

Care & Support Briefing

This briefing explores older carers and the care of older people. It describes the prevalence and experience of older carers, and explores the provision of home and residential care to the older population.

Older Carers

It is difficult to get information on informal carers. Most of the following information is derived from the 2001 census, so current figures would be greater, and much of it from England and Wales only.

Around 6 million people provide unpaid care in the UK.¹ 70% of those people cared for are aged 65 or over.² It is estimated that the work of voluntary carers saves the state a total of £87 billion in social services spending per year – equivalent to £15,260 per year for every carer.³ This figure is nearly as high as the estimated net revenue expenditure of the NHS in 2008-09, which was £90.94 billion.⁴

There are almost 1 million carers in England and Wales aged 65 and over. 16% of those aged 65-74 and 13% of those aged 75+ are currently providing care to someone. Carers over the age of 65 make up 25% of all carers. 5% of people aged 85+ provide unpaid care⁵, which equates to 40,640 carers aged 85 and over, and 7,534 aged 90 and over.⁶

Among carers aged 65+, 42% are providing less than 20 hours of care per week, while 57% provide more than 20 hours of care per week.⁷ 88% care for only one person, while 9% care for 2 people, and 3% care for 3 or more people. 54% of carers aged 65+ are the sole carer of the person they care for. 25% of carers aged 75-plus provide care for 50 or more hours per week, as opposed to 13% of all carers aged 16-plus.⁸ The proportion of carers providing 50 or more hours of care per week increased with age in England and Wales: 21% of all carers, one in four carers (24.3%) aged 50-plus, 36.1% of carers aged 60-plus, and around one in two carers (50.5%) aged 85-plus.⁹

58% of carers aged 65+ think that their caring duties will increase over the next 5 years.¹⁰ Yet, only 9% of carers aged 65+ have been offered a Carer's Assessment. 12% of carers aged 65-69 have left employment because of their caring duties.¹¹

19.7% of all carers aged 65-plus in England and Wales described their health as "not good", 27.4% of those 65-plus providing care for 50 or more hours per week describe their health as not good, and 35.2% of those 85-plus providing care for 50 or more hours per week describe their health as not good.¹²

Older carers may experience increased stress and depression as a consequence of their work: it is estimated that between a third and a half (33-52%) of spousal carers of people with dementia suffer from depression.¹³ Further, long hours and intensity of work, frequently without the possibility of breaks, may well result in isolation from social networks and activity.¹⁴

38% of carers aged 65+ report that their caring duties have affected their personal relationships, social life, and/or leisure.¹⁵ Of those reporting such effects, 67% say they have less time for leisure activities, 29% say they are too tired to go out, 31% say they cannot go on holiday, and 21% say their own health has been affected. 20% report less time for friends, 16% less time for a hobby or pastime, and 13% less time for other family members. 18% say they have no social or leisure activities at all. Additionally, 18% report being more aware of the needs of the disabled because of their caring duties.

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While the majority of older carers themselves care for older people, the situations of older people looking after children or people with serious disabilities should not be overlooked. Among families where the mother is in work, 31% of lone parents and 32% of parent couples rely on grandparents for informal child care.¹⁶ Problems that grandparents caring for grandchildren can face include the physical and time demands of younger children (which can be particularly stressful), and emotional demands - grandparent carers report difficulties with combining the roles of guardian and grandparent, and many worry about the emotional demands of caring for teenagers.

Table 1. Types of people who are being cared for by older adults¹⁷

Person who is being cared for (percent of cases)	Age of Carer	
	55-64	65+
A parent	41%	7%
A parent-in-law	12%	3%
A spouse or partner	23%	58%
A child	6%	9%
A friend or neighbour	10%	13%
Another relative	7%	9%

Care of Older People

1,216,000 people in England aged 65+ received social care support during 2008-09 – including home care, day care, equipment and adaptations, and other services. The government estimates that there will be 1.7 million more adults needing care and support (of all types) by 2026.¹⁸

1.5 million people in England have care and support needs that the state does not meet, and of those, 450,000 have some shortfall in their care that is not met by informal carers. Around 6,000 older people with high support needs receive no care at all (from either state or informal sources), and neither do 275,000 older people with less intensive needs.¹⁹ 2% of 65+ (roughly 180,000 in UK) need but do not receive help getting out of the house; 5% of UK (nearly half a million) need but do not receive help with everyday jobs.²⁰

It has been projected that community-based social care in England could cost up to £7.8 billion by 2017 and £11.5 billion by 2026, an increase of about 150%²¹, while CSCI estimate that older people themselves spend a total of £5.9 billion a year on care.²²

Turning to care homes, we see that few residents are under 65: only 1% of those in residential homes, and 7% of those in nursing homes²³. There are an estimated 24,000 younger physically disabled people (under pension age) receiving care in residential settings.²⁴ On this basis it can be said that there are 394,000 older people in residential care.

An estimated 244,185 people with late onset dementia live in care homes, or 36.5% of people with dementia. The proportion of people with dementia who live in care homes rises with age: while 26.6% of people with dementia aged 65-74 live in care homes, the figure is 60.8% for those aged 90 and over.²⁵

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Around 40% of care home residents have clinical depression²⁶, and more than 50% of care home residents have urinary incontinence.²⁷ One study found that 20% of care homes have no regular visit from a GP²⁸, and research suggests that “almost 50% of residents’ time is spent asleep, socially withdrawn or inactive, with only 3% spent on constructive activity”.²⁹ Only 29% of persons over the age of 65 who are cared for report attending any outside activity (such as a day centre or club).³⁰

Private organisations are supplying a greater proportion of care home places in the UK. Since 1996, private supply of residential care has increased from 172,700 to 184,000 places, while local authority supply has nearly more than halved from 77,200 to 35,400.³¹

Of residents in care homes operated by private or voluntary organisations (376,195), 39% pay all their own care costs (146,000); 55% have fees wholly or partially funded by local authorities (206,000), and 6% by the NHS (24,195).³²

On average for 2008, weekly fees for residents in private homes for older people are £464 for residential care, and £664 for nursing care. For single rooms, they are £471 for residential care, and £675 for nursing care. Average fees and fee increases vary by region.³³ On this basis, the average annual fee for a single room in a private residential home is £24,492; a private nursing home, £35,100.

There is some evidence that care homes charge different rates for council placements and for self-funding residents, with the higher rate for self-funders subsidising the rate the council will pay. However, the actual care provided does not differ.³⁴

Perceptions of care & support

25% of adults in England said they worry about having to sell their home to pay for social care in old age, 28% worried about having to spend their children’s inheritance to pay for care in their old age, and 38% worried about being a burden when they got older;³⁵ however, 64% of adults in the UK said they had no plans to put any money aside to fund their social care in older age.³⁶ 47% of homeowners 18+ agree with the statement - “I expect support in my old age.”³⁷

48% of homeowners 18+ say they can’t think of anything worse than moving into a care home. A further 14% say they would be nervous and 9% frightened.³⁸

77% of adults 18+ in the UK expect to be living independently in their own homes into very old age.³⁹ The things they thought would be important in helping them to remain independent at home in old age were (in order):

1. Alarm
2. Assistance round home (grab rails etc.)
3. Someone to talk to regularly
4. Transport
5. Services to keep fit and active
6. Someone to speak up for them
7. Warden (7=)
8. Info and advice housing, health and care (7=)
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- ¹ Office for National Statistics. Based on latest figures – 2001 Census. Accessed 07/10/10 from <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1336>
- ² *Facts about carers*, Carers UK, 2009. Accessed 07/10/10 at <http://www.carersuk.org/Newsandcampaigns/Media/Factsaboutcaring>
- ³ *Valuing Carers – calculating the value of unpaid care*, Carers UK, 2007. Report accessed 07/10/10 from <http://www.carersuk.org/Professionals/ResearchLibrary/Profileofcaring/1201108437>
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- ⁵ *Focus on Older People*, Office for National Statistics, 2004. Accessed 07/10/10 from http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/foop/Olderpeople.pdf
- ⁶ *Census 2001: National Report for England and Wales*, Office for National Statistics, 2003
- ⁷ *NHS Survey of Carers in Households 2009/10*, Health and Social Care Information Centre, 2010
- ⁸ *Family Resources Survey United Kingdom 2007-08*, Department for Works and Pensions (DWP). 2009. Accessed 07/10/10 at http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/frs/2007_08/frs_2007_08_report.pdf
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- ²⁴ *Care of Elderly People UK Market Survey 2008 – Twenty-First Edition*. Laing and Buisson. 2008
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There are almost 1 million carers in England and Wales aged 65 and over. 16% of those aged 65-74 and 13% of those aged 75+ are currently providing care to someone. Carers over the age of 65 make up 25% of all carers. 5% of people aged 85+ provide unpaid care⁵, which equates to 40,640 carers aged 85 and over, and 7,534 aged 90 and over.⁶

Among carers aged 65+, 42% are providing less than 20 hours of care per week, while 57% provide more than 20 hours of care per week.⁷ 88% care for only one person, while 9% care for 2 people, and 3% care for 3 or more people. 54% of carers aged 65+ are the sole carer of the person they care for. 25% of carers aged 75-plus provide care for 50 or more hours per week, as opposed to 13% of all carers aged 16-plus.⁸ The proportion of carers providing 50 or more hours of care per week increased with age in England and Wales: 21% of all carers, one in four carers (24.3%) aged 50-plus, 36.1% of carers aged 60-plus, and around one in two carers (50.5%) aged 85-plus.⁹

58% of carers aged 65+ think that their caring duties will increase over the next 5 years.¹⁰ Yet, only 9% of carers aged 65+ have been offered a Carer's Assessment. 12% of carers aged 65-69 have left employment because of their caring duties.¹¹

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Older carers may experience increased stress and depression as a consequence of their work: it is estimated that between a third and a half (33-52%) of spousal carers of people with dementia suffer from depression.¹³ Further, long hours and intensity of work, frequently without the possibility of breaks, may well result in isolation from social networks and activity.¹⁴

38% of carers aged 65+ report that their caring duties have affected their personal relationships, social life, and/or leisure.¹⁵ Of those reporting such effects, 67% say they have less time for leisure activities, 29% say they are too tired to go out, 31% say they cannot go on holiday, and 21% say their own health has been affected. 20% report less time for friends, 16% less time for a hobby or pastime, and 13% less time for other family members. 18% say they have no social or leisure activities at all. Additionally, 18% report being more aware of the needs of the disabled because of their caring duties.

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While the majority of older carers themselves care for older people, the situations of older people looking after children or people with serious disabilities should not be overlooked. Among families where the mother is in work, 31% of lone parents and 32% of parent couples rely on grandparents for informal child care.¹⁶ Problems that grandparents caring for grandchildren can face include the physical and time demands of younger children (which can be particularly stressful), and emotional demands - grandparent carers report difficulties with combining the roles of guardian and grandparent, and many worry about the emotional demands of caring for teenagers.

Table 1. Types of people who are being cared for by older adults¹⁷

Person who is being cared for (percent of cases)	Age of Carer	
	55-64	65+
A parent	41%	7%
A parent-in-law	12%	3%
A spouse or partner	23%	58%
A child	6%	9%
A friend or neighbour	10%	13%
Another relative	7%	9%

Care of Older People

1,216,000 people in England aged 65+ received social care support during 2008-09 – including home care, day care, equipment and adaptations, and other services. The government estimates that there will be 1.7 million more adults needing care and support (of all types) by 2026.¹⁸

1.5 million people in England have care and support needs that the state does not meet, and of those, 450,000 have some shortfall in their care that is not met by informal carers. Around 6,000 older people with high support needs receive no care at all (from either state or informal sources), and neither do 275,000 older people with less intensive needs.¹⁹ 2% of 65+ (roughly 180,000 in UK) need but do not receive help getting out of the house; 5% of UK (nearly half a million) need but do not receive help with everyday jobs.²⁰

It has been projected that community-based social care in England could cost up to £7.8 billion by 2017 and £11.5 billion by 2026, an increase of about 150%²¹, while CSCI estimate that older people themselves spend a total of £5.9 billion a year on care.²²

Turning to care homes, we see that few residents are under 65: only 1% of those in residential homes, and 7% of those in nursing homes²³. There are an estimated 24,000 younger physically disabled people (under pension age) receiving care in residential settings.²⁴ On this basis it can be said that there are 394,000 older people in residential care.

An estimated 244,185 people with late onset dementia live in care homes, or 36.5% of people with dementia. The proportion of people with dementia who live in care homes rises with age: while 26.6% of people with dementia aged 65-74 live in care homes, the figure is 60.8% for those aged 90 and over.²⁵

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Around 40% of care home residents have clinical depression²⁶, and more than 50% of care home residents have urinary incontinence.²⁷ One study found that 20% of care homes have no regular visit from a GP²⁸, and research suggests that “almost 50% of residents’ time is spent asleep, socially withdrawn or inactive, with only 3% spent on constructive activity”.²⁹ Only 29% of persons over the age of 65 who are cared for report attending any outside activity (such as a day centre or club).³⁰

Private organisations are supplying a greater proportion of care home places in the UK. Since 1996, private supply of residential care has increased from 172,700 to 184,000 places, while local authority supply has nearly more than halved from 77,200 to 35,400.³¹

Of residents in care homes operated by private or voluntary organisations (376,195), 39% pay all their own care costs (146,000); 55% have fees wholly or partially funded by local authorities (206,000), and 6% by the NHS (24,195).³²

On average for 2008, weekly fees for residents in private homes for older people are £464 for residential care, and £664 for nursing care. For single rooms, they are £471 for residential care, and £675 for nursing care. Average fees and fee increases vary by region.³³ On this basis, the average annual fee for a single room in a private residential home is £24,492; a private nursing home, £35,100.

There is some evidence that care homes charge different rates for council placements and for self-funding residents, with the higher rate for self-funders subsidising the rate the council will pay. However, the actual care provided does not differ.³⁴

Perceptions of care & support

25% of adults in England said they worry about having to sell their home to pay for social care in old age, 28% worried about having to spend their children’s inheritance to pay for care in their old age, and 38% worried about being a burden when they got older;³⁵ however, 64% of adults in the UK said they had no plans to put any money aside to fund their social care in older age.³⁶ 47% of homeowners 18+ agree with the statement - “I expect support in my old age.”³⁷

48% of homeowners 18+ say they can’t think of anything worse than moving into a care home. A further 14% say they would be nervous and 9% frightened.³⁸

77% of adults 18+ in the UK expect to be living independently in their own homes into very old age.³⁹ The things they thought would be important in helping them to remain independent at home in old age were (in order):

1. Alarm
2. Assistance round home (grab rails etc.)
3. Someone to talk to regularly
4. Transport
5. Services to keep fit and active
6. Someone to speak up for them
7. Warden (7=)
8. Info and advice housing, health and care (7=)
9. Info and advice finances and benefits

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Care & Support Briefing

This briefing explores older carers and the care of older people. It describes the prevalence and experience of older carers, and explores the provision of home and residential care to the older population.

Older Carers

It is difficult to get information on informal carers. Most of the following information is derived from the 2001 census, so current figures would be greater, and much of it from England and Wales only.

Around 6 million people provide unpaid care in the UK.¹ 70% of those people cared for are aged 65 or over.² It is estimated that the work of voluntary carers saves the state a total of £87 billion in social services spending per year – equivalent to £15,260 per year for every carer.³ This figure is nearly as high as the estimated net revenue expenditure of the NHS in 2008-09, which was £90.94 billion.⁴

There are almost 1 million carers in England and Wales aged 65 and over. 16% of those aged 65-74 and 13% of those aged 75+ are currently providing care to someone. Carers over the age of 65 make up 25% of all carers. 5% of people aged 85+ provide unpaid care⁵, which equates to 40,640 carers aged 85 and over, and 7,534 aged 90 and over.⁶

Among carers aged 65+, 42% are providing less than 20 hours of care per week, while 57% provide more than 20 hours of care per week.⁷ 88% care for only one person, while 9% care for 2 people, and 3% care for 3 or more people. 54% of carers aged 65+ are the sole carer of the person they care for. 25% of carers aged 75-plus provide care for 50 or more hours per week, as opposed to 13% of all carers aged 16-plus.⁸ The proportion of carers providing 50 or more hours of care per week increased with age in England and Wales: 21% of all carers, one in four carers (24.3%) aged 50-plus, 36.1% of carers aged 60-plus, and around one in two carers (50.5%) aged 85-plus.⁹

58% of carers aged 65+ think that their caring duties will increase over the next 5 years.¹⁰ Yet, only 9% of carers aged 65+ have been offered a Carer's Assessment. 12% of carers aged 65-69 have left employment because of their caring duties.¹¹

19.7% of all carers aged 65-plus in England and Wales described their health as "not good", 27.4% of those 65-plus providing care for 50 or more hours per week describe their health as not good, and 35.2% of those 85-plus providing care for 50 or more hours per week describe their health as not good.¹²

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