

Adult Carers Strategy 2022-27

A great place to live and work.

ADULT CARERS STRATEGY 2022-27

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This strategy refers throughout to carers. This is a reference to unpaid carers, and not those paid to provide care and support.

The terminology used deliberately links to the language and definitions in the Care Act 2014.

This strategy is designed to encompass all adult carers living or caring in Central Bedfordshire.

Specific groups of carers are referred to only where this is relevant.

1. Foreword

Central Bedfordshire Council is pleased to publish the Adult Carers Strategy for Central Bedfordshire that recognises the role that carers have in providing unpaid care and support to their friends, family, and neighbours.

The Carers Strategy sets out in detail our priorities for carers over the next five years. It has been developed with Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group (BLMK CCG), carers and organisations in the Voluntary and Community Sector that deliver services and help represent the views of people they support.

The care and support provided by carers can have a significant impact on their health and wellbeing and other aspects of their life, and it is important that they can access support themselves to help them in their caring role, as well as the person for whom they are caring accessing services.

The COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdowns have highlighted further the value of carers, with many taking on additional caring responsibilities. Carers have told us that are stretched and in need of more support.

Services often focus on the person with care and support needs. The key aim of this strategy, focussed on carers, is to ensure that services continue to consider the needs of carers and their individual circumstances, and that support is available to the carer when they need it.

We are committed to delivering the outcomes under the priorities that we have set out in this document and continuing to work with

carers and the Voluntary and Community Sector to improve the lives and opportunities of carers living or caring in Central Bedfordshire.



Julie Ogley
Director of Social Care,
Health and Housing



Councillor Carole Hegley
Executive Member for
Adult Social Care

2. Executive Summary

Central Bedfordshire Council and the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group (BLMK CCG) have worked with carers to develop this Carers Strategy for adults living or caring in Central Bedfordshire. This strategy sets out our priorities for working with carers and our commitment to working in partnership to support and improve the lives of carers.

Carers provide vital support to their family, friends and neighbours, and many carers put their lives on hold to provide this support.

We have been working with carers to coproduce this strategy, so we can understand what is important to them, what the key gaps are in local delivery; and set out our priorities for the next 5 years.

Priority 1: Identifying, Recognising, and Involving Carers

We will work with partners across health, social care, and the wider system to ensure that carers are identified earlier and provided with information, advice, guidance, and support. We will ensure that carers are involved in designing, commissioning, and evaluating carers services.

Priority 2: A Life Alongside Caring

We will support carers to have a break from their caring role in a way that suits them to enable them to continue to work and to continue with their interests outside of their caring role. We will continue to ensure that carers are aware of opportunities for them to participate in their communities or interests and support them to be able to do this.

Priority 3: Supporting and Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Carers

We will ensure that appropriate health and wellbeing services are available for carers living or caring in Central Bedfordshire, including commissioned services.

Priority 4: Supporting Carers to Learn more about their Caring role and what is important to them

We will ensure that carers are given the opportunity to access the information and training they need to be able to continue in their caring role safely and appropriately. This may be health or long-term condition specific information provided through voluntary sector and community partners, or practical training such as manual handling.

Priority 5: A Life After Caring

We will support carers to adjust to a life after their caring role ends. This will include practical advice and support as well as emotional support. We will ensure that former carers are aware of opportunities for them to participate in their communities or interests, and that they are given the opportunity to be involved in the design, commissioning and evaluating of services.

3. Introduction

The strategy sets out our vision, strategic aims and priorities to support adults caring for family, friends and neighbours living in Central Bedfordshire.

This strategy is informed by the Central Bedfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), an Equality Impact Assessment, feedback from carers, good practice, and guidance. It includes both national and local priorities with details of the proposed actions over the next five years.

A health needs assessment for young carers and sibling carers is due to be undertaken by the Council, the implications of which will be considered and incorporated into this strategy as appropriate, particularly in relation to the transition from children's services to adult's services.

Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes Clinical Commissioning Group (BLMK CCG) have developed this strategy through a process of coproduction and ongoing communication with carers, voluntary sector and statutory partners, and other key stakeholders. The principles of the Think Local, Act Personal (TLAP) Making it Real¹ statements are embedded within the strategy.

Carers provide a vital role in enabling the people they care for to stay as well as possible and live independently. This contributes enabling our residents to live healthy, happy, and independent lives,

whilst also making sure that there is provision of care and support services for those who need it.

Central Bedfordshire Council's overarching outcomes are that people:

- Can live independently in their own home
- Are able to participate in their community
- Are less socially isolated or lonely
- Are safe, secure, valued, and respected

This strategy supports the delivery of these overarching outcomes for carers living or caring in Central Bedfordshire over the next five years.

¹ <https://www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk/makingitreal/about/making-it-real-documents/>

4. Context

Who is a Carer?

The Care Act 2014 defines a carer as *‘an adult who provides or intends to provide care for another adult’*.

NHS England defines a carer as *‘anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.’*²

It is important to distinguish carers from paid care workers. Carers provide unpaid care alongside their other responsibilities, with many putting their lives on hold to provide care for a friend, neighbour or relative. This care could be for a few hours a day or more and could be around the clock care.

Anyone can become a carer. Many carers do not choose or plan to become carers, and caring responsibilities can arise unexpectedly without any training, knowledge, or preparation. It is therefore crucial that carers are identified at the earliest opportunity and offered support with their caring role and their life alongside it as recognised in The Care Act 2014.

Many people do not see themselves as carers because they are simply doing what they can for a relative, a friend or a neighbour who needs them because of their disability or illness. Raising

awareness of the caring role is therefore key to ensure that carers are aware of the information and support that is available to them.

Some carers report positive experiences from caring, finding it positive and rewarding with improved mental wellbeing. Research in 2019³ suggests that providing care makes carers feel good about themselves, gives new meaning and purpose to their lives, enables them to learn new skills, improves resilience and strengthens their relationships with others.

Legal and Policy Context

The Care Act 2014

Section 10 of The Care Act requires local authorities to “assess (a) whether the carer does have needs for support (or is likely to do so in the future), and (b) if the carer does, what those needs are (or are likely to be in the future).” This assessment must include:

- The carer’s ability and willingness to continue to provide care
- The carer’s individual wellbeing
- The impact of the carer’s needs for support
- The outcomes that the carer wishes to achieve in day-to-day life, and whether, and if so to what extent, the provision of support could contribute to the achievement of those outcomes.

² <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/comm-carers/carers/>

³ <https://futurecarecapital.org.uk/research/4th-june-2019-a-forgotten-army-coping-as-a-carer/>

Under the Act, equal status is given to carers as to those to whom they provide care and support for, and local authorities should have regard to all carers within their area and ensure they are able to access information, advice, and support to prevent or postpone their care and support needs from increasing and to promote their wellbeing.

There are also requirements for safeguarding adults at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and support. Safeguarding adults means protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. The Care Act sets out requirements for local authorities to investigate safeguarding concerns and work in within a multi-agency framework by setting up Safeguarding Adults Boards.

The aims of safeguarding adults are:

- To prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs
- To safeguard individuals in a way that supports them in making choices and having control in how they choose to live their lives
- To raise public awareness so that professionals, other staff, and communities as a whole play their part in preventing, identifying and responding to abuse and neglect.

Carers Action Plan 2018-2020

The Government published the carers action plan in 2018, setting out how the government would support carers in England for the 2-year period. It recognised the importance of the caring role and set out plans for:

- Services and systems that work for carers

- Employment and financial wellbeing
- Recognising and supporting carers in the wider community and society
- Building research and evidence to improve outcomes for carers

The action plan was a pre-cursor to the Health and Care Bill and referenced the publishing and implementation of a National Carers Strategy. The National Carers Strategy is still awaited. This strategy will be reviewed when the National strategy is published.

Health and Care Bill

The Health and Care Bill builds on the proposals for change set out by NHS England in its Long-Term Plan, while also incorporating lessons learnt from the pandemic. It introduces Integrated Care Boards and Integrated Care Partnerships which will be responsible for bringing together local NHS and local government to deliver joined up care for its local population.

It is anticipated that the Bill will bring changes for carers in line with the Carers Action Plan.

The Bill is due to be implemented during 2022. The implications for carers services will be considered and this strategy will be reviewed in response to this.

The National and Local Picture

The 2019 'Will I Care?'⁴ report suggests that two thirds of the population will care at some point in their lifetime, with everyone having a 50:50 chance of caring for someone by the age of 50.

As of 2020, Carers UK estimated that there were around 13.6 million people in the UK caring for someone else. Every day another 6,000 people take on a caring responsibility; that is 2 million people each year. Equally, around 2 million people find that their caring role comes to an end every year. Over 1 million people provide care for more than 1 person, and 1.3 million people provide over 50 hours of care per week.⁵

The Census 2011 shows that 1 in 10 of the population are carers, which in Central Bedfordshire equates to 30,000 people; 10% of the local population. Locally the Projecting Older People Population Information System (POPPI) suggests a figure of almost 7400 people over the age of 65 provided unpaid care in 2020, and this is anticipated to rise to over 8100. Central Bedfordshire Council is aware of 1019 carers (September 2021) who have had a carers assessment. There are around 4,325 (September 2021) carers in contact with our commissioned Carers Support Services provider, and 8,248 (October 2021) are flagged as carers with their GP.

The Value of Carers

The support and contribution that unpaid carers provide for those they care for, their relatives, friends, and neighbours, and to society is well documented. The financial value of this contribution, which avoids spend on Social Care and Health Services is significant; the 2015 Carers UK 'Valuing Carers' Report⁶ estimated the total economic value of the contribution made by carers nationally as £132 billion; an average of £19,336 per carer. This value is estimated to have gone up to £193 billion in November 2020, due to the effect of the pandemic.

A 1% reduction in the number of carers or time spent caring could potentially cost the UK £1 billion in extra care⁷. Unpaid carers are an asset to their communities, to the wider health and social care system, and to the people they are supporting.

Most care in the UK does not come from the NHS, care homes or from paid care workers in the community, but from unpaid family, friends, and neighbours. Carers are experts by experience and should be recognised as such.

Unpaid carers make a significant contribution to society, with the care that they are providing being worth between £54-86 billion per year in England alone.⁸

⁴

https://www.carersuk.org/images/News__campaigns/CarersRightsDay_Nov19_FINAL.pdf

⁵ <https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/press-releases/facts-and-figures>

⁶ <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/valuing-carers-2015>

⁷ Carers UK, 2011

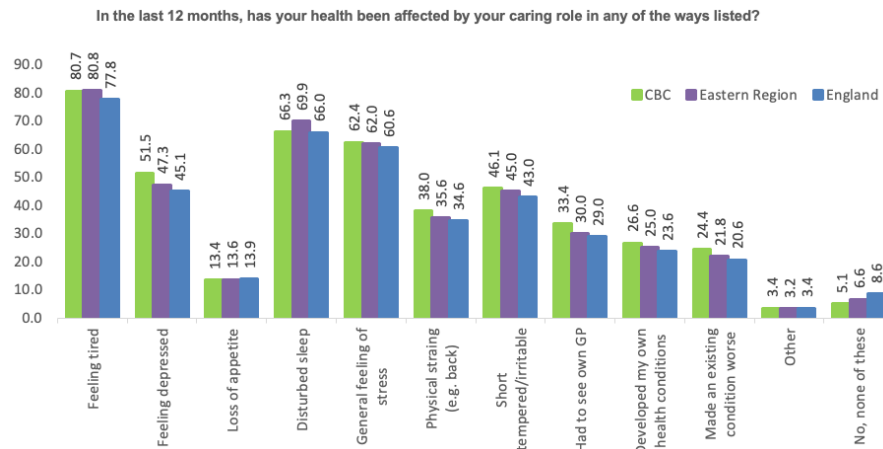
⁸ ONS 2017: 'Unpaid carers provide social care worth £57 billion', available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/articles/unpaidcarersprovidesocialcareworth57billion/2017-07-10>

5 million people in the UK, or 1 in 7 people, are juggling caring responsibilities with work. However, the significant demands of caring mean that 600 people give up work every day to care for an older or disabled relative.

Impact of Caring

Caring can take a toll on the carer's own health, wellbeing, relationships, and finance.

In response to the 2018 Survey of Adult Carers in England, 95% of carers living in Central Bedfordshire said that caring has had an impact on their health:



Caring can make managing their own health and wellbeing more difficult due to constraints on time. This could be a lack of time to exercise, or a feeling there is not time to address their own health concerns and a struggle to fit in their own health appointments due to a lack of time away from caring.

In responding to Carers UK's 'State of Caring 2018' Survey⁹, 61% of carers reported their physical health had worsened due to caring. In addition, 72% said that they had suffered mental ill health as a result of caring.

The 2019 GP Patient Survey¹⁰ confirmed this research, showing that carers were more likely to report having health problems compared with the general public. 63% of carers reported having a long-term condition, disability or illness compared with 51% of non-carers. The difference was even higher for carers who care for more than 50 hours per week; with 71% reporting having a long-term condition, disability, or illness.

The impact of caring is often exacerbated by carers not being able to find time for medical check-ups or treatment, and in particular feeling there is no one else to provide the care that they provide in their absence.

With an ageing population more high-level care is provided for longer. Increasing hours of care often result in general health of

⁹ Carers Week (2018) Supporting Carers to be Healthy and Connected

¹⁰ Carers UK analysis of 2019 GP patient survey data -

<https://www.carersuk.org/forprofessionals/policy/expert-comment/6173-what-does-the-gp-patient-survey-tell-us-about-carers>

carers deteriorating with caring responsibilities having an adverse impact on physical and mental health, education, and employment.

8 in 10 carers say they have felt lonely or socially isolated. Carers are seven times more likely to report feeling lonely always or more often than the general population.¹¹

Caring can adversely impact on a carers ability to continue with work or education. A lack of time away from the caring role can lead to carers feeling they have to stop working, in turn leading to financial hardship and further struggles for both the carer and the cared for. In addition to a loss of earnings, for many giving up work is giving up a part of their identity.

Carers allowance is available for some carers who provide at least 35 hours of unpaid care per week and are on certain benefits, such as Personal Independent Payment (daily living component), Disability Living Allowance (middle or highest care rate), Attendance Allowance or other specified benefits or payments. This does not cover all unpaid carers. The amount available to those who are eligible is £67.60 per week, however carers report this is not enough to cover their outgoings.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and increase in numbers and hours caring

The pandemic has brought with it an increase in the number of people with a caring responsibility, and for many the number of

hours they were caring during the pandemic increased. Carers UK have reported that 81% of unpaid carers are currently providing more care than before lockdown, with 78% of carers reporting that the needs of the person they care for have increased. 58% of carers have seen their physical health impacted by caring through the pandemic, while 64% said their mental health has worsened.

Carers UK's 'Carers' Experiences of Hospital Discharge'¹² report looks at the Discharge to Assess approach to hospital discharge, which became the predominant model in the UK during the pandemic. It states the guidance issued did not refer to or include carers' rights under the Care Act 2014, such as that carers should be asked whether they were willing and able to care. It also missed that carers should have been assessed under the Care Act if they were about to provide care, and on the appearance of need. The Carers UK research found that the Care Act did not seem to have been followed in many cases. As a result, many carers have been left with high levels of caring responsibilities without consultation, which in some cases are unsafe. In turn, this has placed additional stress upon carers and has had negative outcomes for people needing care and support.

Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire's report 'Hospital to Home – Discharge to Assess Review'¹³ in July 2021 found that 52% of respondents answered that they were not involved in their discharge plan, and 30% of respondents felt that they were

¹¹ Getting Carers Connected (2019) Carers Week

¹²

http://www.carersuk.org/images/News_and_campaigns/Carers_experiences_of_hospital_discharge_report_2021.pdf

¹³ <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/hospital-to-home>

discharged too soon. Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire concluded that more work needs to be done to fully embed the Discharge to Assess process to ensure that people are supported to go home from hospital in a timely manner with families included in decisions about their care.

Carers of people with dementia have been particularly affected. Dementia UK's 'Impact of COVID-19' report¹⁴ of September 2020 assessed the impact the pandemic had on families affected by dementia. 78% of respondents said that pandemic had a negative impact on the wellbeing of the person living with dementia. This is felt to have been impacted by a lack of stimulation with less face-to-face day opportunities available due to the national lockdowns. 86% of carers responding said that there had been a negative impact on their own wellbeing.

Carers of people with dementia have highlighted that online or telephone appointments are harder and more confusing for the person living with dementia, leading to more difficulties for carers dealing with frustrations from the person they care for.

In Central Bedfordshire many people paused their care packages during the pandemic due to shielding and not wanting someone to come into their house. In addition, all day services provided by the Council and other organisations across the area ceased to operate during lockdown. This impacted on both the carer and the cared for with many conditions worsening due to a reduction in social interaction and stimulation away from the home.

The increased caring responsibilities and lack of breaks has resulted in added pressure and impacted upon carers ability to continue to care. Carers are reporting fatigue and there has been an increase in reports of carer breakdown.

¹⁴ <https://www.dementiauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Impact-of-COVID-19-%E2%80%93-summary-report-of-carers-experiences.pdf>

5. What Have Carers Living in Central Bedfordshire Told Us?

Survey of Adult Carers in England (SACE)

The SACE survey is undertaken every 2 years across England and asks carers in receipt of support from local authorities several questions about their caring role and the impact it has on them. The last SACE survey was undertaken during December 2018 and the results reported in June 2019. 900 carers in Central Bedfordshire were invited to participate in the survey, and 414 completed it (46%).

The 2020 SACE survey was delayed due to the pandemic, and was instead issued in October 2021, with the results anticipated in April 2022, which will be considered as the strategy is reviewed.

In summary, the things that were reported to be working well for carers in Central Bedfordshire from the survey were:

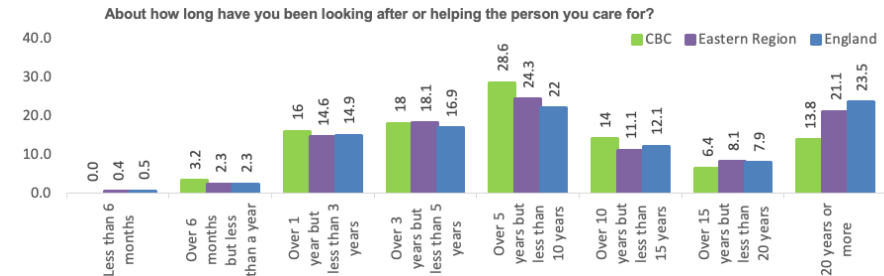
- Information and advice services
- Carers groups and networks
- Short breaks from caring
- Equipment and adaptations
- A sense of personal safety

The areas for improvement were:

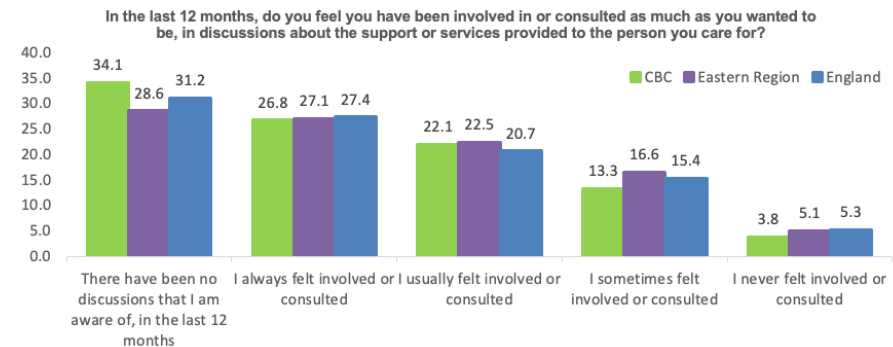
- Helping more carers to access the information, advice and guidance available and raise awareness of the opportunities for support
- Training to support carers in their caring role
- Improving social contact, support and encouragement

- How to improve carers sense of control and the time they have outside of their caring role.

In comparison to national / regional responses, Central Bedfordshire has more people who are relatively new to caring:



There were a higher number of people who reported that they had not had a discussion about the support for people they care for in the last 12 months:



Working Together for Change

In 2020-2021 Working Together for Change (WTfC) a coproduction approach was undertaken. This involves surveying local carers asking three key questions; what is working well, what is not working well, and what is important for the future. When these responses were received, a two-day workshop was held with carers, commissioners, social work teams and providers to group these responses, to look at the root causes of what was not working well, and to start to put an action plan in place for tackling some of these areas.

What is working well?

- I am getting (good) support from local service providers
- Working from home has given me more time and flexibility and reduced my stress
- I really value the relationship with family and friends. They help keep me well.
- I really value managing my own time rather than have it dictated to me
- I'm getting good support from my local GP (and other) health services
- I am able to do the things that keep me well
- I appreciate being able to have a break from my caring role
- Some people were unable to think of something positive

What is not working well?

- Living with serious illness and disability is hard on our daily life

- Not getting the support that works for me – support dictates what they will and won't do
- COVID and lockdown has made it hard to get about and do simple tasks
- I can't get suitable support to get some time for myself
- I feel the loss and limitations on my life even more acutely during lockdown
- The organisations are not engaging with me. I don't feel heard, listened to, or supported
- I'm not getting the support from my GP and local health services
- I'm feeling isolated and trapped
- I am worried about the future
- I feel I'm not getting the support I need when I need it
- I'm feeling stressed and worried about my mental health and wellbeing
- I am worried about money

What is important for the future?

- Having a better choice of good quality affordable services for the person I care for
- Getting back to normal
- Reliable good quality support that help my cared for person live well and stay independent
- Having a plan for the future that helps me have a life and feel confident my cared for person will be OK
- Being secure financially
- Maintaining our links with family, friends and the people who support us
- Being able to work

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- Feeling and being able to take a break when I need to
- Getting competent advice and guidance more easily and being listened to, especially when things go wrong
- Helping those I'm caring for stay well and have a good life
- To stay physically and mentally well and to get the support I need to help out with that
- Faith
- Having access to free healthcare
- My child is able to thrive in school

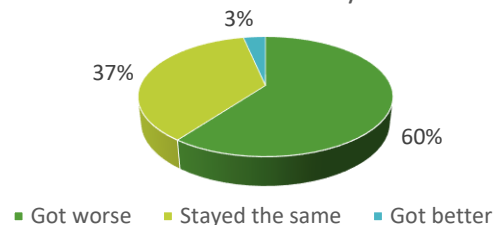
Carers in Bedfordshire Survey 2021

The commissioned carers service undertook a survey with carers registered with them in 2021. As the service is jointly commissioned by Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedford Borough Council and BLMK CCG, some of the results cover carers living and caring in both Central Bedfordshire and Bedford. The survey was distributed to over 5000 carers, with 650 responses received: a 59% increase from the 2019 survey.

The key findings of the survey were:

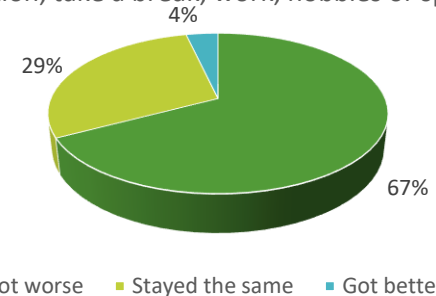
- 60% of carers in Central Bedfordshire reported their wellbeing has got worse due to the pandemic

How much has COVID affected your wellbeing



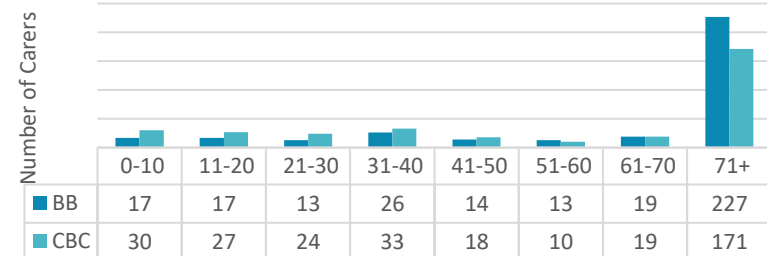
- 67% of carers reported they were unable to do the things they would like to do.

Ability to do the things you would like to do e.g. recreation, take a break, work, hobbies or sport

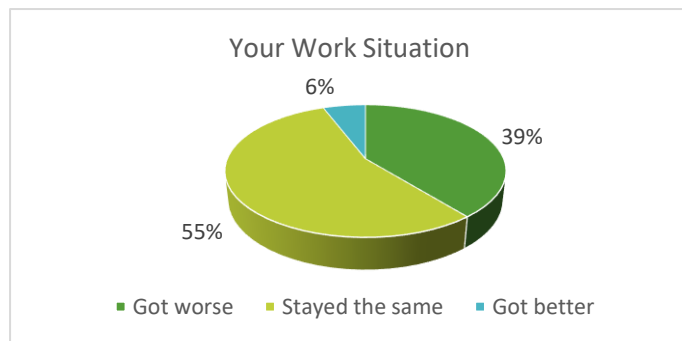


- 51% of carers stated that they have a caring role of 71+ hours a week

How many hours do you care per week?



- 28% of carers responding were currently working, and 39% of carers in Central Bedfordshire reported that their work situation got worse.



From comments from carers throughout the survey and the findings given there is a suggestion that breaks from the caring role remain a key carer concern.

6. Our Vision and Priorities

Our Vision

Our vision is to ensure carers:

- Receive support to have a life of their own outside of their caring role
- Are given the tools, training and support they need to continue to care well
- Are listened to, respected, and treated as expert care partners
- Are identified at an early stage to help to support their health and wellbeing
- Are supported at the end of their caring journey

Our Priorities

Priority 1: Identifying, Recognising, and Involving Carers

Why is this important?

Identifying carers earlier ensures carers can be offered appropriate information, advice and support and are given access to services to help them in their caring role. Identification also allows us to recognise the value of carers contributions and ensure that they are listened to as an expert care partners.

Outcomes for Priority 1:

- More carers are identified and receive support. This will be shown by the number of carers with a flag on their GP record, the number of carers known to commissioned carers support services, and the number known to the local authority.
- Information and advice is readily available to carers through a variety of means, for example through websites, GP surgeries, Pharmacies, hospitals and other relevant venues.
- Carers are given opportunities to share their views and to help to shape local services
- Carers are given opportunities to contribute to the ongoing development of services, for example by liaising with social work teams in ongoing workshops, through carers forums and through involvement in commissioning activities.

What is currently in place that will continue?

- GP Champion scheme in GP Practices in Central Bedfordshire, which provides support to GP practices in identifying carers, referral pathways on, providing information for use in waiting rooms and working closely with social prescribers, among other things.
- Carers Hubs are available within hospital settings, where carers are provided with information and support when they need while their cared for person is in hospital, and when they are discharged. This service is available both face to face within the hospital and over the phone. The hub team works closely with the patient experience teams, the discharge teams and the wards themselves to ensure

that carers are identified and given information on the support available to them.

- The commissioned carers support service provides a wide range of services to 4135 individual carers¹⁵ and to organisations who are working with carers. Carers accessing the services are triaged to ensure they receive the appropriate level of support for their needs, based on the impact of their caring role. The support offered according to those needs can include:
 - Information and advice
 - Individual support
 - Wellbeing services
 - Groups (both online and in person)
 - Days out
 - Exercise sessions
 - Counselling
 - A carers card (which may be digitalised in the future) which many use to prove they are a carer, or to access discounts
 - Other support as appropriate to that carer
- Regular Carers Workshops between carers and social workers have been introduced as an outcome of the Working Together for Change programme. These aim to reinforce relationships and to enable carers to influence the way that services are run.
- Bi-monthly Carers Forums are held, with carers influencing what is discussed on the agenda

- Information on all services available to carers is on the Council's website, information is also available on the BLMK CCG website, and that of the commissioned service provider. This will continue to be developed, with social media, newsletters and further information continuing to be available.
- In the period April – June 2021, 1269 carers were provided with some form of support. Of those carers who were happy to disclose, 297 were male and 820 were female. The service is actively targeting male carers and male specific groups and walks have been put in place.

What else will be put in place?

- A primary aim is to make sure that carers are identified at the earliest opportunity. We will work in partnership with Primary Care providers and hospitals to better identify and support carers at an earlier stage.
- Carers should be included in the design, commissioning and evaluating of services for carers. By involving carers in commissioning activity, we ensure that services are meeting the needs identified by carers and that they continue to adapt to those needs. In doing so, we will work with carers as equal partners and combine our respective knowledge and experience to support the shaping of services.

¹⁵ Figure from June 2021

Priority 2: A Life Alongside Caring

Why is this important?

Carers often feel socially isolated because of their caring role, and in many cases have ceased social and interest activities due to their caring role. Carers should have the opportunity to have a family and community life that includes things of interest to them alongside their caring role.

Outcomes for Priority 2:

- Carers can take a break from their caring role at a time that is convenient to them, and in a way that suits them
- Carers can access a variety of activities, groups, and support according to their needs and interests
- Carers are connected with others – both from their own families/communities, but also from peer support with other carers and groups available to them
- Carers are able to continue to work and seek education opportunities

What is currently in place that will continue?

- Carers Assessments will continue to focus on the wellbeing of the carer and to help ensure strategies or support is in place to meet their needs. This will include helping carers to be able to participate in activities that are of interest to them.
- Carers vouchers may be offered to some carers following a carers assessment. These vouchers can be used for a sitting service for the cared for, and in some situations for gardening and other services.

- Direct payments may be offered to some carers as a result of a carers assessment. Generally, direct payments for carers are a one-off payment given to support the carer to have some time to look after their own wellbeing. Direct payments for the person being looked after are more commonly ongoing payments used to employ a care worker or personal assistant to help with their day-to-day needs or for a period of respite care. These payments are instead of having those services provided directly by the Council.
- Central Bedfordshire's commissioned carers support service works with individual carers to see what their interests are, the types of support that might be of most help to them and let them know of any interest groups applicable to them.
- Befriending services, peer support and other forms of volunteer support and opportunities are available to carers.
- Not many breaks have been offered recently due to the pandemic, however when these are available, they are in the form of:
 - Help with housework
 - Sitting with the cared for person (carers vouchers)
 - Time away from their cared for person
 - Cared for person has a break in a care home for respite for the carer
- While less breaks have been offered during the pandemic additional support has been provided for some carers, such as an increase in carers vouchers, to prevent crisis.

What else will be put in place?

- For this to be successful, breaks must be available for carers. We will work with carers to review our breaks provision to

ensure that we are providing the breaks that carers want and need, and to meet their wellbeing needs.

- We will work in partnership with others to create opportunities for people to work, both in paid and voluntary, and to learn. As part of this, we will work with employers within Central Bedfordshire to ensure that they are “carer friendly”, both in terms of the people they are working with but also their employees.
- We will look for ways to involve people in their communities where they feel included and valued for their contribution. We want carers to be able to continue with any social activities, either within their communities or wider, that are of interest to them. This could be participating in sports, in local projects, or in an interest group.
- Central Bedfordshire Council is reviewing the day opportunities available for people with care and support needs in Central Bedfordshire.

Priority 3: Supporting and Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Carers

Why is this important?

Carers can experience a range of health issues because of their caring role, with recent studies showing the health inequalities that carers face. We will focus on prevention and early intervention to ensure that carers can remain emotionally and physically well, supporting carers to manage their own health and wellbeing.

Outcomes for Priority 3:

- Carers can plan for the future. This includes both long term and emergency plans
- Carers can easily access health and social care services when needed, through clear pathways. Through these pathways, carers only need to tell their story once.
- Carers can access health and wellbeing information, and to access further support such as groups
- Carers have access to specific health and wellbeing services that are of interest to them (e.g. exercise schemes, wellbeing activities, walking groups etc)

What is currently in place that will continue?

- All carers have the right to request a Carers Assessment from their local authority. These assessments focus on the impact of the caring role on that individual and their wellbeing and look at how the carer can be supported to improve their wellbeing.
- The commissioned carers service provides a wellbeing element to its service. This includes walking groups, exercise sessions, mindfulness, and counselling. There are also some sessions where carers can receive a massage and other wellbeing activities. When carers register with the service and are triaged, they are given information on the wellbeing services that may be applicable to them.
- Through the commissioned carers service, those carers in need of a higher level of support are allocated a named support worker who works with them to support over all areas of the caring role. This continuity and consistency for

carers has been highlighted by carers living and caring in Central Bedfordshire as something they value.

- NHS Carers Grants are available through the commissioned carers service. Applications are made, assessed, and awarded against a set of criteria and are used for a specific purpose. Grants can be used to help fund something that would improve the carers health and wellbeing, or training that would help the carer to gain qualifications to access the job market. Carers can apply for either a full carers grant which is likely to be up to £300, or a fast track grant with a maximum of £120.

What else will be put in place?

- We will work to ensure that the process of requesting and having a carers assessment is as smooth as possible for the carer, and that where possible the carer only has to tell their story once.
- Carers worry about the future when they are no longer able to provide care and support. We will support carers to be able to plan for this. We want to ensure that carers can care well for longer, but also to ensure that all carers have an emergency plan in place should they not be able to care for some reason.

Priority 4: Supporting Carers to Learn more about their Caring role and what is important to them

Why is this important?

Carers have told us that they would like more training and information on certain health and long-term conditions, such as

dementia, stroke and other conditions, to enable them to support their cared for person better.

Outcomes for Priority 4:

- Carers are more confident and able to provide better care
- More training and education opportunities are available for carers on specific conditions
- Practical training is available for carers that need it

What is currently in place that will continue?

- Voluntary Community Sector and other Community Providers within Central Bedfordshire provide a range of training on health and long-term conditions. This training will continue to be supported and publicised for carers. Where any gaps are identified or where opportunities are not currently available, we will look to expand our training offer and meet the needs of carers.
- Central Bedfordshire's commissioned carers service provide training and learning opportunities for carers to be able to develop their skills and knowledge to be able to care safely for longer.

What else will be put in place?

- Practical training, such as manual handling, will be offered to carers where this has been assessed as a need for that carer
- We will ensure that the carer is supported to take breaks from their caring role as needed to be able to attend this training.

Priority 5: A Life After Caring

Why is this important?

When a caring role comes to an end, carers can feel a big gap in their life which can bring mixed emotions. Former carers need both practical and emotional support to be able to adjust after the caring role ends.

Outcomes for Priority 5:

- Former carers are supported to move on from caring
- Former carers are connected with others – both from their own families/communities, but also from peer support with other carers and groups available to them
- Former carers are recognised for the valuable contribution that they have to offer
- Former carers are supported to use their skills and experience in paid or voluntary work, should they wish to do so
- Carers whose caring role has changed, for example where the person they care for enters a care home, are supported to adjust to their new caring role.

What is currently in place that will be continued?

- Former carers can access peer support and counselling as appropriate through our Commissioned Carers Service.
- Wellbeing services and support are available to former carers through our Commissioned Carers Service.
- Former carers will be given information and advice on ways they can participate in their communities or interests.

- Bereavement support is available where appropriate for former carers where the cared for person has died.
- Information and advice on benefits is available to all residents in Central Bedfordshire.
- Former carers can access a transition grant for up to a year post bereavement, to enable them to look after their wellbeing.

What else will be put in place?

- Former carers will be given the opportunity to use their knowledge from their caring role to influence the commissioning and evaluation of services.
- We will support former carers to use their skills in employment, should they wish to do so.
- Former carers will be given the opportunity to support carers as volunteers should they wish to do so.

7. Next Steps

In order to achieve the priorities as set out above, we will:

- Develop an Action Plan to support the implementation of the strategy
- Work in partnership with Primary Care providers and hospitals to better identify and support carers at an earlier stage
- Monitor the number of carers with a carers flag on their record
- Expand the GP Champion offer out to more GP Practices in Central Bedfordshire
- Continue to review the hospital hub offer and monitor usage of it, working with staff in hospitals to ensure all carers are given more information on it
- Include carers in commissioning activity
- Continue to support our commissioned carers service to target those carers not currently engaging with services
- Monitor hits and feedback on information available on the Council's website, the website of the commissioned carers service website, social media and newsletters
- Enhance and strengthen our data sharing across the system to better support carers and their experience
- Support continued innovation with carers services
- Work with employers within Central Bedfordshire to create opportunities for carers to work
- Continue to support and develop the carers forums, with more outcomes reported for carers to see impact
- Hold regular workshops with carers, social workers and other professionals, co-producing and co-chairing these workshops with carers
- Monitor the number of carers assessments completed

- Work with carers and partners to develop our breaks offer, ensuring respite is available to carers as and when needed
- Continue to drive forward change to more personalised support to carers
- Review the current assessment process to ensure that it is accessible, and the carer only needs to tell their story once
- Support carers to plan for the future
- Ensure appropriate training and information is available to carers
- Work with our commissioned services to support former carers in the transition out of caring when the caring role ends
- Consider the details and implications of the young and sibling carers health needs assessment for this strategy.

Monitoring and Measuring Success

The priorities identified will be supported by action plans with key milestones. Delivery and achievement of the outcomes within the strategy will be overseen by the Council, BLMK CCG, carers and other appropriate Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations who will monitor, review and evaluate the strategy.

The Council is keen to work collaboratively with providers who provide services within Central Bedfordshire to continue to raise the quality to improve the outcomes for people who use the services and their families.

8. Appendix 1:

Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework

The Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) measures how well care and support services achieve the outcomes that matter most to people. It aims to give an indication of the strengths and weaknesses of social care in delivering better outcomes for people who use services.

The following table gives shows the indicators related to carers within the ASCOF and the performance of Central Bedfordshire, alongside the regional and national performance, and the ranking against other local authorities nationally.¹⁶ Councils are aiming for high scores on all of these indicators.

Indicator	Central Bedfordshire	Regional Performance	National Performance	National Ranking
Proportion of carers who receive self-directed support	97.4	91.4	86.9	97
Proportion of carers who receive direct payments	44.6	65.6	77.1	118
Carer-reported quality of life	7.2	7.3	7.5	89

Indicator	Central Bedfordshire	Regional Performance	National Performance	National Ranking
Proportion of carers who reported that they had as much social contact as they would like	28.5	27.7	32.5	95
Overall satisfaction of carers with social services	41.9	37.6	38.6	39
Proportion of carers who report that they have been included or consulted in discussion about the person they care for	74.1	69.6	69.7	35
Proportion of carers who find it easy to find information about support	64.2	61.3	62.5	54

¹⁶ Full ASCOF data can be found [here](#)

NHS Outcomes Framework

The NHS Outcomes Framework is a set of indicators developed by the Department of Health and Social Care to monitor the health outcomes of adults and children in England. The framework provides an overview of how the NHS is performing. This has previously been reported quarterly but will be published on an annual basis from February/March 2022 onwards.

Data for Central Bedfordshire within the NHS Outcomes Framework is captured under the East of England region where it is not able to be broken down to local authority area. All data can be found [here](#).

9. Appendix 2:

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)

The Council commissions a range of VCS services which are available to support carers and those they care for. Information on each of these can be found through the following links.

- [Carers Support Service](#)
- [Memory Navigation Service](#)
- [Stroke Recovery Service](#)
- [Good Neighbour and Village Care Schemes](#)
- [Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire](#)
- [Adult Autism Support Services](#)
- [Advocacy Services](#)
- [Preventative Mental Health Services for Adults with Mental Health Issues](#)
- [Employment Support Services \(Mental Health\)](#)
- [Sensory Impairment Services](#)
- [Advice and Telephone Befriending for over 50s](#)
- [Information and Signposting Services for people with disabilities and their families](#)
- [Timebanking](#)
- [Dementia Support](#)

10. Contact information

If you want to find out more or discuss any aspect of meeting the accommodation, care and support needs for people, please get in touch. You can:

Email us at: strategic.commissioning@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Call us on: 0300 300 5585

Write to us at: Strategic Commissioning Adult Social Care, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire, SG17 5TQ

Central Bedfordshire in contact

Find us online: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Call: 0300 300 5585

Email: strategic.commissioning@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Write to: Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ