

# Building a carer friendly society

Research summary for Carers Week 2017



Carers Week is an annual awareness campaign which takes place to celebrate and recognise the vital contribution made by the UK's 6.5 million unpaid carers<sup>1</sup>.


<sup>1</sup> Census 2011

# Contents


Key findings	2
Those who care unpaid aren't sufficiently valued by society	3
Public underestimate how likely they are to take on the role of a carer	4
Public's main worries about becoming a carer	5
Where would the public seek support with a caring role?	6
Building a carer friendly society	7
Key facts about carers	7


## Key findings

Carers Week commissioned public polling exploring public perceptions of how unpaid care is valued by society and their expectations of becoming a carer. The poll also looked at what would worry people if they took on a caring role and where they would go for support.

 The vast majority of the UK public feel those caring unpaid aren't sufficiently valued by society.

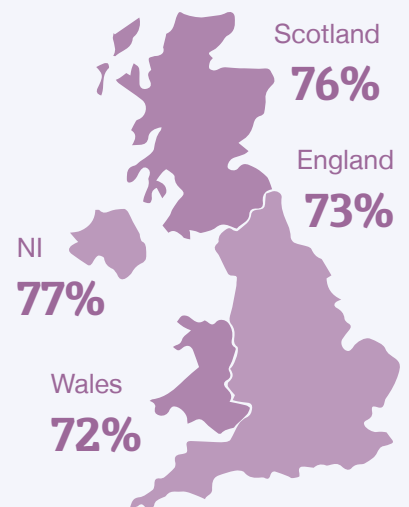
More than 7 in 10 (74%) of the UK public feel carers are not sufficiently valued by society for the support they provide and this figure rises to 8 in 10 (83%) of those who have previous experience of caring themselves but don't currently.

 The public are not prepared for a future caring role. Half of respondents with no experience of caring (50%) think it's unlikely they would ever become a carer.

 When asked to choose their top three, worries about becoming a carer were affordability of care and the impact on their finances (46%) and coping with the stress of caring (43%).

# 74%

of the UK public feel unpaid carers are not valued by society



# 50%

with no experience of caring think it's unlikely they would ever become a carer



# 46%

worry about the affordability of care and the impact on their finances



# 43%

worry about coping with the stress of caring



## Those who care unpaid aren't sufficiently valued by society

More than 7 in 10 (74%) of the UK public feel carers are not sufficiently valued by society for the support they provide.



# 74%

of the UK public feel carers are not sufficiently valued by society.



Only

# 10%

of the public feel that carers are sufficiently valued.

3

Only 10% of the public feel that carers are sufficiently valued with the same number saying they are highly valued. Nearly a third (29%) of the public feels carers are poorly valued by society.

Women are more likely to think that carers are not sufficiently valued (78%) compared with men (69%).

Younger people, aged 16–24, who are generally less likely to have experience of caring, or have peers who are carers, were much less likely (16%) to say that carers are poorly valued compared to those aged 55–64 (38%) who are in the age group generally most associated with providing unpaid care.

Those who have had a caring role in the past but aren't currently are the most likely to say that carers are not sufficiently valued (83%).



# 83%

of those who have had a caring role in the past say that carers are not sufficiently valued.



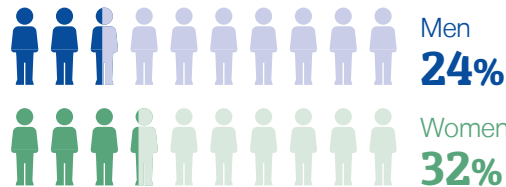
## Public underestimate how likely they are to take on the role of a carer

The public are not prepared for a future caring role: Half of respondents with no experience of caring (50%) think it's unlikely they would ever become a carer.

1 in 8 adults<sup>2</sup> are currently providing unpaid care and over 2 million people each year take on a caring role for a loved one or friend<sup>3</sup>.

Just over a quarter (26%) of people who have no experience of caring think it is likely that they will take on the role of a carer in the future. Of those who are not currently carers there is a marked difference between male and female expectations with 24% of men thinking it's likely they will become a carer compared with 32% of women.

Only **26%** of people with no experience of caring think it's likely they will take on the role of a carer



# 50%

of respondents with no experience of caring think it's unlikely they would ever become a carer.

4

Only 4% of those who are not currently carers think it is 'very likely' that they will become a carer in the future.

Those in the age groups generally most associated with caring – those aged 45–64 years old – but do not currently care are only slightly more likely (33%) to think they are likely to become carers in the future. One in five people aged 50–64 are carers<sup>4</sup>.

Perhaps unsurprisingly only 17% of 16–24 year olds who are not currently carers think it's likely that they will become carers at some point in their lives. Those workers who are not currently carers are more likely to think that they will become carers (33%) than those retired (23%) or unemployed (24%).

Also unsurprisingly, those who are married or in a civil partnership and not current carers are more likely than the UK average to feel it is likely they will become a carer, though this figure remains low. The same proportion of people who are married or in civil partnerships as the wider public (4%) think it's very likely they will become a carer.

71% of those 75 years old and over who are not currently carers think it's unlikely they will become carers. This is despite the 35% increase in carers aged over 65 years in just ten years, compared to an 11% rise in the number of all carers.<sup>5</sup>

Only

# 4%



of the public think it's 'very' likely that they will become a carer.

<sup>2</sup> Census 2011

<sup>3</sup> Carers UK (2014) *Need to know: Transitions in and out of caring: the information challenge*

<sup>4,5</sup> Census 2011



## Public's main worries about becoming a carer

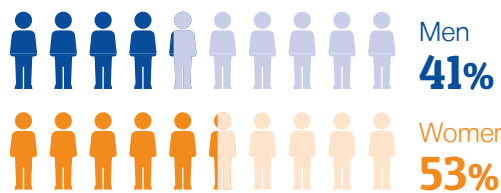
We asked people with no experience of providing care what three things would worry them most about taking on becoming a carer for a family member or close friend who is frail or facing long-term illness or disability.

**Top worries about becoming a carer are being able to cope financially e.g. afford the care services or equipment and home adaptations required (46%) and coping with the stress of caring (43%).**

Women were significantly more likely to worry about both these areas than men.

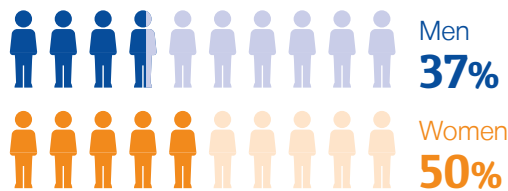
**46%**

Being unable to cope financially / afford the care services or equipment and home adaptations required



**43%**

That I couldn't manage the stress / responsibility of being a carer



There are significant variations in the worries of different age groups. Younger people aged 16–24 worried almost equally about the stress and responsibility (51%) of being a carer and the financial impact (50%). Those in employment are more likely to rate affordability of care as a top worry (51%) than UK adults (46%).

One of the biggest worries for older people with no experience of caring is the impact on their physical health, 40% of over 65 year olds put this as one of their top three worries compared with only a quarter (26%) of the public more widely.

Younger generations worry more about the impact of caring on their work or study - a third (33%) of those aged between 16–54 years old who have never been carers put this as a top worry.

For those who have never been carers with children in their household, the impact on their ability to work or study is more likely to be a worry (32%) compared with those without children at home (22%) suggesting that the sandwich generation feel squeezed by childcare, work and caring responsibilities.

Almost a quarter of those polled who have never cared (23%) would not know or understand where to get help if they became a carer.



**32%**

of those who have never been carers with children in their household say the impact on their ability to work or study is a worry compared with those without children at home (22%).

## Where would the public seek support with a caring role?

We asked people with no experience of caring where they would be most likely to turn to for support if they were ever called upon to become a carer for a family member or close friend.

The results vary by age for example whilst nearly half of all of those without experience of caring (47%) said they'd turn to family or friends, this was much higher (61%) for those aged 16-24 than for those aged between 45-64 (39%).

Local authority social care departments are the next most likely source of support with a caring role with nearly 4 in 10 (39%) of those with no experience of caring saying this is where they are most likely to turn.

Numbers of people with no experience of caring expecting to buy care services were low across all age groups with less than 1 in 5 (18%) saying they'd be most likely to turn to paid for services. The age group least likely to look at paid services for support are the over 75 year olds at only 11%. In contrast nearly 6 in 10 (58%) of those aged 75 years or older would be most likely to seek support from their local authority.

1 in 5 (20%) of workers with no experience of caring said that their employer would be somewhere they are likely to turn to for support with a caring role for example, flexible working.

Just over a quarter (28%) of full time students would look for support from their university with for example with flexible study hours or extended deadlines.

Just under a third (32%) of UK adults who have no experience of caring said they'd be most likely to turn to the welfare state and this becomes more likely the older people are, with 42% of those aged 65+ saying they'd turn to the welfare state for support.

Their GP or the GP of the person they care for is more likely to be the first port of call for older people taking on a caring role than for younger people. 55% of those 65 years old and over who are not currently carers say they would be most likely to turn to a GP compared with 36% of people of all ages and just 25% of those aged 16-24 years old.

Men with no experience of caring are much less likely to turn to their GP with only 31% naming a GP as where they'd be most likely to go for support compared with 41% of women.

Those in the age groups generally considered most likely to become a carer are very unlikely to turn to technology such as telecare, the internet, health monitoring devices, smartphone apps. Only 14% of 45-64 year olds online with no experience of caring say this is where they would be most likely to go for support. Whereas a third (33%) of 16-24 year olds said they'd be most likely to turn to technology for support.



**1 in 5**

(20%) of workers said that they would turn to their employer for support with a caring role.



**28%**

of full time students said that they would turn to their university for support with a caring role.



**55%**

of carers aged 65 or over would turn to their GP for support, compared to only 25% of carers aged 16-24.

# Building a carer friendly society

## The Carers Week charities want:

The new Government to show it values carers by setting out in a new strategy for carers its action plan for improving public understanding of caring and steps to build better support for unpaid carers.

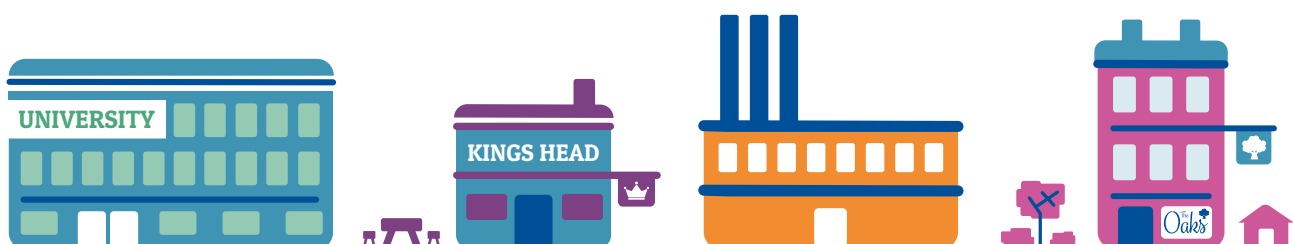
A new strategy should be the start of a new conversation about the value placed on unpaid care and the ways in which society and public services support carers.

The NHS, care, education bodies and community services as well as business and employers should consider the way they recognise and value carers and take action to make themselves both more carer aware and carer friendly.

Carers Week seeks to highlight, share and celebrate carers and the communities that support them.

## Key facts about carers

- 6.5 million people in the UK are carers; that's 1 in 8 adults (Census 2011)
- By 2037, it is estimated that the number of carers in the UK will rise to 9 million (Carers UK)
- Every day another 6,000 people take on a caring responsibility – that equals over 2 million people every year (Carers UK)
- 58% of carers are women and 42% are men (Census 2011)
- The unpaid care provided by the UK's carers is worth £132 billion per year, an average of £19,336 per carer (Carers UK, University of Sheffield, University of Leeds)
- Over 3 million people juggle care with work, however the significant demands of caring mean that 1 in 5 carers are forced to give up work altogether (Carers UK).



All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc.

Total sample size was 2184 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 20th – 21st April 2017. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

Carers Week is kindly supported by Nutricia Advanced Medical Nutrition and the Lockwood Charitable Foundation.



**The Lockwood  
Charitable Foundation**

Carers Week is made possible by Carers UK joining forces with Age UK, Carers Trust, Independent Age, Macmillan Cancer Support, Motor Neurone Disease Association, the MS Society and Which? Elderly Care.



Find out more and get involved at [carersweek.org](http://carersweek.org)

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