

CARE MATTERS

Time for You

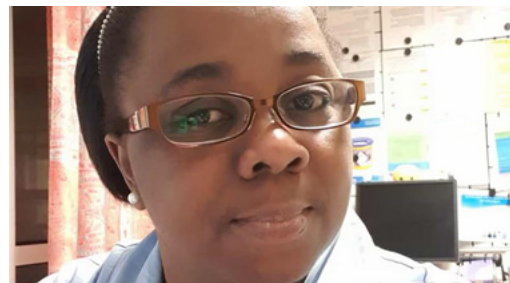
Oxfordshire Carers Strategy

Welcome from our new Head of Service, Juliet Cocks

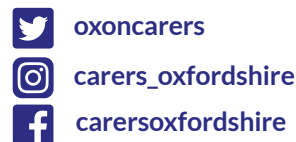
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www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk
01235 424715



"I am delighted to join Carers Oxfordshire as the new Head of Service. It is the perfect time to start with the recent launch of the new All-Age Unpaid Carers Strategy for Oxfordshire. I look forward to working with our partners and organisations to action the strategy.

I have been a passionate advocate for social change all my working life, and fairness, equality, and inclusion are important values to me. I am excited to join a team so committed to improving the lives of unpaid carers, ensuring carers have a voice and access to support, advice, information, and opportunities to help them continue their important roles.

Having worked in the voluntary and charity sector for over 25 years in larger and smaller organisations, I have seen first-hand the beneficial impact of local support. Knowing that someone is there to answer questions, offer advice and support or simply know what is going on in the local area is invaluable. It is a fundamental principle of Carers Oxfordshire that our work is strengths-based, meaning we work alongside carers and focus on their passions, abilities, and strengths to set personal goals, rather than focusing on problems. I am looking forward to getting out and about to meet carers and find out what is important to them.



Over the next few months, I plan to get out of our Abingdon office as much as possible to get to know our mainly home-based team, to meet local partners and organisations and see how we can further improve the lives of unpaid carers. Outside of work, I am looking forward to winter walks with my Labrador Otis and enjoying our Oxfordshire countryside."

Juliet Cocks
Head of Carers Oxfordshire

New All-Age Unpaid Carers Strategy



People who care for friends and family members in Oxfordshire have been recognised for their hard work and dedication in a new strategy designed to help them feel valued and to support them to live their lives to the full.

The All-Age Unpaid Carers Strategy for Oxfordshire has been produced hand-in-hand with more than 1600 carers, sharing their experiences.

Councillor Tim Bearder, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: *"Unpaid carers matter and their needs deserve to be met. We've heard that although caring can be rewarding, many are tired, saying they cannot easily find information and that they often feel undervalued."*

"This strategy is designed to address these concerns, helping to support unpaid carers of all ages to continue to do their vital work while enabling them to live their lives to the fullest."

The framework outlines carers' rights as well as areas where there is already valuable existing support, including that offered by Carers Oxfordshire.

It identifies three agreed priorities:

- To identify carers and effectively support them, improving their health and wellbeing and providing opportunities for a break from their caring role;
- To safeguard adult and young carers at risk who need more support to look after themselves, particularly during times of change and transition;
- To encourage and enable carers to have an active life outside their caring role, including fulfilling their education, employment, and training potential.

To ensure these priorities are met, partners in health, education and social care, city and district councils and voluntary organisations have agreed to work together around eight key commitments, including:

- Continuing to work with carers to keep the strategy up to date;
- improved identification and support of unpaid carers by aligning work plans across health, education and social care organisations;
- ensuring carers can access breaks from their caring role to support their own wellbeing;
- that carers are valued and treated as the experts in their lives and what they need to support their health and wellbeing.

Partners, including Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB), Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (OUH) and Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust (OHFT), will now work together to align action plans and set targets to improve outcomes for carers as well as taking steps to ensure their services are more joined up.



Daniel Leveson, Place Director for Oxfordshire at BOB ICB, said: *"I welcome our unpaid carers' strategy. It signals our renewed commitment to carers. It recognises not only their contributions to people's emotional health and wellbeing but also the valuable roles they play in our health and care system and society as a whole."*

Marie Crofts, Chief Nurse at OHFT, said: *"Unpaid carers are often parents, family members and friends supporting and caring for the people they love. It is vital that we support them, as they support others, and I welcome this strategy which has been co-produced with carers so they can continue with their lives and futures."*

Cllr Bearder continued: *"This strategy is a live document. Carers along with Healthwatch Oxfordshire, the independent health and social care watchdog, will help us monitor and comment on the progress we are all making on our action plans, allowing us to make changes where necessary and ensuring we stick to our commitments."*

"This is very much just the beginning and I look forward to seeing the difference it will make for our army of unpaid carers."

You can read the full strategy at www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/unpaid-carers-strategy

Carers Rights Day

Each year, Carers UK hold Carers Rights Day to bring organisations across the UK together to help carers in their local community find out how to get the help and support they are entitled to. This year, the campaign's focus is the rights that unpaid carers have:

- **Your rights: today, tomorrow and in the future.**
- **Your rights, right now.**
- **New rights, right around the corner.**

Find out more about your rights as a carer and what Carers UK are doing this year by visiting their website www.carersuk.org.

Each year, organisations across the UK hold events to mark the day and we are one of them.

The Shortest Distance Event

Come and celebrate Carers Rights Day with other carers!

On 27th November 10am-2pm at Christ Church Hall Abingdon, we are bringing together Oxfordshire carers for The Shortest Distance Celebration.

This is the culmination of the carers' storytelling project we have been working on with Georgie Steele, local carer and award-winning storyteller.

All unpaid carers are welcome to attend. The venue has on-site parking and facilities for the disabled. Lunch will be provided.

Book your place at www.trybooking.com/uk/CVPV or call Carers Oxfordshire on **01235 424715**.

With thanks to NHS England for co-funding this project.



Introducing our new Chief Executive Officer, Paul Ringer

Action for Carers Oxfordshire and our sister charity Age UK Oxfordshire are delighted to announce the appointment of Paul Ringer as our new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Paul Ringer joins us from a role as Interim CEO of Riding for the Disabled UK and brings a background in social care and a decade of senior management experience in the charity sector. With his proven track record of leadership in high-quality regulated health and social care services, alongside influencing, campaigning and profile-raising work, he is poised to lead the charities in their missions to support people to live life to the full.

Paul Ringer replaces Penny Thewlis who has been instrumental in the development and growth of the organisations over the past 23 years, including 7 years as CEO. After a considerable tenure, Penny Thewlis has stepped down with a plan to put the charities' missions of living life to the full into practice.



Paul Ringer and Penny Thewlis

Of her time with the charities, and the appointment of Paul Ringer, she said, *"It has been a real pleasure and a privilege to work alongside older people and carers and a wonderful team of staff and volunteers, as well as some excellent partners in both the statutory and voluntary sectors over the last 23 years – a period of enormous change and development. I am delighted to be passing the baton into Paul's safe and very capable hands – he has all the qualities and the values to lead Age UK Oxfordshire and Action for Carers Oxfordshire to the next stage, at a time when the two organisations have never been more needed. I wish him very well and hope he enjoys the role half as much as I have."*

New Year, New Me: Better Memberships



Better leisure centres across Oxfordshire have partnered with Carers Oxfordshire to help carers access physical activity.

Carers go for free when attending a leisure centre with the cared for but they also need time for their own physical and mental health.

Carers Oxfordshire are offering unpaid carers 'Better memberships' that will reduce the cost of a range of activities at Better leisure centres in Oxfordshire.

Working together with Better leisure, Carers Oxfordshire will provide annual memberships, that give carers up to a 50% discount on activities including swimming, gym, fitness classes and court bookings.

Find your nearest Better location:
www.better.org.uk/leisure-centres/centre-locator

Discounts may not be available for all activities at every centre.

The offer is available for unpaid carers age 18 or over who support someone living in Oxfordshire.

To request a Better membership fill out the form on our website or call 01235 424715.

www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/better-memberships



Courses for Carers

A Carer's Journey is a series of workshops and courses designed to help unpaid carers improve their own well-being, manage difficult situations and to support those who feel ready to get back to work or education.

Most of the classes are online to make them as accessible as possible.

Far Eastern Philosophy and Well-being – 8th Jan - 5th Feb

Mindfulness for Carers – 10th Jan - 20th Mar

Creative Writing – 11th Jan – 21st March

Learning how to self-massage – 19th Feb - 25th Mar

Exploring your options: work, volunteering, or training – 23rd Feb - 22nd Mar

Managing your own needs when caring for others – 23rd Feb - 22nd Mar

To find out more and book visit www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/part-time-evening and select the course subject 'A Carer's Journey' or talk to our friendly Admissions team: **01235 216400**

Funding for courses

Want to take up a hobby, learn a new language or how to do something practical such as plumbing? We can offer funding of up to £150 towards any part-time and evening course.

Find your course at:
www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk/part-time-evening
and then apply via our funding application form
www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/course-funding-application-form

These offers are available for unpaid carers aged 19 and over who support someone of any age living in Oxfordshire. You can apply for the funding once per calendar year.



Abena's Story

Abena has three sons, Emanuel (17), Richard (15) and Kelvin (10) and lives in Oxford. The family is originally from Ghana (West Africa) and moved to Oxford for her husband's work.

Richard and Kelvin are both autistic. Abena says "Richard has hearing and sight problems, he wears hearing aids. Kelvin is the severe and really tricky one. He is very energetic, has no sense of danger, walks on tiptoes and needs constant supervision 24-7.

Abena had a difficult premature birth with Richard "At the hospital they told me he had a bleed on the left side of his brain." He didn't sit up until eight months old "That's when we noticed he couldn't hear properly or see properly, the doctors told me then he wouldn't be able to speak." Over time things began to improve and Richard was able to sit, then crawl and finally walk but he wasn't talking.

Richard and Kelvin go to schools that cater specifically for children with special needs. Emanuel is in sixth form at a comprehensive school and will finish school this year.

Richard started school at six "He was still in nappies, and then I had Kelvin, he was also premature. When he was born, he was tiny but strong. When he was a year old, he started talking, he was ok, then all

of a sudden, the talking disappeared." She took Kelvin to the GP for an assessment and was told he was autistic and non-verbal. "My whole world just shattered, I already had Richard in nappies with lots of challenges and... the day they told me Kelvin was never going to talk, it was going to be really challenging and he would need constant care for the rest of his life like Richard... I cried and cried."

Abena says things have greatly improved for Richard "He has come along beautifully (since starting school), he doesn't wear nappies anymore and started talking around seven years old."

Kelvin needs a greater level of care "If you see him standing, he's handsome, tall, cute, you wouldn't think there was anything wrong, but he is still very, very



challenging. We live close to a main road, with any little mistake Kelvin will run into the middle of the busy two-lane road... it's very, very scary." When Kelvin finishes primary school, he will go to a specialist secondary school to help with his needs. Abena describes looking after Kelvin now "I'm still in that journey, still going, hoping it will get better."

Abena's husband often works abroad for weeks at a time. The rest of her family live in Ghana. She works in a hospital "I used to work full time and take them to a childminder. Things got really out of hand, so I reduced my hours." To help her manage, a friend she met through work takes her children two or three times a week, so she has time to do the housework "She's a very nice gentle lady".

She found out about Carers Oxfordshire through Richard's school. During a chat at parents evening a teacher arranged to put her in touch with us. She spoke to our carers team and had a carers assessment. She was then offered Feet up Fridays, "amazing food, it was really nice," and a carer's payment.

Abena loves cooking, her favourite dish is jollof rice from West Africa. "I've made it for a few people, they all enjoyed it. It's tomato sauce with rice and chicken or beef or a combination of both". She loves going out with friends "any little thing to get me out, a walk...meeting people...to have a little break for myself."



Speaking from experience she says to other carers "It's not an easy journey, every day is different. We need patience, love, laughter. You need to be strong and look after yourself a bit more so that when your cup is full you will be able to pour it out. I used to be down, and I realised I was always weak, but when I am happy I do the best." Doing things that make her happy helps her to look after her children more. "These kids are so special. When they know you are happy, you have that energy... it has a whole impact on them...it makes them happy, it makes them grow, it makes them relax."

Time For You

A carer's break is time off from caring and a chance to do things you would like to do. Many carers would like to take a break but don't know how. It is essential to make space for yourself and protect your own well-being while you're caring.

We can help you to take a break because we know how important you are. From counselling and funding to take up a part-time course, to hotel breaks away, we will help you find a way to rest and recharge.

"It was so nice to have some time out for me and be able to relax and be refreshed ready to care again." Carer.

To find out more call **01235 424715** or visit www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/time-for-you



Oxfordshire Parent Carers Forum (OxPCF) is an independent group enabling the voices of parent carers of children and young people with SEND across Oxfordshire to be heard. The forum is committed to making parent carer participation an integral part of service and information development and provision in Oxfordshire, with the aim of creating better outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families.

We are members of the NNPCF (National Network of Parent Carer Forms) which is supported by the organisation Contact. We are kindly hosted and supported by OxFSN (Oxfordshire Family Support Network)

We are run by parent carers for parent carers and are here to give parent carers a voice. By joining us, we can work together to improve services for our children.



HOW TO JOIN?

You can join our mailing list by scanning the QR code below or by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/OxPCFmailinglist> and enter your details.

JOIN OUR STEERING GROUP:

If you are interested in taking a more active role in the forum such as becoming a steering group member then please fill in our expression of interest form: <https://tinyurl.com/OxPCFjoinus>

JOIN OUR PEER SUPPORT GROUP:



New Services Handbook



The new *Carers Oxfordshire Services Handbook* explains who we are, what we do and how we help support unpaid carers in Oxfordshire.

Available in six languages. Download a copy from our website:

www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/services-handbook

Oxfordshire Care Awards 2024 – Inspiration for All

The annual **Oxfordshire Care Awards** recognises and celebrates individuals, organisations and companies who have demonstrated excellence within the care sector in Oxfordshire. The Awards bring together unpaid carers, the community/voluntary sector, and statutory and independent care providers.

The awards are hosted by the Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers (OACP), Carers Oxfordshire and Age UK Oxfordshire and are supported and recognised by Oxfordshire County Council. The awards ceremony will take place in spring/summer 2024.

These uplifting awards give us all the opportunity to 'say thank you' to the inspirational people working hard in the community and care services across Oxfordshire every day.

They celebrate local individuals, highly trained 'care giver' professionals, family-run care services, larger care groups and support organisations who together consistently 'go the extra mile' for 'real lives' in their care – placing the 'person receiving care' at the heart of everything they do.

The Award Categories are:

- The Newcomer to Care Award
- The Care Home Worker Award
- The Unpaid Carer
- The Volunteer Award
- The Community/ Home Care Worker Award
- The Care Team Award
- The Care Employer Award
- The Long-Term Service Award
- The Leadership Award
- The Inspiration Award
- Josie's Award

Find out more about each award at www.oacp.org.uk

Nominations

Do you know someone who deserves to be recognised and celebrated for providing outstanding care? Nominate them to celebrate their dedication and commitment and help raise the profile of caring across Oxfordshire.

Nominations can be made via www.oacp.org.uk soon. Shortlisted nominees will be published on www.oacp.org.uk. Nominators will be advised if their nominee has won an

award and invited to attend the ceremony. Winners will be announced at the ceremony and will appear on www.oacp.org.uk.

If you would like to get involved or need

more information about the Oxfordshire Care Awards 2024 please email Jane Wood Marketing Manager OACP awards@oacp.org.uk, call **01235 248087** or visit www.oacp.org.uk.



Be Free Young Carers



Be Free YC is the only specialist charity in Oxfordshire supporting young carers aged 8 - 17 years old. They believe young carers should be free to fulfil their adult potential unhindered by their childhood responsibilities. To achieve this, they help young carers by widening their life options and improving their emotional and social health, resilience, and development.

Be Free YC work with young carers, their families, and schools to provide:

- Advice and guidance dedicated to improving the lives and well-being of young carers.
- Befriending and peer support to increase self-confidence and improve their mental well-being.
- One-to-one emotional support and counselling to help alleviate the isolation, anxiety, and stress many young carers experience.
- Respite activities – Trips and workshops giving young carers time away from their carers roles to make friends, socialise and have fun.
- Training in key skills such as first aid, cookery/nutrition, and relaxation to improve young carer's self-confidence and ability to cope in their caring roles.
- Exclusive 13+ Youth Groups – Monthly respite activities voted for by young carers e.g. bowling, cinema, escape rooms and restaurants.

To access their support the young person needs to be:

- Aged 8 to 17 years old and caring or helping to care for a family member(s). This can involve caring for a parent and/or a sibling.
- Impacted by their caring responsibilities.
- Living or attending school/college within either South Oxfordshire, the Vale of White Horse or Oxford City Districts.

Be Free YC is an independent charity that has been operating for over 28 years. It is a not-for-profit charity and not government-funded, relying solely on donations and fundraising efforts.

Contact:

To contact **Be Free YC** call **01235 838554** (9 am – 5:30 pm, Monday to Friday) or email yc@befreeyc.org.uk or visit www.befreeyc.org.uk

Better Housing Better Health



Help is available to stay warm and well at home this winter

Better Housing Better Health (BHBH) is a longstanding service working with local councils and partners in Oxfordshire to reduce the number of people struggling with their household energy. Their services are completely free and confidential, ensuring that you receive personalised solutions for your home. Whether you require insulation improvements, heating system upgrades, or guidance on energy-saving practices, they are there to assist you every step of the way.

Better Housing Better Health also provides free home visits for residents in Oxfordshire. Their skilled advisors can visit your home, conduct a thorough property assessment, and offer expert guidance on the best course of action to enhance your home's energy efficiency. Their advisors can also provide small energy efficiency measures such as radiator foils, draught excluders, and LED lightbulbs completely free of charge.

To learn more about the benefits of BHBH and how they can help you create a warmer, more energy-efficient home, call **0800 107 0044** or email bhbh@nef.org.uk



For additional information about their services and success stories from homeowners who have already benefited from support, visit www.bhbh.org.uk



"Hello,

My husband and I cared for our beloved daughter Alexandra, who had profound learning disabilities and passed away in March 2019. Our experiences of caring for 47 years meant that we learnt so much about the needs of our daughter, her friends, and primary carers.

Caring full time is a very difficult pathway, and we fully remember the isolation, loneliness, being unheard many times, anxious, being unwell, and exhaustion that we often experienced. I am sure many of you can identify with these feelings. We want to help in some small way.

Rachael says, many of you will have experienced the budget cuts by the Local Authority which had a devastating blow on the lives of our adults and their primary carers. Especially the closures of 14 day time support centres across Oxfordshire. Many families are now experiencing lack of placements for their children after school. In addition, respite breaks are so hard to find, and end of life care very often is in inappropriate settings. We want you to know that Ian and I, and a lovely team of Trustees, Committee members, and volunteers, are working tirelessly to bring change to wonderful families like yours.

Our mission is to build a centre of excellence with daytime support, respite care breaks, hospice end of life care, hydrotherapy, cafe, kitchen gardens and an enormous range of tailor-made activities for everyone attending. A local farmer has gifted the land to us in Bicester, Oxfordshire, and it will be for anyone who would like to come and join us in this exciting project.

We need all kinds of help; if you are interested in learning more, we would love to hear from you. There is change ahead!"

Ian & Rachael Scott-Hunter

01869 325135

alexandrahouseofjoy@gmail.com • www.alexandrahouseofjoy.co.uk

Alexandra House of Joy is a non-profit registered Charity 1176900.

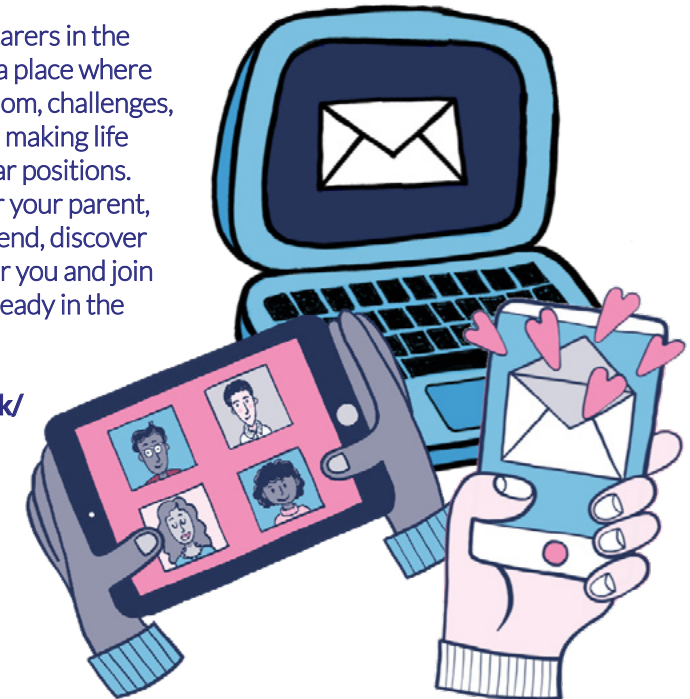


When it comes to caring, one size doesn't fit all, and some of us might not like to identify with the word 'carer'. Some of us live with the person we look after. While others care from far away.

If you're looking after a vulnerable family member or friend with a disability, addiction, or long-term mental or physical illness, Mobilise is a free online service to support you. From simple online tools (www.mobiliseonline.co.uk/financial-toolkit) to make sure you're not missing out on the financial help you (and the person you care for) might be eligible for to a library of guides (www.mobiliseonline.co.uk/mobilise-library) co-written with carers in their community.

With over 60,000 unpaid carers in the **Mobilise Community**, it's a place where carers can share their wisdom, challenges, and tips with one another - making life brighter for others in similar positions. Whether it be looking after your parent, partner, child, sibling, or friend, discover more of what they can offer you and join the thousands of carers already in the **Mobilise Community**.

www.mobiliseonline.co.uk/carers



Telephone Groups



Our **Good to Know** Telephone Groups are social and learning opportunities for people who may not be online or who may struggle to get out and about.

Think of these groups like a cup of tea and a chat at a community centre – but over the phone and in the comfort of your home.

What can I expect?

Groups take place about four times a month and last for an hour. Each time, we invite a different guest speaker to talk about topics like managing finances, scam awareness, seated exercise, volunteering, creative writing and getting online. There's always a chance to interact and learn something new.

Guest Speakers

We've had guest speakers from The Sleep Charity, MIND, The Reader, Turn2Us, DeafBlind and many more.

Location:

On the telephone – and they're free to join.

Want to know more?

Call our Helpline on **0800 319 6789** or email telephone.services@independentage.org

"It was the highlight of my week. There are people from all sorts of walks of life and backgrounds...everybody's got something to contribute."

Fiona



Flu & Covid Vaccines



Carers urged to get flu and Covid boosters now

If you're an unpaid carer protect yourself and those you care for. Now is the time to get your flu and Covid boosters.

You may be eligible for a free jab. Find out more about flu vaccinations and how to book an appointment by visiting nhs.uk/flujab and nhs.uk/covid-vaccine.

Take your Carer ID with you when attending your vaccination appointment and if you haven't done so already, register with your GP surgery as a carer.

Events

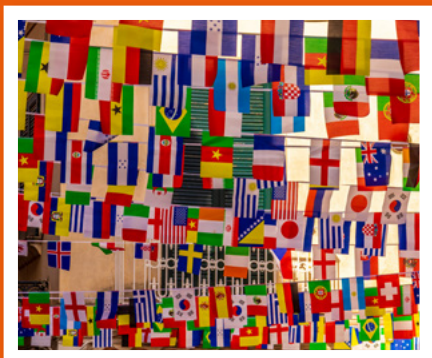
Did you know we attend and run a range of in-person and online events throughout the year? These include training courses, information days, carers groups and Carers Voices. Take a look at our website to find out what's on.

www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/events



LanguageLine

Do you know of a carer whose first language is not English and needs our support?



We can help. Carers Oxfordshire has joined LanguageLine, a telephone translation service in over 200 languages. All our staff have access to add a translator to their calls. We are proud to be able to support many more people in Oxfordshire from different cultural backgrounds.

To arrange a translated call email carersinfo@carersoxfordshire.org.uk in your local language.

Support Unpaid Carers

There are now around 53,000 unpaid carers in Oxfordshire. The need for support has never been so great. We are a small, local charity with a big job. Your donations will help us support carers for whom a call to us makes all the difference.

You can donate via our Just Giving page below or call

01235 424715

www.justgiving.com/actionforcarers-oxfordshire



Sign up for Carers Oxfordshire emails

Receive email updates with news, events, information, and *Care Matters Magazine*. Sign up via the form on our website, visit www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/contact.

To make sure you get emails that are relevant to you we ask in the form if you are a parent carer, adult carer, professional or carer group.

Subscribe free to Care Matters Magazine

To subscribe or update your email subscription to this magazine visit www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/care-matters-magazine.

To subscribe or update a printed subscription to this magazine email carersinfo@carersoxfordshire.org.uk or call 01235 424715.



Useful Contacts

Rethink Mental Illness

01865 904499
www.rethink.org

Age UK Oxfordshire

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

Dementia Oxfordshire

01865 410210
www.dementiaoxfordshire.org.uk

Out of hours Duty Social Worker

0800 833 408
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Child & Adult Social Care

0345 050 7666
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Oxfordshire Family Information Service

01865 323332
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Carers UK

0808 808 7777
www.carersuk.org

Oxfordshire Mind

01865 247788
www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk

Oxfordshire Family Support Network

07821 987 080
www.oxfsn.org.uk

Better Housing Better Health

0800 107 0044
www.bhbh.org.uk

Samaritans

116 123
www.samaritans.org

Talking Space

01865 901 222
www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/talkingspaceplus

Good Neighbour Scheme

01993 776277
www.goodneighbours.org.uk

Home Library Service

01865 810259
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

British Red Cross Mobility Aids Short Term Loan

01235 552664
www.redcross.org.uk

Oxfordshire Specialist Advice (financial advice)

01865 410660
<https://livewell.oxfordshire.gov.uk>

Turn 2 Us (financial advice)

0808 802 2000
www.turn2us.org.uk

Money Helper

0800 138 7777
www.moneyhelper.org.uk

Getting Oxfordshire Online

01235 424 715
www.gettingoxfordshireonline.org

Age UK Oxfordshire Digital Support

07584148507
www.ageuk.org.uk/oxfordshire