

Carers Week 2023 - 5-11 June 2023

Facts about unpaid carers nationally and in the East of England

Caring affects us all

While many people are unaware of the huge number of people who are unpaid carers, caring is something that will impact most of us in our lives.

Behind each of the numbers we give here is the personal story of someone caring for a loved one due to their own personal needs.

You can see:

- Most of us will care for a family member or friend.
- Caring is widespread here in the East of England
- Caring affects your health and wellbeing.
- Caring affects your finances.
- Unpaid carers are hidden.

Most of us will care for a family member or friend

- No one plans to become an unpaid carer.
- Yet, more than three in five of us will become an unpaid carer at some point in our life.¹
- We will look after a family member or friend who needs our help because of illness, disability, poor mental health or addiction.
- Unpaid carers can be any age, including children: 'young carers' who help support and care for a family member with care needs.
- We may care for a parent, partner, husband, wife, child (including when they are an adult), friend or other relative.
- If we ourselves do not become an unpaid carer, we are likely to be cared for, or have someone close to us be an unpaid carer / cared for.
- The economic value of the contributions made by carers in England and Wales is **£162 billion** a year².

¹ Will I care? – Carers UK – November 2019

² Valuing Carers research report – Carers UK May 2023

- **This is the equivalent of a second NHS given in care by unpaid carers**

If all unpaid carers decided they could no longer care for their family member/friend, the health and social care systems in the UK would collapse overnight.

The people who care for the most hours every week are also the oldest. So the biggest responsibility for unpaid caring is borne by the most elderly people in our communities³

Of course, older people are also more likely to have their own health problems to contend with

Most unpaid carers go unnoticed behind closed doors in our cities, towns and villages despite the immense sacrifices they make to look after someone who needs help.

Caring is widespread here in the East of England

Across Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Norfolk the 2021 Census recorded just over 150,000 unpaid carers. That's the size of the entire population of the city of Cambridge.⁴

Caring in Cambridgeshire

- Cambridgeshire has **52,236** unpaid carers⁵
 - Over 19,000 people (19,054) are caring for over 35 hours per week -the equivalent to a full time job.
- Over 14,000 unpaid carers in Cambridgeshire care for over 50 hours a week. That's a minimum of 7 hours a day, every day. And often caring happens as much at night as during the daytime.

Caring in Peterborough

- Peterborough has **16,244** unpaid carers*
 - Almost half of these people (44% or 7,219) are caring for over 35 hours per week – the equivalent to a full time job.

³ Census 2021

⁴ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000008/>

⁵ Census 2021

- Over 5,000 unpaid carers in Peterborough care for over 50 hours a week. That's a minimum of 7 hours a day, every day. And often caring happens as much at night as during the daytime.

Caring in Norfolk

- Norfolk has **81,535** unpaid carers*
 - Over 34,000 of these people are caring for over 35 hours per week – the equivalent to a full time job.
- Almost 26,000 unpaid carers in Norfolk care for over 50 hours a week. That's a minimum of 7 hours a day, every day. And often caring happens as much at night as during the daytime.

Caring affects your health and wellbeing

Being an unpaid carer often has a detrimental effect upon your own health and wellbeing. It can lead to⁶:

- Poor physical and mental health (A fifth of carers said their physical health was bad or very bad (21%) and 30% said their mental health was bad or very bad).
- Loneliness (Over a quarter of carers (29%) said they felt lonely often or always.)
- Tiredness, exhaustion and burnout (Few are taking a break from caring, resulting in tiredness and, in some cases, exhaustion and burn-out.)

Caring affects your finances

Being an unpaid carer often has a detrimental effect on your ability to cope financially:

- A quarter of unpaid carers (25%) said they were cutting back on essentials such as food or heating⁷.
- Almost two-thirds (65%) of unpaid carers have given up opportunities at work because of caring⁸

⁶ Carers UK State of Caring 2022 – November 2022

⁷ Carers UK State of Caring 2022 – November 2022

⁸ Carers UK State of Caring 2022 – November 2022

- 600 people give up work every day because of the demands of their caring role⁹
- Over three-quarters (77%) said that the rising cost of living is one of the main challenges they will face over the coming year.¹⁰

Unpaid carers are hidden

Undervalued, unrecognised, ignored! And even unpaid carers themselves struggle to see themselves as a 'carer' rather than a son, daughter, partner, wife or husband.

- Over half (51%) of unpaid carers took over a year to recognise their caring role¹¹
- Over 70% of carers stated that seeing themselves primarily as a family member or friend was a barrier to identifying themselves as an unpaid carer¹²
- When someone doesn't see themselves as an unpaid carer, they are unlikely to seek support. Many struggle on alone and sadly all too often reach crisis point.
- Nearly 7 out of 10 (69%) of the general public feel that the role of unpaid carers is not well valued by the general public.¹³

Carers speak out

Over the past year unpaid carers across Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Norfolk have been telling us about the challenges of caring, using our ['Carers Speak Out'](#) platform.

Here are just a few of their messages:

"The difficult part of being a carer is the relentlessness of it. If I'm having a bad day or feel unwell, nobody else makes the dinner or does the cleaning, and I can't have a 'night off' or even an early night (unless my husband wants one too) as you can guarantee it will be a toileting or otherwise medically complicated night just when I could really do with

⁹ Carers UK, Juggling Work and Care

¹⁰ Carers UK State of Caring 2022 – November 2022

¹¹ Carers UK State of Caring 2022 – November 2022

¹² Carers UK State of Caring 2022 – November 2022

¹³ Making caring Visible Valued and Supported Carers Week 2022

a rest! Other couples share everyday chores and responsibilities; for me it's just me, all the time." (Jen)

"I have been a carer now for 2 years looking after my mum who has Progressive Supranuclear Palsy. It has been so tough and very tiring, All too often I can have 15 -16 hour day as I hold down a full time job too, you constantly worry if they are ok, Very rarely do you get asked how you are and if you do talk to people about it, unless you have been in that situation they don't get what it's like to be a carer. We do get left behind and seem forgotten, we do this as we care about our loved ones." (Roy)

"We're not in the 1950's anymore! Many people juggle caring with work, we don't live 'round the corner' from our loved ones, caring is hard physically and mentally, not just popping in for a cuppa and a chat. We get isolated, depressed, ill, out of touch with friends and family, stressed from arguing with authorities who don't understand and have no resources. We lose our quality of life as much as the person we care for. We become carers in an instant, it doesn't end until our loved one dies" (Gil)

Finding out more

If you want to learn more, please contact andy.barber@caringtogether.org or see more resources at caringtogether.org/professionals/media-research-and-policy/

You can also learn more about the impact of caring in our Carers speak out report. This can be downloaded at caringtogether.org/CarersSpeakOut2022