

voice

AUTUMN/WINTER 2025

Bedfordshire
ageUK

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY + RECIPES + GARDENING TIPS + ADVICE + MUCH MORE

Local homecare provider recognised among the best in the UK

GoodOaks
Quality Care at Home



GoodOaks Homecare Bedford is quickly becoming one of the most respected names in care across the Bedford area, and it's not just local families taking notice. The dedicated team has recently been awarded not one, but two prestigious national accolades recognising their commitment to delivering high-quality, compassionate care in the community.

In June, GoodOaks Bedford was named a Top 20 Home Care Provider 2025 by Homecare.co.uk, the UK's leading home care review website. This award is based entirely on reviews from clients and their families, making it a powerful reflection of the trust and appreciation the team has earned through their work. To be ranked among the top providers in the region is a significant achievement and a source of enormous pride for the Bedford team.

In addition, the branch also received the 'Best Start-Up Homecare Service or New Franchisee' award at the 2025 Home Care Awards, an industry-leading event that recognises outstanding performance, innovation, and service in the homecare sector.

Scan here to learn more:



Winner 2025

Founded on the ethos of providing care "we'd be happy for our own families to receive," GoodOaks Homecare Bedford has made it their mission to support people to live independently, safely, and with dignity in their own homes. Their care professionals are known not just for their professionalism, but also for the warmth, respect, and genuine connection they bring to every visit.

Shaz and Naz Islam, the husband-and-wife team behind the branch, say these awards are a testament to their staff's dedication and passion. "Every member of our team goes above and beyond to support clients and their families. These recognitions mean so much to all of us and show that our hard work is truly making a difference."

With national awards under their belt and a growing reputation for excellence, GoodOaks Homecare Bedford is clearly a name to watch in local care.



- ♣ **Dementia care**
- ♣ **After hospital stay care**
- ♣ **Meal preparation**
- ♣ **Medication**
- ♣ **Help around the home**
- ♣ **Personal care**
- ♣ **Companionship**

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goodoakshomecare.co.uk/bedford

Gardening Service

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We can mow, weed, strim, trim and tidy, keeping your garden looking lovely.

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A service for carers in Bedfordshire



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- Sit and chat •
- Make tea or a light snack •
- Go for a walk with your loved one •
- Watch TV or listen to the radio with them •
- Simply watch over them •

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Friends for Life

Friends for Life is a local Bedford-based charity working to reduce loneliness and isolation among care home residents. Many older people through no fault of their own have few or no visitors. By volunteering with us you could change that.



We recruit, train and support volunteers to become befrienders, offering regular one-to-one visits that provide companionship, conversation, and comfort. We also welcome activity volunteers, whether you enjoy music, art, games, or simply bringing energy into a room, your presence can make a big difference.

Volunteering is flexible, rewarding, and fully supported. Even just an hour a week can brighten someone's day.

email us at hello@friendsforlife.org.uk,
visit www.friendsforlife.org.uk, or follow us on social media

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Foreword from the CEO

Hello and a warm welcome to this edition of **VOICE**. Age UK Bedfordshire's very own biannual magazine.



As we move from Summer into Autumn, I am reminded of how much resilience and warmth exists within our community. The darker months can be challenging for many older people, yet again I have seen countless examples of neighbours, volunteers, and our own staff going the extra mile to ensure no one is left isolated or without support. It is this spirit of care and connection that makes Bedfordshire such a special place to live and grow older in.

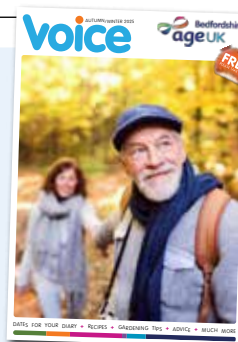
Looking ahead, I am filled with optimism. We continue to

expand our services, strengthen our partnerships, and explore new ways to make life brighter for those who turn to us. I am also proud to share that Age UK Bedfordshire has been recognised with the prestigious BSI Kite Mark for quality – a testament to the hard work and commitment of our entire team. I will write more on this later in the magazine, but for now, I want to thank every colleague, volunteer, and supporter who has helped us achieve this milestone.

Together, we are not only weathering the seasons, but building a future of care, dignity, and hope.

Steve

Steve Perry
Chief Officer
Age UK Bedfordshire



Cover Image

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Meet the team

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Reg. Charity No. 1090535



Get Set for Winter

Age UK Bedfordshire has been working with energy suppliers to save money for older people and to ensure your home is insulated and energy efficient.

Over the last 14 years we have helped over 1,600 people to keep warmer in winter and to save money on fuel bills through the colder months.

FREE small insulation aids that we will fit Free of Charge through our Handyperson Service.

Simple items that can save you money include:

- Low Energy Light Bulbs
- Low Energy Night Lights
- Remote Control Plug In Sockets
- Timer Switches
- Radiator Reflector Kits
- Letter box Brush Strips or Flaps
- Draught Excluders for windows and doors



If you or someone you know is over 65, lives in Bedfordshire or Luton and would benefit from this opportunity then please contact us:
Tel: **01234 360510** or
Email: enquiries@ageukbedfordshire.org.uk

Don't miss out we have limited supplies which are on a first come first served basis.



Winter Quiz

Questions

- Which British city hosts the famous Hogmanay celebrations on New Year's Eve?
- What is traditionally hidden inside a Christmas pudding?
- Which British monarch delivered the first Christmas radio broadcast in 1932?
- Which Country do Christmas Markets originate from?
- What is the meteorological definition of winter in the UK (start and end months)?
- Which bird is most associated with British Christmas cards?
- What is the term for the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere?
- Which UK national park is most likely to experience snowfall first:
A) Dartmoor
B) Snowdonia
C) The Broads
- What is the record lowest temperature ever recorded in the UK (to the nearest degree Celsius)?
- The Twelve Days of Christmas traditionally begin on which date?
- Which English king is said to have died after eating a "surfeit of lampreys" at a winter feast?
- What year did the Great Frost Fair take place on the frozen River Thames for the last time?
- Which British author wrote the novella A Christmas Carol in 1843?
- What is the name of the festival of lights celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains that sometimes falls in late autumn or early winter?
- What is the main ingredient in mulled wine besides wine?
- Which traditional Scottish dish is often served at Burns Night in January?
- What is the name of the cheese traditionally eaten with Christmas cake in parts of Yorkshire?
- Which dried fruit is the main component of mincemeat?



Dates for Your Diary

- | | |
|---|--|
| Tuesday 21st October
Diwali – keep pets indoors! | Thursday 1st January
New Years Day |
| Sunday 26th October
(2am) British Summer Time
Ends - Clocks go back one hour | Saturday 14th February
Valentine's Day |
| Friday 31st October
Halloween | Tuesday 17th February
Shrove Tuesday |
| Saturday 1st November
All Saints Day | Sunday 1st March
St David's Day |
| Wednesday 5th November
Bonfire Night - keep pets indoors! | Sunday 15th March
Mothering Sunday |
| Sunday 9th November
Remembrance Sunday | Tuesday 17th March
St Patrick's Day |
| Wednesday 24th December
Christmas Eve | Sunday 29th March
(1am) British Summer Time commences - Clocks go forward one hour |
| Thursday 25th December
Christmas Day | Wednesday 1st April
April Fools Day |
| Friday 26th December
Boxing Day | Thursday 2nd April
Maundy Thursday |
| Wednesday 31st December
New Years Eve | Friday 3rd April
Good Friday |
| | Sunday 5th April
Easter Sunday |
| | Monday 6th April
Easter Monday |
| | Thursday 23rd April
St George's Day |

Answers

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Edinburgh | 4. Germany |
| 2. A coin (traditionally a silver sixpence) | 5. December 1 to February 28 (or 29) |
| 3. King George V | 6. Robin |
| | 7. Winter Solstice |
| | 8. B) Snowdonia |
| | 9. -27°C |
| | 10. December 25 |
| | 11. King Henry I |
| | 12. 1814 |
| | 13. Charles Dickens |
| | 14. Diwali |
| | 15. Spices (e.g. cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg) |
| | 16. Haggis |
| | 17. Wensleydale |
| | 18. Raisins |



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Helen and Andy

Autumn leaves have fallen
Making a path of golden brown
And as I walk along the street
They make a rustling sound

I remember as a child
On a cold wet autumn day
Wrapped in our coats
and hats and scarves
My brother and I would play

Running ahead of our parents
We would gather
twigs and leaves
And then making
ourselves a shelter
We made a den among the trees

That game would last for ages
We were Maid Marion
and Robin Hood
Sorting out the bad guys
So, we could help the good

As I think back to
those moments
A time once so carefree
Of autumn fun so long ago
My heart, it fills with glee

And as I gently turn around
A tear then fills my eye
My grandchildren are
gathering up some leaves
Just like my brother and I

"Let's make a den,
Nanny" they shout
As they run towards
some trees
And we played for
ages - oh what fun
In the gentle autumn breeze.



Home Help

Practical Support, Lasting Reassurance

Most of us want the same thing as we grow older: to remain independent in our own homes, surrounded by the comfort of familiar items and routines in our homes.

Yet sometimes the day-to-day tasks of keeping house becomes harder to manage alone. That is where Age UK Bedfordshire's Home Help service makes such a difference.

Our fully trained, caring staff provide practical support tailored to each person's needs. From cleaning, laundry, and shopping to light meal preparation and help with ensuring food is in date in the fridge to helping to write a shopping list. Our team ensures that homes stay safe, welcoming, and well-run. This is not a luxury – it is a lifeline. A tidy home, a hot drink, or help getting shopping

done can lift an enormous burden and restore peace of mind.

But Home Help is about much more than household tasks. For many older people, our visits are a vital social connection. The same friendly face arriving each week can ease the loneliness that so many experience, especially during long winter months. Simple conversations, shared laughter, and a sense of companionship are every bit as valuable as the practical assistance.

Families also benefit from reassurance. If a customer is unwell or something seems amiss during a visit, our staff will always ensure that loved ones are informed quickly. This safety net gives relatives peace of mind, knowing someone is keeping a caring eye on their parent, grandparent, or friend.

Crucially, our Home Help service is delivered with the professionalism and consistency you would expect from

Bedfordshire's leading older people's charity – now proudly accredited with the BSI Kite Mark for quality. Every member of our team is trained, supported, and trusted to deliver services to the very highest standard. Every team member is trained in Safeguarding, Confidentiality, Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) and Health and Safety. All new team members undergo thorough vetting before we employ them. This includes two previous employer references and a DBS check (Generally known as a Police Check). Followed by a friendly but vigorous interview process. Training is updated and takes place every three months. Obviously, they are in close touch with their supervisor, daily.

The result is a service that does far more than "help around the house." It keeps people independent; eases pressure on families and prevents the small difficulties of daily living from becoming a crisis. In short, it helps older people live not just longer, but better.

Case Study:

"A Helping Hand That Means the World"

Mrs. L, aged 82, lives alone. Although she is fiercely independent, arthritis has made it difficult for her to manage household chores. Simple tasks like vacuuming or carrying shopping had become exhausting. Since beginning with Age UK Bedfordshire's Home Help service, Mrs. L says her life has changed dramatically, for the better. My Home Help now visits twice a week to assist with cleaning, laundry, and shopping. Just as importantly, she provides company and conversation – something Mrs L greatly looks forward to. Her daughter, who lives 40 miles away, says: "I can't always be there, and I used to worry constantly. Knowing that someone checks in on Mum, keeps her home in good order, and will let me know straight away if anything seems wrong gives me real peace of mind. It's like having an extended family we can both trust." For Mrs L, the service has meant she can remain in the home she loves, with the confidence that she is supported, safe, and never truly alone.



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Lima Homecare

Our Heartly Are In It

CARE IN YOUR HOME

Do you live in Bedford, Central Bedfordshire or Hertfordshire? Do you need domestic or personal care in your home?

We are a team of carers with many years of experience as home care providers, and provide our services for people with restricted mobility and those with special needs. You can also count on us for live-in care and sitting services.



SERVICES TO SUIT YOU

We are able to help with everyday needs and routines – whether you require someone to assist you with personal care, or support you with day-to-day tasks such as medication or meal preparation. We offer companionship calls tailor made to suit you, whether that be for shopping or appointments.

If you've never navigated the care system and need assistance, we are happy to advise if you want to give us a call.

We also accept care vouchers provided by the Central Bedfordshire Council.

CONTACT

0333 358 0038, Option 2
info@limahomecare.com
www.limahomecare.com







Service	Available
Day care	Yes
Evening care	Yes
Live-in care	Yes
Respite care	Yes
Short-term care	Yes

Do you often feel upset and tearful?
 Do you find it hard to cope?
 Do you feel anxious?
 Do you feel stressed at work?
 Do you have relationship difficulties?

We can help you

to learn ways to manage the way you think about things, to improve your overall mood and your approach to the issues in your life.

for anxiety and depression
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<https://www.elft.nhs.uk/bedfordshire-talking-therapies>

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The Secret Gift of Sleep

There is a quiet magic in closing one's eyes at night. No fuss, no ceremony—just the simple surrender of drifting off.

Yet behind that everyday act lies one of life's most precious healers. A good night's sleep can do more for body and spirit than a cupboard full of tonics.

We know the difference. A restless night leaves us groggy, our temper short, our thoughts muddled. But after deep, restorative rest, the world seems sharper, kinder, more manageable. For older people especially, sleep is not a luxury but a lifeline: it steadies blood pressure, supports memory, helps muscles recover, and even softens the edges of pain.

Doctors may remind us of sleep's importance, but we don't really need convincing—we feel it in our bones.

Why Sleep Matters So Much

During sleep, the body repairs itself. Heart rate and breathing slow, giving the heart a chance to rest. Muscles knit together after the small strains of the

day. The immune system does its quiet night shift, strengthening our defences. And in the brain, thousands of tiny processes click away: memories are sorted, emotions settled, clutter swept out.

For those of us who sometimes wake in the small hours, it's comforting to remember that even dozing brings benefits. Light sleep, too, is part of the restorative process.

The World of Dreams

Then there are the dreams—those curious little plays staged by the mind without permission. Some dreams are obvious: we dream of a holiday just booked, a film just watched, or a friend just phoned. Others arrive with no clear origin: flying across rooftops, talking to a long-departed relative, turning up to school half-dressed despite being well past school age.

Cultures across the centuries have looked for meaning in



these nocturnal adventures. Ancient Egyptians thought dreams were messages from the gods. Sigmund Freud, less reverent, suggested they revealed hidden wishes. Modern science tends to see them as the brain's way of processing the day—filing, sorting, making sense of loose ends.

Perhaps the truth is a little of each. Dreams can surprise us, comfort us, or simply entertain us. Sometimes they even solve problems. More than one inventor has woken with the answer to a tricky puzzle that eluded them while awake.

Common Dream Themes

A few dream patterns seem to cross continents and ages:

- Falling: often linked to feeling out of control.
 - Flying: a symbol of freedom or escape.
 - Teeth falling out: thought to reflect worries about ageing or appearance (though perhaps it's just that late-night cheese).
 - Being chased: a classic theme, sometimes tied to avoiding a problem in waking life.
- Of course, not every dream needs decoding. Sometimes the brain is simply rearranging its furniture, and the images we glimpse are the clutter being moved about.



Top Tips for a Restful Night

- Keep a routine: Go to bed and rise at roughly the same times each day.
- Create a calm space: Dark, cool, and comfortable works best.
- Ease the mind: Swap screens for a book, gentle music, or slow breathing.
- Watch the caffeine: Tea, coffee, and even chocolate late in the evening can keep you awake.
- Daylight and movement: A walk in the fresh air helps the body know when it's time to sleep.
- Don't wrestle with the pillow: If wide awake, get up, potter quietly, and return when drowsy.
- A few simple habits can turn bedtime into one of the most restorative parts of the day.

How to Encourage Restful Nights

While we can't command sleep, we can coax it. Small habits make a difference:

- Routine helps. Going to bed and waking at similar times sets the body's clock.
- Create calm. A comfortable room, not too warm, not too cluttered.
- Ease the mind. Reading a few pages of a book, listening to gentle music, or practising slow breathing works better than scrolling through a glowing phone screen.
- Limit stimulants. A strong cup of tea at nine o'clock

may not be your friend.

- Gentle activity. A walk in the day brings natural tiredness by evening.

If sleep proves elusive, don't lie rigid, fuming at the ceiling. Get up, make a warm drink, potter quietly, and return to bed when drowsiness returns.

A Little Humour at Bedtime

The truth is, none of us sleeps perfectly every night. Some of us nod off in the armchair, then find we're wide awake at midnight. Others rise before dawn, convinced they've had

"enough" only to feel sleepy by breakfast. There's no shame in it; the body's rhythms shift as the years advance.

It can help to laugh at the quirks. One gentleman of my acquaintance swore he always dreamed of running marathons—despite never having run further than the bus stop. Another lady claimed she dreamt repeatedly of making jam, though she had never once made it awake. Perhaps dreams are proof that the imagination remains playful long after the joints grow stiff.

The Heart of the Matter

A good night's rest is more than eight hours on the clock. It is a gift we give ourselves: the chance to repair, restore, and refresh. Dreams are the colourful embroidery stitched onto that fabric. Whether or not we search for their meaning, they remind us that the mind, like the heart, never quite stops wandering.

So tonight, when you switch off the light, think of sleep not as an interruption to life, but as one of its sweetest chapters. Close your eyes and let the quiet work begin.

Voluntary Trustees Recruitment

We wish to recruit new people to join our Board of Trustees.

Age UK Bedfordshire is an independent local charity, dedicated to making Bedfordshire a great place in which to grow old. Age is different for everyone and its challenges and demands are individual.

At Age UK Bedfordshire we are many things to many people – a source of advice, information, companionship and practical support. We put the

interests of older people living in Bedfordshire at the heart of everything we do, helping them to achieve and maintain their independence and wellbeing.

Age UK Bedfordshire has been supporting older people across Bedfordshire for over 30 years, especially those who are frail, vulnerable or have no family living nearby.

We are looking for Trustees who have a range of skills and experience including leadership and senior management in areas such as health sector,

social work, local government, financial, religion.

The Board of Trustees work with the Chief Executive at a strategic level to ensure the organisation is effective within its aims and objectives. The Board is made up of 6 Trustees who meet with the Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive, approximately every two months, to discuss the wider obligations and challenges of the specific sector in which we work.

The successful candidates would ideally be able to demonstrate:

- Being able to take joint responsibility with the Board and Chief Executive to ensure the charity complies with good practice and legal obligations.
- Through the Chairman and Treasurer work with the Chief

Executive and their Deputy to ensure finance and resources are adequate for the needs of the organisation.

- Support the Chief Executive through the Chairman, in order for her to carry out the management of the Charity.
- Act with integrity and in the interests of the organisation and its clients and staff.
- Jointly with the Board, to take and give advice and guidance to and from the Chief Executive as required.

How to apply:

Please contact the Chief Executives office to express an interest by sending an email to jo.rising@ageukbedfordshire.org.uk



The Higgins Bedford

A Treasure on Our Doorstep

Tucked away in the heart of Bedford is a cultural gem that many of us may walk past without realising just how much it offers.



The Higgins Bedford is more than a museum – it's a vibrant centre for art, history, and community life, with a delightful coffee shop.

Housed in the beautifully restored Higgins family brewery and Victorian house, the museum brings together fascinating collections that tell the story of Bedford and beyond. From local archaeology and the town's lace-making heritage to fine art, design, and temporary exhibitions, there is always something new to discover.

One of the great joys of The Higgins is its accessibility. Entry is free, and the space has been designed to be welcoming for all ages. For older visitors, it's an opportunity to revisit familiar stories from the past,

explore art at a gentle pace, or simply enjoy the quiet charm of the building and gardens.

The Higgins also hosts talks, workshops, and community events, making it a place where history comes alive and people connect. If you haven't been for a while, perhaps this spring is the perfect time to rediscover it – a reminder that culture and creativity are right here on our doorstep.

Did you know?

The Higgins is home to one of the world's largest collections of works by Edward Bawden, the celebrated British painter and illustrator who lived in Great Bardfield, Essex. His playful and distinctive style is a real highlight of the museum.



Trusted Quality, Proven Impact

At Age UK Bedfordshire, we never take trust for granted. Older people and their families invite us into their homes, often at times when life feels most fragile. They deserve to know that the support they receive is safe, reliable, and of the highest standard.

That is why we are especially proud to have achieved the BSI Kite Mark for quality – a recognition that no other older people's charity has earned. For our customers, this is a visible guarantee: when you see the Kite Mark, you know you are in safe hands. It is assurance that every visit, every service, and every member of our team works to nationally recognised standards of care and professionalism.

But quality is not only about reassurance – it is also about impact. Our preventative services keep people well, connected, and independent, often avoiding the need for costly hospital admissions or crisis interventions. For funders and partners, this means that every pound invested in Age UK Bedfordshire goes further: it not only transforms lives today, but it also saves resources tomorrow.

Above all, the Kite Mark stands for something simple yet profound – trust. And that is what we are determined to uphold every single day.



Gardening Tips

Autumn/Winter 2025

With Autumn and Winter on their way I thought I would follow the Spring and Summer trend of hints and tips in month order to keep your luscious lawns and beautiful borders for as long as possible as the days wane, and give them the best start next Spring. Take a peek at the tips below:

October

- Finish off pruning roses and then feed them
- If not already done lift and divide congested clumps of snowdrops while still in leaf
- Prune back autumn flowering clematis
- Take the old flower heads off winter flowering heathers and trim the plants
- Lay new turf when there is no frost
- If seeding a lawn prepare the area now
- If cutting grass, cut with the mower set at its highest setting
- Start raking up any leaves so they don't become slippery

November

- Dig up and divide established plants which are now overcrowded and re-plant
- Pansies, primulas and other winter/spring bedding plants
- There is still time to apply an autumn lawn food and moss killer
- Spike badly drained lawns to improve drainage and if not carried out previously scarify to remove dead grass
- Depending on the season and location it may still be necessary to continue to cut the lawn
- Continue to rake up and get rid of dead wet leaves

December

- If not frosty plant new Rose bushes
- Cut back the herbaceous border
- Put slug pellets around treasured plants, especially Alpines and Bulbs in mild weather
- Protect delicate evergreens from cold winds
- Avoid walking on lawns in frosty weather



- If puddles stay on the lawn spike with a garden fork or an aerator to aid drainage and prevent disease

January

- Check Dahlia tubers, Gladioli and Begonia corms that are being stored and remove any that are rotting
- Keep off in frosty weather but rake and get rid of leaves that will suffocate the growth

February

- Lightly trim winter flowering Heathers when the flowers die off
- Divide Snowdrops after flowering
- Plant Lily of the Valley Crowns
- Prune summer flowering shrubs
- Depending upon the weather and growth high level lawn cutting may be needed



March

- Finish off pruning roses
- If not already done lift and divide congested clumps of snowdrops while still in leaf
- Prune back autumn flowering clematis
- Take the old flower heads off winter flowering heathers and trim the plants to shape
- Feed rose bushes
- Mulch any areas of garden missed in the autumn
- Lay new turf when there is no frost
- If seeding a lawn prepare the area now
- If cutting is needed, cut with the mower set at its highest setting



Please don't forget the birds and any other wildlife that you may like to encourage and feed throughout the cold months of the year. Otherwise sit back in the warm and enjoy the changing seasons.

Being Together

Choosing Each Other, Every Day

At this stage of life, you've already seen how quickly the years slip by, and how easy it is to drift apart if you're not careful. Staying close doesn't require grand gestures or dramatic reinventions. More often, it's about the steady choice to notice one another, to laugh together, to share the ordinary moments. The spark may not look the same as it did

decades ago, but the warmth still matters—and warmth, like a fire, needs tending.

Shared experiences, laughter, challenges, even companionable silence: all of these can keep a relationship rich. You don't need a coach or a manual. You need small, consistent acts of leaning in and showing up. The goal isn't perfection. It's presence. And presence, at any age, can be deeply beautiful.

Below are a handful of gentle invitations—ways to rediscover each other that don't require grand budgets or youthful energy, only a willingness to try.

Take a walk together, with no agenda

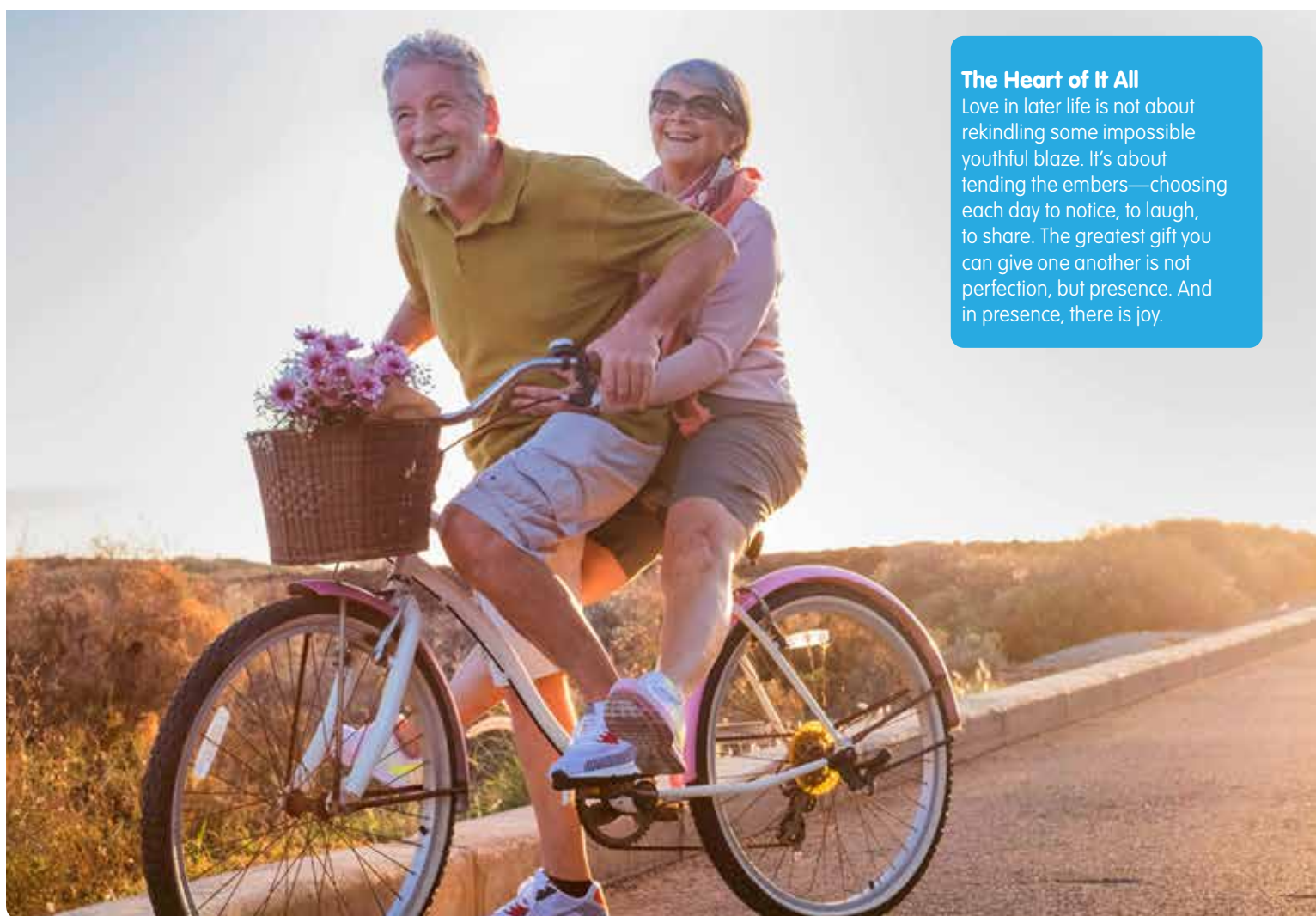
Walking side by side has its own quiet magic. You're not sitting across a table, so conversation feels lighter, easier. The rhythm of your steps provides its own calm. You might talk about the children, your plans for the weekend, or the way the clouds are moving. Or you might not talk at all. The point isn't exercise; it's the simple companionship of moving forward together. Over time, this can become a cherished ritual, a thread of continuity in the tapestry of your days.

Revisit an old haunt

There's power in returning to a place that holds meaning: the café where you once lingered over coffee, the park bench where you talked until dark, the seaside town you used to visit when the children were small. Memories arrive in flashes: the clothes you wore, the songs that played, the worries that seemed enormous at the time but now feel small. Revisiting isn't about nostalgia so much as recognising how far you've travelled together.

Learn something new—together

Embarking on an unfamiliar hobby puts you both back at the starting line. Whether it's sketching, birdwatching, dancing, or a jigsaw puzzle,



The Heart of It All

Love in later life is not about rekindling some impossible youthful blaze. It's about tending the embers—choosing each day to notice, to laugh, to share. The greatest gift you can give one another is not perfection, but presence. And in presence, there is joy.

you'll stumble and laugh through it side by side. It isn't about being good. It's about remembering what it feels like to be beginners again and discovering new corners of yourselves in the process.

Carve out a quiet conversation hour

Life, even in later years, is noisy. Televisions hum, phones buzz, routines crowd in. Set aside a weekly hour where you simply sit, free of interruptions, and talk. You might ask each other: What made you smile this week? or What's been on your mind? The depth doesn't matter; the attention does. Offering undivided attention is one of the most tender gifts you can give.

Take on a small project

It might be planting herbs in a window box, reorganising the loft, or repainting the garden fence. Working toward a modest goal together builds the sense of being a team. And at the end, you'll have something tangible—a sprig of basil, a neat shelf, a fresh coat of paint—that quietly says, We did this together.

Make a shared playlist

Music is a time machine. Create a list of songs that have mattered to you: the one you danced to at your wedding, the tune you sang in the car on



holiday, the silly pop song that always makes you grin. Play them in the background while you cook, or during a drive. Each song becomes a thread linking past and present.

Read the same book

Choose a novel or memoir and read it at your own pace. Then compare notes. You'll find you notice different details, laugh at different lines, and perhaps disagree about the ending. That difference is part of the richness. It's a way to keep discovering how the other person thinks, long after you thought you knew them inside out.

Give a little back—together

Volunteering for a cause close to your hearts—whether that's a community garden, a local foodbank, or a charity event—brings a new dimension to your connection. You see each other in action, generous and engaged, and it reminds you that your partnership has always been about more than just yourselves.

Write a letter

It may feel quaint, but putting pen to paper slows you down and invites honesty. A brief note tucked under a pillow or slipped into a pocket says: I thought of you, and you matter. These scraps of paper may one day become keepsakes, treasures to be read again when the house is quiet.

Try a "yes" day

Every so often, agree to say yes to one another's suggestions. It could be as small as visiting a new café or watching a film you'd normally veto. The point is not the activity itself but the spirit of openness. That willingness to try keeps curiosity alive.

Look through old photographs

Open the albums or scroll through digital folders and

Cook a meal, without fuss

Forget impressing anyone. Choose something straightforward—an omelette, a stew, perhaps an old family recipe—and make it together. You'll likely bump elbows, disagree over how much salt is needed, and sneak mouthfuls before the dish is done. That's the fun of it. A shared meal built with laughter tastes better than any restaurant dish, and it nourishes more than just the body.

linger over a few pictures. Ask each other not just where and when but what were you feeling? The stories behind the photographs can be richer than the images themselves, and they spark gratitude for the long road you've travelled.

End the day with affection

Not fireworks, just the small gestures: a hand squeeze, a gentle kiss, a whispered word before sleep. These ordinary acts build an extraordinary foundation. They say: You still matter to me. Over months and years, they weave a rhythm of warmth that steadies you through life's ups and downs.





Chicken and Chorizo Pasta Bake

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 2 large chicken breasts, skinless
- 340g/11¾oz fusilli (or other short pasta)
- 1 large onion, roughly chopped
- 100g/3½oz chorizo (from a ring), thinly sliced
- 2 large garlic cloves, crushed
- ¼ tsp dried chilli flakes
- ¼ tsp sweet smoked paprika
- 600g/1lb 5oz tinned chopped tomatoes (1½ tins)
- splash white wine (optional)
- 2 tbsp double cream
- 250g/9oz mozzarella
- sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200C/180C Fan/Gas 6.
2. Bring a saucepan of salted water to the boil and add the chicken. Reduce the heat to medium-low and gently poach the chicken for 10–15 minutes, or until just cooked through. Remove from the pan with a slotted spoon and set aside to cool.
3. Bring a clean saucepan of salted water to the boil and add the pasta. Cook for just 10 minutes, or until the shapes are just softened but still have a lot of bite. Drain thoroughly.
4. Add the onion and chorizo to a large casserole (or an ovenproof frying pan) set over a medium-high heat and fry for 7–8 minutes, or until the onion has softened. Add the garlic, followed by the chilli flakes and paprika and cook for a minute until the garlic is aromatic.
5. Add the tomatoes, washing out the residual tomato juices from each tin with the wine (or water if not using wine). Stir the tomatoes into the sauce and leave to simmer for 5 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the cream. Season with salt and pepper.
6. Chop the cooked chicken breasts into bite-sized chunks and stir into the sauce along with the pasta.
7. Tear the mozzarella and scatter over the top of the pasta. Finish with more black pepper and bake in the oven for 30 minutes, covering the dish with foil or a lid about halfway through, once the cheese is brown and bubbling.



Sticky Toffee Pudding

Ingredients

- 100g/3½oz butter, softened, plus extra for greasing
- 175g/6oz light muscovado sugar
- 2 large free-range eggs
- 225g/8oz self-raising flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 3 tbsp black treacle
- 275ml/9½fl oz full-fat milk
- double cream or vanilla ice cream, to serve

For the sauce

- 100g/3½oz butter
- 125g/4½oz light muscovado sugar
- 1 tbsp black treacle
- 300ml/10fl oz pouring double cream
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180C/160C Fan/Gas 4. Butter a wide shallow 1.7-litre/3-pint ovenproof dish.
2. Put the butter, sugar, eggs, flour, baking powder, bicarbonate of soda and treacle into a mixing bowl. Beat using an electric handheld whisk for about 30 seconds or until combined. Pour in the milk gradually and whisk again until smooth.
3. Pour into the prepared dish. Bake for 35–40 minutes or until well risen and springy in the centre.
4. To make the sauce, put all the ingredients into a saucepan and stir over a low heat until the sugar has dissolved and the butter has melted. Bring to the boil, stirring for a minute.
5. To serve, pour half the sauce over the pudding in the baking dish. Serve with the cream or ice cream.

Dunstable Downs

Nature's Open Invitation

Just a short drive from anywhere in Bedfordshire, Dunstable Downs offers one of the most breathtaking landscapes in the county.

As part of the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Downs are a haven of fresh air, open skies, and sweeping views across the countryside.

For those who enjoy walking, the gentle chalk hills provide paths

for all abilities, from short strolls to longer rambles. Benches are dotted along the routes, giving plenty of opportunities to rest and take in the scenery. For the more adventurous, the Downs are famous for kite flying, gliding, and outdoor activities that make full use of the open space. But perhaps the greatest pleasure

of Dunstable Downs is its sense of peace. Standing at the highest point in Bedfordshire, you can feel far removed from the busyness of daily life. The National Trust Visitor Centre provides a welcoming base with refreshments, accessible facilities, and information about the natural environment.

Whether it's a bracing winter walk or a gentle spring picnic, Dunstable Downs is a reminder of how lucky we are to have such natural beauty so close to home. It's nature's open invitation – and well worth accepting.

Did you know?

At nearly 800 feet above sea level, Dunstable Downs is the highest point in Bedfordshire. On a clear day, the views stretch as far as Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire, and even into Oxfordshire.

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Charlie Chuckles



I gave my handyman a to do list, but he only did jobs 1, 3 and 5. Turns out he only does odd jobs.

Q. Where do rainbows go when they've been bad?
A. To prism, so they have time to reflect on what they done.

Knock, knock!
Who's there?
Annie.
Annie who?
Annie thing you can do, I can do better.

Mother's Day. Two children ordered their mother to stay in bed one Mother's Day morning. As she lay there looking forward to breakfast in bed, the smell of bacon floated up from the kitchen. But after a good long wait she finally went downstairs to investigate. She found them both sitting at the table eating bacon and eggs. "As a surprise for Mother's Day," one explained, "we decided to cook our own breakfast."

A man takes his sick Chihuahua to the veterinarian. They're immediately taken back to a room. Soon, a Labrador walks in, sniffs the Chihuahua for 10 minutes and leaves. Then a cat comes in, stares at the Chihuahua for 10 minutes and leaves. Finally, the vet comes in, prescribes some medicine and hands the man a £250 bill. "This must be a mistake," the man says. "I've been here only 20 minutes!"

An elderly man called Keith. Misaid his set of false teeth. They'd been laid on a chair. He'd forgot they were there. Sat down, and was bitten beneath.

Q. What do you call a magic dog?
A. A Labracadabrador

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