



CARE MATTERS

A magazine for unpaid carers

Discover a new podcast for parent carers

A week with one of our Carers Advisers

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Carers Oxfordshire is a free service that offers information, advice and support to unpaid adult carers of someone living in Oxfordshire. The service is delivered by Action for Carers Oxfordshire.



01235 424 715

www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk



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Commissioned by



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COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Hello and welcome to our spring/summer edition of Care Matters, the magazine for those caring for someone in Oxfordshire.

As we move into summer, we want to take a moment to recognise and thank you for everything you do as a carer.

Your dedication, kindness and resilience make an enormous difference every day, often behind the scenes and without recognition.

8th – 14th June is **Carers Week**. This is a special time to celebrate unpaid carers, raise awareness of the vital role you play in our communities, and highlight the challenges carers can face. It's an important moment to say thank you, to make carers visible, and to remind you that your wellbeing matters too. We hope you'll join us in marking Carers Week and taking pride in the invaluable support you provide. You can find out more on page 9.

In this edition, you'll find information about local support and practical tips to help you look after yourself over the warmer months. Whether this brings you new ideas, useful information, or simply a reminder that you're not alone, we hope it feels supportive and uplifting.

Thank you for all that you do. We are proud to celebrate and support our caring community, this Carers Week and all year round.

Best wishes,

Juliet Cocks

Head of Service, Carers Oxfordshire



Caring through the sunshine

Summer is here — longer days, warmer weather, and little moments that invite you to pause. This year, we're encouraging you to make space for yourself, in ways that feel realistic and guilt-free.

Own your moments

Even five minutes counts. That cup of tea while the house is quiet, a stretch in the garden or a short walk around the block can be a mini reset. This summer, try carving out non-negotiable moments just for you — they add up more than you think.



Rethink energy

Hot days, busy schedules, and disrupted routines can be draining. Instead of pushing for long outings, ask yourself: what feels doable and enjoyable today? A shaded park bench, a favourite podcast, or even a half-hour nap can recharge your mind and body. Wellbeing isn't about doing more — it's about doing what matters most.

Tap into your support

Support doesn't have to be complicated. Neighbours, friends, or family can offer a short break — a coffee, a walk or a shared meal. Accepting help isn't weakness; it's a practical way to keep going. Even a small shift in your day can make a real difference.

Flexible routines work best

Summer often shakes up the usual rhythm, and that's ok. A gentle morning walk, quiet afternoons, or staggered activities can keep things flowing without pressure. Scheduling small pockets of time for yourself in your diary — just as you would any other commitment — can help make those moments more likely to happen. Having a flexible routine that fits your life is important.

Notice the wins

Not every positive change is dramatic. Sometimes the wins are subtle: a calmer morning, a short break that leaves you feeling steadier, or a moment of shared laughter. Notice them when you can.

If someone offers help, saying yes can allow those small wins to happen more often. It's not giving something up — it's creating space to keep your wellbeing supported.

Let go of “summer pressure”

There's often a sense that summer should look a certain way: packed calendars, trips out, smiling photos, endless activity. But caring responsibilities don't disappear just because the weather improves. It's ok if your summer is quieter or looks different from others'.

Giving yourself permission to keep things simple can reduce stress and help you enjoy the season on your own terms.

Stay connected to what helps

It's easy to lose touch with the small things that support you when days blur together. A familiar show, a piece of music, a hobby you can dip into, or time outdoors can all provide comfort and a sense of continuity.

These aren't luxuries — they're anchors. Keeping a few easy, reliable comforts close by can help steady you when energy is low and days feel unpredictable.

And if you're looking for a bit more support, we're here to help you figure out what works.

From wellbeing sessions to short breaks, or just a friendly chat to explore practical ideas, we can help you find what fits your life.



Contact us at carerswellbeing@carersoxfordshire.org.uk or by calling **01235 424 715**, or visit www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/time-for-you.

Meet the carer: Pauline's story

We spoke to Pauline about caring for her daughter, the importance of routine and respite, and why she has started speaking out about the financial pressures some unpaid carers face.

I'm a single parent caring for my adult daughter, who is 20, is autistic, has a learning disability, and experiences anxiety and depression. She is non-verbal and communicates in her own ways, which can make everyday life challenging. I also have a younger daughter, who lives at home with us.

When my eldest daughter was younger things weren't always easy, but we got by.

However, when the COVID-19 pandemic happened, everything changed overnight. Being out of school and out of routine had a huge impact on her.

I work in the school that my daughter used to attend, and my colleagues were incredibly supportive. I had to take time away from work until additional support was put in place, which meant I could return to my job.

Sometimes situations can be misunderstood by people who don't know my daughter. Changes to routine can be very distressing for her, and there have been times when members of the public have been concerned about what they were seeing. I understand why — if you see someone in distress, it's natural to worry.



Having some respite has been really important for me. When you're caring, so much of life revolves around someone else's needs, and those breaks give me time to rest and recharge.

Earlier this year I was able to take a short break while my daughter was in respite, thanks to support from Carers Oxfordshire. I stayed at a nearby hotel for two nights and even managed to use the pool. Having that time to recharge made a huge difference.

Alongside the caring, finances have also been a challenge. When my husband and I separated, I applied for Universal Credit. At the time, my daughter was part of my claim and I received around £1,300 a month. I live in privately owned accommodation and pay a mortgage, which isn't the most common situation. Many families rent and receive housing support through Universal Credit to help with those costs.

When my daughter moved onto her own Universal Credit claim as an adult, my payment dropped from £1,300 to around £70 a month. I work part-time during term time and earn about £950 a month, but because I no longer have a child on my claim, I don't qualify for a work allowance. That means my earnings reduce my Universal Credit almost entirely.

That's what led me to start a petition calling for carers on Universal Credit to get a work allowance. The response so far has been really encouraging, with other carers saying they're in a similar situation.

If you would like to find out more about Pauline's campaign, scan the QR code or visit:

www.change.org/p/demand-carers-on-universal-credit-get-a-work-allowance



If you'd like to share your experience as a carer, please email carersvoices@carersoxfordshire.org.uk or call **01235 424 715**.

Maintaining summer routines

While a break from the usual school routine can be welcome, the long summer holidays can sometimes feel overwhelming — and changes to familiar patterns can be challenging for many children, especially those with additional needs.

Top tips for managing the change and keeping a routine:

- Even if the days look different, try to keep core routines like mealtimes and bedtimes consistent.
- Create a simple visual schedule to help your child understand what's coming next.
- Build in some holiday flexibility – offer choice with limited options.
- If a day will be different, talk about it ahead of time, show photos of where you're going and use a simple countdown.
- Keep transitions gentle by allowing time and explaining what's coming next.
- If your child uses quiet spaces at school, aim to set up something similar at home.
- If you've gone a little off routine during the holidays, gradually bring back school-time routines before term starts.



Apply for a Max Card for summer fun

The Max Card gives children and young people with SEND free or discounted entry to attractions across the UK. In Oxfordshire, it's provided by Carers Oxfordshire in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council.

Eligible children and young people must be aged 0-25, live in Oxfordshire, and have a disability or additional needs.

The child must be present when the card is used, and you may be asked to show ID. Apply online at www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/max-card or call **01235 424 715** for support or more information.

Carers Week 2026

Carers Week (8th - 14th June) is a national campaign run by Carers UK, the national charity supporting unpaid carers, with this year's theme focusing on Building Carer Friendly Communities.

A carer friendly community is one that recognises caring, understands its impact, and responds in practical ways, so that you feel supported in the places you live, work, study and spend time.

That might mean flexibility from local services, health professionals who recognise your caring role and connect you to support, schools and colleges that understand young carers, or employers who offer understanding and flexibility. It also includes community groups that make space for connection and belonging.



Often, it's the small things that make the biggest difference — a bit of flexibility, being acknowledged or someone taking the time to listen.

Carers Week is a chance to build on this and share what works well across Oxfordshire, so everyday places become easier and more supportive for you.

In Oxfordshire, we'll be marking Carers Week by sharing ways to make day-to-day life a little easier, with opportunities to connect with our team and explore the support available.

To stay up to date with everything happening across Oxfordshire during Carers Week 2026, sign up to our email updates by scanning the QR code, follow us on social media or visit www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk.



A phone friend for life

Caring can be all consuming. As Doreen puts it, “You’re combining two jobs into one — you’re still a wife, but you’re also a carer.”

Her husband lives with Parkinson’s, dementia and chronic illness, and each day brings uncertainty. “You don’t know what you’re going to be dealing with. Some days you plod along, then something rocks the boat.”

Like many carers, Doreen felt increasingly isolated. “I wasn’t able to get out without taking him. Most days I’m at home. I might do a jigsaw or colouring wellbeing books just to have a bit of space, but it can be very lonely. You lose track of time, even what day it is.”

Teresa knows that experience well. Her husband is now in a care home with Alzheimer’s, but she spent years caring for him at home. “I remember thinking how much it would have meant to have someone ring me — someone outside of my family, just to talk. So I wanted to give something back.”

When Teresa and Doreen were matched through Carers Phone Friends, the connection was immediate.

“We just clicked from the first call,” Teresa says.

Doreen agrees: “It felt natural, it’s like having a friend all your life. You can pick up where you left off, and it’s like no time has passed.”

Despite different paths, they quickly discovered shared experiences. “Her husband has Parkinson’s, so we understand each other,” Teresa says. “We’ve even been to some of the same places. We chat about everything.”

Their conversations cover memories, daily life and caring experiences, but it’s the feeling behind them that matters most.



Teresa recognises that. “On our first call, I asked how she was, and she was taken aback. She said, ‘You’re the first person to ask me that.’ People don’t always ask how you’re coping.”

Both speak openly about the emotional toll of caring: “You try to be practical, but it doesn’t stop the feeling of seeing someone you’ve been with for nearly 60 years fading away,” says Doreen.

Teresa reflects: “Once your loved one gets a diagnosis, you’re often left to your own devices, it can feel like a constant battle.”

And yet, their weekly calls offer something simple but powerful.

“I feel like I’ve made a phone friend for life,” says Teresa. “You go into it thinking you’re doing someone else a favour, but actually you’re doing yourself a favour too.”

Doreen agrees: “She’s nothing but a friend to me — a lovely friend to have. I call her my buddy. Even my daughter knows I look forward to that call.

“I go to bed feeling lighter, it brings you back to the real world. Just having one person can make such a difference.”

Both are clear in their message to others: “You never know until you try,” Teresa says. “It’s very rewarding - and you might need it yourself one day.”

Doreen adds: “Don’t be frightened. You’ve been through so much already — this change is for the better. Give it a chance. I’m glad I did.”

If you could benefit from a weekly call, or would like to volunteer as a Carers Phone Friend, find out more by calling **01295 234 850** or visit www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/phone-friends.



Carer Q&A

David cares for his wife Janet, who lives with vascular dementia. He talks to us about his caring role, the impact it has had on his life, and the support that has made a difference.

Who do you care for?

I care for my wife Janet who has lived with vascular dementia for three and a half years. She is the love of my life and we have enjoyed a great life for the last 58 years, full of travel and adventure. When we married, we promised to look after each other in sickness and in health, and I will keep my promise.

Can you share your journey into caring?

We waited nine months for a memory clinic appointment, but once the diagnosis came, things moved quickly. We had excellent support from Dementia Oxfordshire, who helped guide us.

At first, caring was manageable, but as Janet's dementia progressed it became more complex and I am now her full-time carer. We had planned to travel, which hasn't been possible.

Most of the caring falls to me. My world has shrunk. I've had to give things up, though my church remains very important to me. I am alone and do get lonely, whilst also not alone.

What challenges do you face?

Dementia has made Janet obstinate, which is difficult. As she worsens, she struggles to say how she feels, knowing what she wants but unable to express it.

I don't sleep well, always listening at night in case she gets lost. We have been a partnership for 58 years and now it feels different. I feel alone and it is hard work running a house by yourself.



How would you describe your caring role?

I feel like a nanny, it really is like that. I have heard that dementia is a second childhood and it is true.

It is tricky getting the message across and so I have printed some large questions on sheets of A4 paper. It is sort of working.

As a carer, you're supporting someone who can no longer manage many of the things they once could, and on some days even the simplest tasks are very hard. But Janet is the love of my life, and I will care for her for as long as she needs.

Where do you turn for support?

Carers Oxfordshire and Dementia Oxfordshire have been great. Pip [Dementia Adviser] helped me get a banister rail and grab handle and I've joined the Carers Oxfordshire group in Bicester, where I share experiences and have a laugh.

My family and friends support us and I keep fit, so I can carry on caring. I also love fishing, but I haven't been this season.

How do you maintain connections with your family?

WhatsApp is wonderful. I am in four groups and we share news and stories. Family phone calls and visits. My granddaughter is a tonic and we love her company. I have lots of people I can turn to, so I feel fortunate. I am lonely physically but not mentally.

What is one piece of advice you would share with someone who may be going through a similar experience?

Talk about it, don't bottle it up. Find people to talk to who have similar experiences. The Carers Oxfordshire support groups are a great place for this. Ask for help. It is there if you ask for it.

We'd love to hear from carers who would like to share their experiences with other readers. Email carersvoices@carersoxfordshire.org.uk or call **01235 424 715** if you would like to share your story.



A podcast for parent carers

Parenting a child with SEND and/or complex medical needs can feel overwhelming, isolating and full of unanswered questions — especially when you're learning as you go.

That's why Imogen Liddell and Naz Hernandez, both parent carers in Oxfordshire and advocates of the Oxfordshire Family Support Network (OXFSN), created a podcast — a resource they wish they'd had in those early years.



Imogen is mum to Ewan, aged 2, who has complex medical needs and learning disabilities. Naz is mum to Rohan, aged 5, who has Williams Syndrome and complex needs, and to Elias, who sadly passed away due to complications linked to his condition.

Through sharing their own journeys, they've created a space where the challenges of caring are met with honesty and warmth, with a little humour mixed in.

Imogen says: “We met through this world none of us choose and realised how lonely, confusing and overwhelming it can be — especially in the early years, when everything is new and you're just trying to survive.”

“But we also wanted to capture the very real reality of looking after our children: that it can be amazing, beautiful and hilarious, and that sometimes you need a bit of humour just to get through the day. This is a space where both of those things get to exist.”

The podcast covers a wide range of topics important to parent carers: the emotional impact of caring, practical tips and strategies, how to get the right support, and how to navigate health, education and benefits systems.

Guest speakers, including NHS Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) clinicians and physiotherapists, provide expert advice on early communication, GP appointments and other key areas.

Naz adds: “We want to take you on our journey as we learn in real time — about the emotional impact of all this, about looking after our children from therapies to the day-to-day practical care, and about the systems we’re all trying to navigate like benefits, health and education.”

“We don’t have it all figured out, but we’re committed to learning, asking questions, and sharing what we discover along the way.”

You can listen and subscribe to the SENDHelp podcast on Spotify by scanning the QR code below or visiting the Oxfordshire Family Support Network website at www.oxfsn.org.uk.

SEND Help



A week in the life of a Carers Adviser

At the heart of Carers Oxfordshire is a team of 14 Carers Advisers supporting unpaid carers across the county. Many have personal caring experience, so understand the challenges and rewards it brings.

To learn more, we spent a working week in the Vale of White Horse with part-time Carers Adviser Trish Heron.

Wednesday

Trish's first appointment was a home visit in Wantage to a parent carer whose primary-school-age child has profound autism and challenging, complex needs.

“This home visit enabled me to complete a carer's assessment with the carer in a relaxed, informal setting, while offering emotional support, information and signposting. The assessment explores the carer's role, support needs and the outcomes they wish to achieve in daily life.

“The visit also enabled me to refer the carer for a benefits check and signpost her to a local community fridge, as well as linking me up to their Children's Disability Team worker to enhance our support offer.”

In the afternoon, Trish attended her monthly Carers Adviser team meeting in Yarnton to catch up with colleagues and her Team Manager, as well as sharing good practice, cascading and discussing service information, emotional support and future planning.

“I find these meetings alongside my monthly catch up with my Team Manager so useful in a demanding job role — especially where it is important to remember my own mental health and wellbeing too.”



Thursday

Thursday starts with Trish representing Carers Oxfordshire at a carers group at a GP surgery in Abingdon.

“I was delighted to be able to give a presentation of our service offer and hand out our brilliant Support Guide booklets which explain how we help support unpaid carers in Oxfordshire. The group was well attended and helped reach carers who were previously unaware of us.

“One carer, supporting her husband, was particularly interested in our Time for You offers, including discounted Serco and Better Leisure memberships, Carefree breaks and counselling. The surgery has also invited me to a larger event during Carers Week.”

After travelling home, Trish spends the rest of the day catching up with emails, working on support plans, and carrying out review calls. “For those carers who have agreed to carer’s assessments and support plans we also undertake three-month reviews by phone or via email, if preferred.”

Friday

It’s Trish’s weekly Carersline slot this morning. One call is from an older carer supporting a sibling with Parkinson’s, who has been advised by Adult Social Care to contact us. As they aren’t comfortable using IT, Trish is able to refer them into Carers Oxfordshire by taking their details over the phone.

“Our Carersline is well used by unpaid carers, professionals and anyone who has questions or concerns about an unpaid caring role.”

In the afternoon, Trish undertakes neurodiversity training online to enhance her support knowledge, particularly around parent carers.

Her working week finished, Trish’s thoughts turn to finishing her latest assignment for her Level 4 Diploma in Health and Social Care. Good luck, Trish!



Make space for your wellbeing

Caring is one of the most meaningful roles anyone can take on but it can also be exhausting, isolating and emotionally demanding. Many carers tell us they rarely pause for themselves, often placing their own wellbeing at the very bottom of the list. At Carers Oxfordshire, we want to help change that.

Our carers' breaks and wellbeing offers provide simple, accessible ways to catch your breath, reconnect with yourself, and rediscover the things that bring you joy. The stories we hear from carers remind us just how powerful even a small moment of rest or movement can be.



Getting active

Through our partnerships with Serco Leisure and Better Leisure groups, carers are able to take meaningful steps toward feeling healthier and more energised. From gym access to swimming, carers have told us how much it means to feel remembered and supported:

“I’ve actually been in and registered now, which is great.”

“I’m really looking forward to swimming mostly.”

Sometimes wellbeing starts with one small, supported step, and we’re here to help you take it. We can help you access a free annual membership that gives you up to 50% off activities as a carer.

A real break away

Sometimes what you need is a complete change of scene. Carefree is a charity transforming vacant hotel rooms into vital breaks for full-time unpaid carers.

Their hotel stays give carers precious time to unwind, reset and reconnect. Carers described these breaks as “reviving,” “uplifting,” and “much needed”. They’re a reminder that you deserve rest and recognition too.



We can support you to access a free one or two-night hotel break away through Carefree. There’s a £38 admin fee, and travel and spending costs will need to be covered. To be eligible, you must be over 18 and providing more than 30 hours of unpaid care per week.

**“We immediately felt relaxed...
the spa facilities were amazing!”**

How to get started

Email carerswellbeing@carersoxfordshire.org.uk or call **01235 424 715** to ask about short breaks and wellbeing offers. You can also scan the QR code to complete our online contact form.



Seeing the person you care for enjoy an activity can make a real difference to your own wellbeing.

We often offer free opportunities such as football matches, concerts, theatre trips and creative activities for carers and those they support.

To sign up for email updates to hear about new offers, visit www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/contact or scan the QR code.



Do you know an unpaid carer?

As an unpaid carer, you probably know how important it is to feel understood, listened to and not alone. You may also remember how long it took to recognise yourself as a carer in the first place.

Many people in similar situations never make that connection. They think they're "just helping," doing their duty, or that what they do doesn't really count. Because of this, they can miss out on emotional, financial and practical support that could make a real difference to their everyday lives.



You can help change that. You likely know someone who regularly supports a partner, parent, child, neighbour or friend. They might be managing medication, offering emotional reassurance, helping with daily tasks, organising appointments, or checking in every day. These are all signs of caring — even if the person doesn't see themselves as a carer.

A gentle prompt from someone who understands can be incredibly powerful. Sharing your own experience of realising you were a carer, or mentioning how support has helped you, might be exactly what someone else needs to take that first step. Many carers say they only reached out because a friend or family member encouraged them.

So, if someone comes to mind as you read this, please reach out to them. Let them know they're not alone and encourage them to explore the support available.

And if they'd like to talk to us, we're here — ready to listen and help work out what support could make a difference.

Visit www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk or call us on **01235 424 715**.

Useful contacts

Age UK Oxfordshire

0345 450 1276
www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire

Better Housing Better Health

0800 107 0044
www.bhbh.org.uk

British Red Cross Mobility Aids

01235 552 664
www.redcross.org.uk

Carers UK

020 7 378 4999
www.carersuk.org

Child & Adult Social Care

0345 050 7666
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Dementia Oxfordshire

01865 410 210
www.dementiaoxfordshire.org.uk

Getting Oxfordshire Online

01235 424 715
www.gettingoxfordshireonline.org

Good Neighbour Scheme

01993 776 277
www.goodneighbours.org.uk

Home Library Service

01865 810 259
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Out of hours Duty Social Worker

0800 833 408
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Oxfordshire Advice Navigator

01865 410 660
oxfordshireadvicenavigator.org.uk

Oxfordshire Family Info Service

01865 323 332
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Oxfordshire Family Support Network

07821 987 080
www.oxfsn.org.uk

Oxfordshire Mind

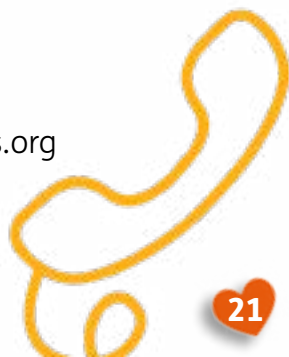
01865 247 788
www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk

Rethink Mental Illness

0121 522 7009
www.rethink.org

Samaritans

116 123
www.samaritans.org



Sign up to receive Care Matters

If you would like to receive Care Matters magazine in the post, fill out this request form and return it to: **Carers Oxfordshire, 10 Napier Court, Barton Lane, Abingdon, OX14 3YT**, call **01235 424 715** or email **carersinfo@carersoxfordshire.org.uk**. If you received this copy through the post you'll already be on our mailing list.

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Alternatively, you can scan the QR code or visit **www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/contact** to sign up to our email updates which include this magazine. You can change your mind at any time and contact us as above to unsubscribe.



For further details of how your data is used and stored, please visit **www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/privacy-policy**.



Donate

Action for Carers Oxfordshire relies on donations to ensure that we can continue to support unpaid carers in Oxfordshire. To make a donation please complete and return this form to: **Action for Carers Oxfordshire, 10 Napier Court, Barton Lane, Abingdon, OX14 3YT.**



Alternatively, scan the QR code, call us on **01235 424 715** or donate online **www.justgiving.com/actionforcarers-oxfordshire**. Every donation makes a difference. Thank you.

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Date..... What prompted you to donate?

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Gift Aid declaration

giftaid it

Please add to your donations through Gift Aid. If you are a UK tax payer, we can reclaim 25p for every £1 you donate.

Yes, I want Action for Carers Oxfordshire to treat all donations I make from the date of this declaration, for the past four years and in the future until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less income tax and / or Capital Gains Tax in a tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all of my donations in that tax year, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

If you would like to hear about our events, campaigns and how you can support local carers, please tick your contact preferences below. You can opt out at any time.

Email Post



Carers Oxfordshire is a free service for unpaid adult carers of someone living in Oxfordshire.

Offering information, advice and support, including: carer's assessments, Carer ID, carers' groups, short breaks, offers and discounts, courses for carers and Max Card.



Call us on
01235 424 715 or visit
www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk
for more
information.

Leaving a legacy of kindness

A gift in your will could help give unpaid carers in Oxfordshire someone to turn to. You can make sure we are always there for those who need us for years to come. To leave a gift in your will you will need to provide your solicitor with our charity details, see page 2. To find out more please call **01235 424 715** or email **carersinfo@carersoxfordshire.org.uk**.