ENGAGE

A guide to living well in Buckinghamshire

Age UK Buckinghamshire in partnership with Buckinghamshire Council

Issue One

Winter 2026



Buckinghamshire Council est. 2020

Buckinghamshire age UK Let's change how we age

AGE FRIENDLY BUCKS

Please read me and keep for reference.

We can all age better



Age UK Buckinghamshire is an independent, local charity focused on helping older Bucks residents age better, tackling the challenges of ageing and celebrating the contribution older people make to our communities.

Over the past year or so, we've worked in the community to listen and hear your thoughts on what barriers, challenges and opportunities there are for older people, and this publication is a response to some of what we heard. You told us accessing information can be a challenge, from finding out what's on, to accessing services and managing digital platforms and tech. No doubt our first edition of 'Eng*age*' (in hard copy and online) will hit some marks and miss others, but we welcome your feedback for future editions.

We can all age better, and some of us have more challenges to tackle than others, but what we hope you'll find reading through this guide, are hints, tips and stories that help you consider ways to age better. Our starting point are the Five Pillars of Ageing Well, developed by the Open University, from moving more to improve our health and wellbeing, to nutrition, what we drink, who we talk to and how we keep our minds active.

I hope you find the guide useful and please do share feedback.

Mark Russell
CEO Age UK Buckinghamshire

The five pillars of ageing well:

MOVE
Move your body every day to stay strong and independent.

EAT
Enjoy a balanced diet to fuel your body and mind.

DRINK
Drink plenty of water to stay healthy and feel your best.

CONNECT
Stay connected with family, friends and your community.

THINK
Learn something new to keep your mind active.

Have a story to share, an idea for a future edition or something happening in your community?

Get in touch today! We'll need submissions for the April Eng*age* by **27 Jan 2027**.

01296 388051
agefriendly@ageukbucks.org
Age UK Buckinghamshire, 145 Meadowcroft, Aylesbury, HP19 9HH

Visit **www.ageuk.org.uk/buckinghamshire** or scan the above QR code to read Eng*age* online.

Staying connected

Anyone can feel lonely or isolated, no matter their age. Loneliness can have a serious impact on both physical and mental health, increasing the risk of depression, inactivity, and long-term health conditions. Staying connected through family, friends, neighbours, community groups, or volunteering can make a real difference to wellbeing.

Coffee, Cake and Company

Age UK Buckinghamshire runs monthly 'Coffee, Cake and Company' community meet-ups at various locations. These combine a chance to chat over refreshments and hear from a variety of guest speakers - and everyone is welcome!

Quarrendon and Meadowcroft Community Centre, Meadowcroft, Aylesbury, HP19 9HH
First Wednesday of every month
10:30am – 12:30pm

7th October, 4th November, 2nd December, 6th January, 3rd February, 3rd March

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The Woodlands, Butte Furlong Haddenham, HP17 8JE
Third Wednesday of every month
10:30am – 12:30pm

21st October, 18th November, 16th December, 20th January, 17th February, 17th March

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Southcourt, Aylesbury Thistle Court, Plym Close Aylesbury, HP21 8TD,
Second Monday of every month
10:30am – 12:30pm

12th October, 9th November, 14th December

Look out for more Coffee, Cake and Company venues coming soon!

Did you know

that loneliness can be very harmful to our health? Some studies suggest that its impact can be as harmful as smoking ***15 cigarettes a day.***

Bucks Older People's Action Group

Bucks Older People's Action Group (BOPAG) is a Buckinghamshire charity promoting positive ageing and providing information, advice and opportunities through its free HOOT Magazine, public meetings and website.

BOPAG's free bi-monthly public meetings are held at Christ the Servant King Church meeting hall in Cressex, High Wycombe, and feature informative speakers, refreshments and local updates.

To find out more, receive Hoot Magazine or attend a meeting, visit: **www.bopag.org.uk** email **info@bopag.org.uk** or call **07980 042 890**.

Connections in the Community, BOPAG's annual free event for over-60s, takes place at Amersham Free Church on 29th October, 10.30am–1pm. This year's event focuses on Amersham and Chesham, showcasing local clubs, activities, support groups and services. Visitors can enjoy free health checks, refreshments, goodie bags, expert talks and more than 35 exhibitors. **Age UK Buckinghamshire will also be there!**

Chatty Cafés are growing across Bucks!

Volunteers needed

Great Missenden and Winslow Libraries are looking for volunteers to support their Chatty Cafés by setting up and hosting Chatter and Natter tables. These are friendly open-to-all conversation tables where anyone can sit, chat and feel part of their community.



If you are interested, please contact:

Great Missenden Library Chatty Café
Carol Holloway on **01494 586865**

Winslow Library Chatty Café
Nicola Smith on **01296 383588**

To find out about a Table Volunteering role, visit: **https://bit.ly/4ym5RDF**. To find out about your nearest Chatty Café, visit: **https://bit.ly/4rX0AQV**

For more information email: **mariam.watling@buckinghamshire.gov.uk** or phone: **01296 382391**

See page 11 for information on the exciting volunteering opportunities with Age UK Bucks!

Do you find it difficult to get out and about in Buckinghamshire?

We know transport links can be a challenge for reaching activities and clubs. Being able to get out helps people to stay independent, connected and involved in their communities.

Bus passes

Did you know that you qualify for a free bus pass when you reach state pension age?

To apply you'll need:

- an email address (if you are applying online)
- your National Insurance Number
- a passport-style photograph

Your bus pass is valid on eligible local bus services **anywhere in England (please check local area for specific timings)**.

Find out more by contacting the Bus pass team **buspasses@buckinghamshire.gov.uk**

If you don't have an email address contact Buckinghamshire Council on **0300 131 6000** for advice.

Get thinking!

Our brain, like muscles really, works better the more it gets stimulated. By treating your brain like a muscle, you will help keep it active to support memory, concentration and wellbeing, while also providing enjoyment and relaxation.

You could:

- Read a book, magazine or newspaper – maybe at your local library
- Do a crossword, puzzle or word search (See our Eng*age* Winter bingo overleaf)
- Watch films, documentaries or TV programmes that interest you
- Learn something new or rediscover a hobby or interest

Libraries: bringing people together

Libraries are much more than places to borrow books. They are welcoming community spaces where people can learn new skills, access information, and connect with others.

The Healthy Libraries Programme helps everyone exercise their brains and stay connected, especially after life changes such as retirement, bereavement, new health conditions, or reduced mobility. They offer coffee mornings and book groups as well as digital support sessions and wellbeing events. To find out more, visit: **https://bit.ly/4AOd9C6** or call Buckinghamshire Council on **0300 131 6000**.

Keep entertained this winter with Calibre Audio

Looking for a good book this winter? For a small charge, Calibre Audio provides audiobooks for people who find it difficult or impossible to read printed text.

Their service is available to people with:

- Dyslexia or other learning difficulties
- Sight loss or blindness
- Conditions that affect dexterity, such as Parkinson's, Arthritis or Motor Neurone Disease
- Brain injuries or cognitive impairments, including stroke

Did you know? Calibre Audio also runs **book groups**, giving people the chance to share their love of reading and connect with others. Contact them to find out more.

Phone: **01296 432 339**
Visit: **www.calibreaudio.org.uk**



Engage Winter bingo

Nine little things to enjoy before spring.

Try something new, connect with others and make the most of winter. Tick them off as you go!
How many can you tick off before April?

BINGO

1. Catch up with someone you haven't seen for a while	**2.** Visit somewhere in Buckinghamshire you've never been	**3.** Check eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment - see page 9!
4. Read a new book or listen to something new (music, podcast, radio station)	**5.** Be active – go for a walk or try an exercise class	**6.** Try a new hobby or revisit an old one
7. Go to a local event or community group	**8.** Do something that makes you laugh (out loud!)	**9.** Spot the first signs of spring / Make plans for something you'd like to do in spring

Got a full house?
We'd love to hear how you got on! Share your bingo stories and ideas with us.

Have you noticed the **Engage Spark** throughout Engage? It highlights articles, ideas and local opportunities that could help you complete your Winter Bingo and inspire you to try something new!

Did you know

Government guidelines say that each week older adults (65 years plus) should aim to accumulate at least 150 minutes (2 and a half hours) of moderate intensity activity that raises your heart rate, building up gradually from current levels.

Let's get moving!

Staying active as we get older helps keep us strong and healthy. Even when cold or wet weather keeps us indoors, small amounts of movement throughout the day can make a difference.

- **Move regularly:** Break up long periods of sitting by standing, stretching or walking around
- **Walk more:** Choose walking over driving for short journeys when you can
- **Stay strong:** Try simple exercises at home, such as wall push-ups or standing up from a chair
- **Keep your balance:** Strength and balance exercises can help you stay steady on your feet

Every bit of activity counts and can have a positive impact on our health as we age.

You're never too old to try something new

After losing his wife, and at the age of 98, Frank, who lives near High Wycombe, was struggling to meet new people. He was introduced to **Age UK Buckinghamshire's** befriending service and soon struck up a great relationship with our volunteer Faisal.



Together they started attending a local breakfast club, where Frank heard about a croquet club looking for new members. He decided to give it a try and hasn't looked back since.

"I took to it like a duck to water," and Frank now plays regularly, has made new friends, and even practises in his garden with a homemade croquet mallet – which is a little heavier than rules allow. 😊

Sometimes that first step to make new friends and connections can lead to something special, and Frank's story shows how one new connection can lead to new friendships, hobbies and new found confidence.

move together
Buckinghamshire

Move Together Bucks helps people aged 50+ become more active, whether you're just starting out, returning to activity or looking to build your confidence. You'll receive personalised support to set goals and find local activities that work for you.

You can refer yourself or someone else through the Joy referral platform **https://bit.ly/4yp0Ytw**

For more information email: **MTB@aitc.org.uk** or call **07949 455241**.



Keeping warm and well this winter

Keeping warm in winter is especially important as we get older, as cold weather and seasonal illnesses can affect us more than they once did.

As we age, our bodies can find it harder to stay warm because we lose muscle mass and become less efficient at regulating body temperature. Blood flow to our brains also drops more for older people in lower temperatures.

Did you know

Cold temperatures can affect more than just our physical health. Research suggests that colder weather may also impact memory, concentration, and reaction times in older adults.

Top tips for keeping warm and well

- **Keep warm:** Heat the rooms you use most to at least **18°C**
- **Layer up:** Wear several thin layers rather than one thick one
- **Keep moving:** Get up and move around regularly
- **Eat and drink well:** Have regular meals and warm drinks
- **Stay protected:** Keep up to date with vaccinations, including flu and COVID-19 if eligible
- **Keep in touch:** Check in with friends, neighbours and family during cold weather

Help with food, fuel (gas and electric) and bills

Buckinghamshire Council's **Helping Hand Crisis Payment scheme** may be able to provide support if someone you know is facing financial hardship due to an unexpected expense or sudden loss of income.

Councillor Steve Bowles, Cabinet Member for Communities at Buckinghamshire Council said: "Please keep warm over this winter. The Helping Hand team may be able to help if you are struggling to heat your home because you are worried about paying your bills."

A crisis payment may be available if someone:

- Has experienced a financial shock, such as an unexpected expense or a drop in income that has put pressure on their budget.
- Is at risk of a financial crisis and a one-off payment could help them maintain control of their finances.

Please note that crisis payments are intended to provide short-term support and are not designed to help with ongoing financial pressures.

Who can apply?

To qualify you must:

- Live in Buckinghamshire.
- Be part of a low-income household with limited savings, where income does not cover essential living costs.
- Be experiencing a sudden, unexpected expense or reduction in income that is causing immediate hardship.

Apply online: **bit.ly/4yoMz0E**
Or call: **01296 531 151**

For more information from Buckinghamshire Council about cost-of-living support, visit: **www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/cost-of-living/**

Winter Fuel Payment: could you be eligible? ✨

As energy costs continue to be a concern for many households, the **Winter Fuel Payment** can provide valuable support to help older people with their heating costs during the colder months. If you believe you are eligible but do not receive a letter, you should check whether you need to make a claim.

Contact the Winter Fuel Payment Centre

Telephone: **0800 731 0160**

Relay UK (for people who cannot hear or speak on the phone): 18001 then 0800 731 0160

Visit: **https://bit.ly/4xQD7Sq**

Did you know

*In Buckinghamshire, thousands of people could be missing out **Housing Benefit** and **Carer's Allowance**. More than 3,500 people may also be eligible for **Pension Credit** but are not currently claiming it.*

Buckinghamshire age UK
Let's change how we age

Contact our Welfare Benefits Service at Age UK Buckinghamshire if you need help checking your eligibility for and applying for benefits on **01296 431911** or email **age@ageukbucks.org.uk**

Staying well this winter: vaccination support in Bucks

We spoke to **Louisa Pearson, Community Engagement Lead for the Vaccine Team at Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust** about the importance of staying well during the winter months. Louisa has been in her job for three years and she is passionate about letting people know how to find out about the vaccinations that are available in Buckinghamshire. She also told us about all the benefits of vaccinations for older people and shared how incredibly rewarding she finds her work.

Louisa and her friendly team run vaccination clinics in local community venues, including village halls and faith centres, making it easier for people to access vaccines that help protect both themselves and those around them.

"What's really nice about my job is meeting lots of people and chatting to them about their health and wellbeing. As well as offering vaccines we can sometimes offer support to people who might be bereaved or feel lonely or pick up on general health issues before they become serious, such as very high or low blood pressure."

Vaccinations available

The team offers the following vaccinations for eligible individuals: COVID-19, Flu, RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) and Shingles (currently via bookings only, at Stoke Mandeville Hospital)

Check your eligibility and book an appointment

To find out whether you are eligible for a vaccination, you can call the National Booking Service on **119**.



Louisa at Health on the High Street, Aylesbury

Spotlight on Age Better Bucks: a NEW service from Age UK Buckinghamshire

Would Age Better Bucks benefit you?

Age Better Bucks from Age UK Buckinghamshire, is a free service helping older adults across Buckinghamshire facing a change in circumstances to stay independent, connected, and supported.

The service offers one-to-one support from a Community Support Connector. They'll visit you at home or chat over the phone, to discuss what's important to you, and help create a simple six-week plan tailored to your needs. This could include finding local activities, accessing information, or building confidence to get out and about. **Know someone who might benefit?**

Call: 01296 846099 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm) email: **agebetter@ageukbucks.org.uk**

Building confidence and reconnecting

Stan (not his real name) was referred to Age Better Bucks because he felt anxious about leaving his flat and wanted to become more independent.

Working with his Community Support Connector, Alexia, he was introduced to local opportunities, including a snooker club and community café, helping him to meet new people and feel more connected. He also received support to achieve personal goals, such as placing his first telephone food shopping order and contacting his GP.

Stan was signposted to additional local services for ongoing support. With encouragement and practical advice, he took positive steps towards greater confidence, independence, and community involvement.

> *"I can't believe how much my life has changed in a year. It's all thanks to the help I received from Age UK Buckinghamshire."*

From finding support to supporting others

After some big changes in his life, Jeremy began to feel lonely. Ongoing pain and reduced mobility also made it harder for him to get out and about.



He was referred to Age UK Buckinghamshire, where he received one-to-one support to help him find activities and opportunities in his local community and this made a real difference to Jeremy's life. Wanting to help others, he completed volunteer training with Age UK Buckinghamshire and now he volunteers to support people who may be facing some of the same challenges he once experienced.

Just like Jeremy, you could use your time and experience to make a difference in someone else's life.

How you can support older people in Buckinghamshire

Inspired by the stories in this magazine? Why not volunteer with us?

Volunteering is a great way to meet new people, stay connected and make a difference to older people in your community. And there's a volunteering role for everyone!

Our volunteers support us in many ways. Some work directly with older people through our new Age Better Bucks service (see page 10), befriending, community support and other services. Others help at fundraising events, talk to members of the public, or provide essential behind-the-scenes administrative support.

Whatever your skills, interests or experience, you could make a real difference. If you have some time to spare, we'd love to hear from you.

Help shape an Age Friendly Buckinghamshire

We are also looking for people who would like to join our Age UK Bucks Resident Board. If you live in Buckinghamshire, this is an opportunity to share your views and experiences on the issues that affect older people, help us make sure the voices of local residents are heard, and help shape our work and future projects.

By getting involved, you can help us work towards making Buckinghamshire a great place to grow older and an Age Friendly community for everyone.

Find out more about volunteering with us!

Call: **01296 431911**
Visit: **https://www.ageuk.org.uk/buckinghamshire/get-involved/volunteer/**
Email: **volunteers@ageukbucks.org.uk**



Pat and her volunteer Befriender Betty

Have we helped you or someone you know?

We'd love to hear about the difference our support has made. Your story could inspire others, and you may even feature in a future edition of Eng*age*!

Help us be there for older people in Buckinghamshire. Your support can help us:

- Answer calls from older people needing information, advice and reassurance
- Provide befriending calls to people who may be lonely or isolated
- Support someone home from hospital, helping them settle back in safely
- Provide welfare benefits advice to housebound older people, helping them claim what they are entitled to

Every donation, however big or small, can make a real difference to older people across Buckinghamshire.

Please donate here if you can
https://bit.ly/4z5ulRH

We are very grateful for your support.

Useful Phone Numbers

Age UK Silver Line Helpline:
0800 4 70 80 90

Age UK Buckinghamshire
General Enquiries, Information and Advice
01296 431911

Buckinghamshire Council
0300 131 6000

Buckinghamshire Domestic Abuse Service
01296 437777

Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards
0300 123 2329
07860 053465
Textphone (via Text Relay): 18001 0808 223 1133

Bucks Integrated Sensory Service
01296 479 970
SMS 07918 904 664
www.bucksvision.co.uk/biss

Bucks Older People's Action Group (BOPAG)
07980 042 890
info@bopag.org.uk

Buckinghamshire Libraries
0300 131 6000
If you can't hear or speak on the phone we provide a text relay service: 18001 0300 131 6000

Bus Pass Enquiries
0300 131 6000

Citizens Advice Buckinghamshire
Advice Line (Freephone)
0808 278 7938

Community Transport Hub
www.communityimpactbucks.org.uk bucks-residents/community-transport-hub
Support for people who have difficulty using public transport due to age, illness or disability
0800 085 8480
01844 348834

Helping Hand (Buckinghamshire Council)
01296 531 151

NHS (Non-Emergency)
111

Police (Non-Emergency)
101

Shopmobility (Aylesbury)
01296 336725

Talking Therapies
01865 901600

Vaccinations National Booking Service
119

Winter Fuel Payment
0800 731 0160

Age UK Buckinghamshire, 145 Meadowcroft, Aylesbury, HP19 9HH
Tel: **01296 431911** Website: **www.ageuk.org.uk/buckinghamshire**

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