

# Carers

## (England)

May 2019

**Carers must not be expected to sacrifice their health and quality of life. Society should recognise carers' contribution, and ensure that they are supported to be able to live fulfilling lives whilst continuing in their caring role.**



*“With the right support, my physical health and wellbeing would improve and I would be able to care for many years”*

*Anonymous carer – Carer’s UK State of Caring 2018*

There are 7.6 million carers in the United Kingdom over the age of 16 and a quarter of those who provide family care are aged 65 or over<sup>4</sup>. The Office for National Statistics estimate that unpaid carers provided support worth £59.5 billion in 2016<sup>5</sup> and Carers UK estimate that the total economic value of contribution made by carers in this country is £132 billion<sup>6</sup>.

### Who cares?

A carer is anyone who provides regular, ongoing unpaid assistance to someone who needs help due to illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and who cannot cope without their support<sup>7</sup>. The overwhelming majority of long-term care in England is provided by

### Key statistics

**1 in 4**

Of those who provide family care are age 65+<sup>1</sup>

**3 in 5**

People will be carers at some point in their lives<sup>2</sup>

**69%**

Of older carers say caring has had an adverse effect on their mental health<sup>3</sup>

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informal carers such as friends or family<sup>8</sup>. The number of hours spent caring increases with age, with 28 per cent of people aged 85+ providing care<sup>9</sup>. Women care at greater intensity than men and make up a higher proportion (59 per cent) of family carers<sup>10</sup>.

An ageing population combined with reduced access to public services has meant that more and more older people are finding themselves providing care for friends and family. Between 2010/11 and 2015/16, there was a 16.6 per cent increase in the number of older people who provided care to family and friends<sup>11</sup>.



## What carers do

The reality is that support provided by carers goes well beyond providing personal care and also includes activities such as managing finances, negotiating with health and care services and acting as the person's advocate, particularly if the person lacks mental capacity to make decisions. Carers may continue to play these roles even where a person is receiving help from professional carers.

Many carers do not live with the person they care for, with more than half of those aged 60-69 providing care outside the home<sup>12</sup>. In some cases they may be friends or neighbours rather than relatives providing support. Carers in this situation are often overlooked and may not be included in the person's Carer's Assessment or have access to support services.

## Looking after carers

Caring for a loved one can provide satisfaction and meaning, however the responsibility can prove damaging<sup>13</sup>. Many older people provide care whilst managing their own poor health and wellbeing, with nearly 60 per cent of carers aged 65+ having a long-standing illness or disability<sup>14</sup>. Older carers may be affected by the impact of caring on their mental health with 69 per cent saying it has had an adverse effect<sup>15</sup>, and nearly a third of carers experience feelings of loneliness<sup>16</sup>.

## The cost of caring

It is estimated that the cost to the public purse of people leaving the workforce due to their caring responsibilities is £1.3 billion per year<sup>17</sup>. For those that are able to continue working, Carers UK estimates that the impact of juggling work and caring could carry a productivity cost of £3.5 billion<sup>18</sup>. Despite the financial impact of caring for someone, if family carers were unable

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to do so, the sector would need to hire an extra four million full time care workers, more than two and half times the entire English social care workforce<sup>19</sup>.

## Funding and support for carers

The latest data shows that within the last year 360,310 carers were either supported or assessed by their local authority<sup>20</sup>. This represents a decrease of 7 per cent from the 386,600 carers supported in 2015/16<sup>21</sup>. More than one in seven carers report that they or those they support received fewer care or support services during the previous year<sup>22</sup>. Since 2014/15, there has been a 24 per cent fall in expenditure on supporting carers from £192 million<sup>23</sup> to £145m<sup>24</sup> (although this figure may not capture all spending, particularly if services were provided by third party organisations<sup>25</sup>).



Carers UK found that four in ten (40 per cent) of carers say they haven't had a day off for more than a year<sup>26</sup>. In all but one English region, the number of carers getting respite care reduced over the last two years<sup>27</sup>.

Alongside the offer of respite or other support for carers, there is also financial support from central government in the form of specific benefits, allowances or tax breaks. It is estimated that hundreds of thousands of carers are missing out each year on benefits they are entitled to. When it was last counted, it was estimated that 360,000 carers are missing out on over a billion pounds of Carer's Allowance<sup>28</sup>. Recent research has revealed that 97 per cent of carers do not claim Carer's Credit (which fills in gaps in your National Contributions record) with an estimated 155,000 carers missing out on over £700m of entitlements<sup>29</sup>. Up to 100,000 people are missing out on a 25 per cent council tax discount available if you are living with someone with 'severe mental impairment' such as dementia<sup>30</sup>.

## Government strategy

The Government have published a Carers Action Plan bringing together several workstreams and projects aimed at supporting carers. This included initiatives to support older carers and carers with dementia, an innovation fund to develop 'carer friendly communities' and ensuring that carers are recognised in other government strategies<sup>31</sup>. However, many of the programmes were not new, and the action plan did not include details of further specific funding to support carers. The Government have committed to reviewing the employment rights of carers, including the right to request flexible working and unpaid statutory carers leave<sup>32</sup>.

Built into the action plan is also a commitment for the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that benefits for carers (including Carer's Allowance and Universal Credit) 'meet the needs of carers and support employment for those carers who are able to work'<sup>33</sup>. To be entitled to claim Carer's Allowance (£66.15 from April 2019), a carer must provide care for a minimum of 35 hours. The allowance is therefore paid at £1.89 an hour which is just a quarter of

the 2019/20 National Living Wage of £8.21 an hour. Carer's Allowance is also reduced by any State Pension received, meaning a lot of older carers do not receive any financial support.

Carers are underpinning a care system which has failed to respond to rising levels of demand. Carers in England do so at an equivalent level to those in Spain and Italy<sup>34</sup>, traditionally viewed as doing a better job of looking after older relatives, but without access to the same cash compensation for their time and dedication. There are serious questions as to whether we are reaching the practical limit of informal capacity for caring. Factors such as women's rising participation in the labour market may well mean the supply of unpaid care does not increase to meet demand at a time of reduced access to formal care provision<sup>35</sup>. Public policy needs to recognise the vital role carers play and reward them with specific financial and practical support.

The Age UK Network runs a range of services to support carers including provision of information and advice, help to apply for financial assistance and support for their own physical and mental health.

The Age UK advice line provides support to thousands of carers each year; from help to arrange a Carer's Assessment and how to apply for respite support.

## Public Policy Proposals

- Carers should have a statutory entitlement to the support needed to be able to achieve an acceptable quality of life, defined in terms of mental and physical health and opportunities for social and economic inclusion. Carers should not be expected to sacrifice mental and physical health, or opportunities for employment, education and personal development in order to carry out their caring role
- Councils must meet their legal duty to provide carers' assessments and do more to promote them, particularly if the person they look after is not eligible for local authority funded support. Care plans and needs assessments should not assume that family and friends are able or willing to provide care when allocating resources
- Strategies aimed at promoting the mental and physical health of communities must include measures to promote the health and wellbeing of carers, regardless of their age. All initiatives must have built in indicators for evaluating the success of such policies
- The benefits system should be reformed to ensure all carers have adequate incomes and do not suffer financial hardship as a result of caring and receiving the benefits they are entitled to. This should include financial support for older carers who often receive no financial recognition of their role. Entitlement to the provision of the carer's amount in Universal Credit needs to be understood by carers and benefit advisers and promoted
- Carers should be entitled to claim a credit towards their private pension, so that their own pension is not reduced through caring



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- Carer's Allowance should be increased substantially, in line with changes in Scotland (where carers will receive an additional £221 every 6 months). Earnings rules for Carer's Allowance should be reviewed so they do not serve as a disincentive to employment. There should be a new 'cost of caring' allowance to help with the financial impact of caring for all carers including those over State Pension age
- The Government should introduce a minimum of five days statutory paid carers leave with the option of a further period of unpaid leave, as well as flexible working rights for carers. Employers should support their employees to help balance their caring responsibilities and work
- Proposals for the transformation and future funding of social care should not place increased demands on carers. Respite care is important and should be protected from public spending cuts

## Want to find out more?

Age UK has policy positions on a wide range of issues, covering money matters, health and wellbeing, care and support, housing and communities. There are also some crosscutting themes, such as age equality and human rights, age-friendly government and information and advice.

### Further information

You can read our policy positions here;  
[www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/policypositions/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/our-impact/policy-research/policypositions/)

Individuals can contact us for information or advice here;

[www.ageuk.org.uk/informationadvice/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/informationadvice/) or call us on 0800 169 8787

**Other relevant positions:** *Financial Entitlement, Private Pensions*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Caring-for-Carers.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy\\_file&id=4762](https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy_file&id=4762)

<sup>3</sup> <https://carers.org/key-facts-about-carers-and-people-they-care>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Caring-for-Carers.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/nationalaccounts/satelliteaccounts/articles/householdsatelliteaccounts/2015and2016estimates#focus-on-adult-care>

<sup>6</sup> [file://agepdcpro03.uk.age.local/vdi\\_profiles\\$/Joel.Lewis/Downloads/cuk-valuing-carers-2015-web.pdf](file://agepdcpro03.uk.age.local/vdi_profiles$/Joel.Lewis/Downloads/cuk-valuing-carers-2015-web.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/comm-carers/carers/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/care-support/rb\\_aug18\\_international\\_comparison\\_of\\_social\\_care\\_funding\\_and\\_outcomes.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/care-support/rb_aug18_international_comparison_of_social_care_funding_and_outcomes.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> State of Health and Care of Older People, Age UK 2019 – To be published

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Caring-for-Carers.pdf>

- <sup>11</sup> <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-news/articles/2017/december/older-carers-fill-the-gap/>
- <sup>12</sup> <http://www.smf.co.uk/publications/caring-for-carers/>
- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.apa.org/pi/about/publications/caregivers/faq/positive-aspects.aspx>
- <sup>14</sup> <http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Caring-for-Carers.pdf>
- <sup>15</sup> [https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy\\_file&id=5260](https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy_file&id=5260)
- <sup>16</sup> <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/latest-news/articles/2017/december/older-carers-fill-the-gap/>
- <sup>17</sup> [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48620/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-Helping\\_carers\\_to\\_stay\\_in\\_employment\\_would\\_save\\_the\\_Exchequer\\_over\\_a\\_billion\\_pounds\\_a\\_year.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/48620/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-Helping_carers_to_stay_in_employment_would_save_the_Exchequer_over_a_billion_pounds_a_year.pdf)
- <sup>18</sup> [https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy\\_file&id=4886](https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy_file&id=4886)
- <sup>19</sup> <http://www.smf.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Caring-for-Carers.pdf>
- <sup>20</sup> <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/35/6A192B/Activity%20and%20Finance%20Report%20201718.pdf>
- <sup>21</sup> <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/35/6A192B/Activity%20and%20Finance%20Report%20201718.pdf>
- <sup>22</sup> <https://www.carersuk.org/images/Downloads/SoC2018/State-of-Caring-report-2018.pdf>
- <sup>23</sup> <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/publicationimport/pub19xxx/pub19165/pss-exp-eng-14-15-fin-det-nat-exp.xlsx>
- <sup>24</sup> <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/4B/4B8B7D/ASCFR%20Reference%20Tables%20%28Net%20Current%20Expenditure%29%20v3.xlsx>
- <sup>25</sup> <https://files.digital.nhs.uk/2C/95159C/Activity%20and%20Finance%20Data%20Quality%20Statement.pdf>
- <sup>26</sup> [https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy\\_file&id=6096](https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy_file&id=6096)
- <sup>27</sup> <https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/press-releases/carers-uk-responds-to-the-adult-social-care-activity-and-finance-report-2017-18>
- <sup>28</sup> [https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy\\_file&id=5479](https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library?task=download&file=policy_file&id=5479)
- <sup>29</sup> <https://www.royallondon.com/about/media/news/2018/january/new-foi-reply-reveals-97-of-eligible-carers-do-not-claim-carers-credit-royal-london/>
- <sup>30</sup> [https://images6.moneysavingexpert.com/images/documents/SMI\\_report-2017\\_final-interactive.pdf?\\_ga=2.72666710.410514468.1536070919-413055568.1523961023](https://images6.moneysavingexpert.com/images/documents/SMI_report-2017_final-interactive.pdf?_ga=2.72666710.410514468.1536070919-413055568.1523961023)
- <sup>31</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/713781/carers-action-plan-2018-2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/713781/carers-action-plan-2018-2020.pdf)
- <sup>32</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/1463/146302.htm>
- <sup>33</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/713781/carers-action-plan-2018-2020.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/713781/carers-action-plan-2018-2020.pdf)
- <sup>34</sup> [https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/care-support/rb\\_aug18\\_-\\_international\\_comparison\\_of\\_social\\_care\\_funding\\_and\\_outcomes.pdf](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/care-support/rb_aug18_-_international_comparison_of_social_care_funding_and_outcomes.pdf)
- <sup>35</sup> State of Health and Care of Older People, Age UK 2019 – To be published