bedfordshire's Employment & Skills Academy offers adult learning courses.

It's natural to feel lonely or isolated after caring, but reaching out and connecting with others can make a real difference. Social connections boost your mental health, confidence, and sense of purpose, helping you rebuild your identity.

Tips for reconnecting



Start small: a phone call, a coffee meet-up, or joining one group



Don't pressure yourself to "bounce back" quickly



You're not alone – support is available and waiting

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My husband's death was sudden and unexpected even though he had been ill for many years and living in a care home. He was a wonderful man who had spent his spare time caring for his community. Whilst he was ill, I had joined Carers Rest through which I had made many new friends. We were able to help one another and share our experiences. Once my husband had gone, these friendships were extremely important to me. Connecting with others is so important both at Carer groups but also in my local community when I can.

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Coping with bereavement

When the person you care for dies, it can be really tough to know how to move forward – not only have you lost the person you loved but you have lost your way of life. It is important that you look after yourself during this time and continue to access support services.

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My grieving began when my wife, who had Alzheimer's disease, went into long term care. I was devastated. I sought out a counsellor whom I did not know, and who did not know me. I was able to 'off load' on her all my anxieties, emotions and feelings of guilt, in strict confidence, knowing that she would be totally non-judgmental. I did most of the talking; she listened; only occasionally asking what my feelings were at the time or how I felt now. It was marvellously therapeutic! I strongly recommend that you seek help to help you adjust to life alone

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Looking after your physical and mental health

“ ‘I felt lost and lonely after the death of my husband. Whilst I had been caring I also hadn't thought about my physical health at all, I was so focused on him. After his death I soon realised that it was essential that I ate properly and did not stay in the house all day. I started to exercise and I tried different groups until I found something that I enjoyed’. ”

Carers in Bedfordshire's wellbeing practitioner can help with guiding you towards good physical and mental health. You can find free support on our Online Support Hub or you could call us for information, support or guidance.

Top Tip



Speak to your local social prescriber about looking after your physical health

Useful Link

Social prescribers All Areas
<https://bedsrcc.org.uk/what-we-do/health-wellbeing/communityreferral-social-prescribing/>



Volunteering

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When my wife died and then my disabled daughter nine months later, there was an immense feeling of loneliness but also a huge sense of relief and calm. Volunteering and especially meeting and helping others in a similar caring role to myself has helped greatly in keeping me active, alert and empathetic.

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Carers in Bedfordshire relies on volunteers. Some Former Carers take up volunteering opportunities with us. This will allow you to share the knowledge you have gained with other Carers or you may choose to support us with office administrative tasks or other volunteering duties. Contact Carol Solaiman on 0300 111 1919 or email volunteering@carersinbeds.org.uk CVS Volunteering To volunteer with a local group in your area contact. Bedford 01234 354 366 Voluntary & Community Action Central Beds 01525 376 281



Learning Something new

“I have done several new things since my husband died. I joined the U3A which had lots of other activities, like art, film club etc. and made new friends in the same situation as me. I have helped to prepare lunches at the Carers Rest. It can be a challenge, but it is also enjoyable. It has helped to rebuild my confidence and develop new skills. I can also share experiences with those attending, which benefits me by keeping memories of my husband alive”

Local Services

Carers in Bedfordshire offers activity groups such as the Carers Choir. There are many other community organisations you may wish to explore.

University of the Third Age Bedford, Ivel Valley, Leighton Buzzard:

<https://u3asites.org.uk/bedford/welcome>

Rothsay Education Centre Bedford 01234 302 203 <https://recbedford.co.uk/>

