

State of Caring 2025

The cost of caring – the impact of caring across carers' lives

Throughout the UK, 5.8 million people provide unpaid care to family members and friends who need their support. The economic value of the unpaid care they provide is a staggering £184 billion a year.

Despite the enormous contribution that unpaid carers make to our society, caring often comes with significant personal costs, especially when adequate support is not available. These include financial costs, human costs, wider opportunity costs, and the long-term costs after people's caring responsibilities end.

Our new 'cost of caring' report, based on 10,500 responses to our State of Caring Survey 2025, found that:

52%

of carers said the number of hours per week that they spend caring has increased over the last 12 months



49%

of carers said they've cut back on essentials such as food, heating, clothing and transport costs



84%



reported higher energy bills and 44% said they are finding it increasingly difficult to afford the costs of care due to the rise in the cost of living

42%



of carers said their physical health has suffered as a result of caring and 20% have experienced an injury due to caring

35%



of working carers have reduced their working hours and 21% have taken on a lower paid or more junior role that fits better with their caring responsibilities

74%



of carers are worried about the impact their caring role will have in the future, including supporting themselves financially after their caring role has ended



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As my son's health has declined, I have found the stress and anxiety about what the future holds for him almost unbearable...I often feel overwhelmed with the responsibility of providing care for someone with such complex health needs, whilst providing a full and active life with very little support.”

– an unpaid carer

To confront these challenges, Carers UK is calling for a new social contract for carers – one that recognises their contribution as essential infrastructure for our society.

We want to see the Government, all political parties, policymakers, employers, and communities unite behind this vision. A new social contract for carers is not a luxury or an optional extra — it is a necessity for a fair, compassionate, and sustainable society that will deliver social as well as economic benefits. In developing such a contract, we want the Government to:

1. Develop a new, ambitious and fully funded National Carers Strategy

A strategy which clearly sets out Government's future commitments to supporting carers and improves cross-Government working and support for unpaid carers.

2. Strengthen social care support and funding

Provide sustainable funding for local authorities, invest £1.5 billion in respite and breaks, develop a national social care workforce plan, and ensure carers' needs are integrated into future social care reforms.

3. Improve financial and pension security

Review and simplify the benefits system, raise Carer's Allowance and related supplements to reduce poverty, implement recommendations from the Carer's Allowance overpayments review, and ensure carers receive fair pension support and protections in retirement.

4. Support carers in employment

Introduce a statutory right to five days of paid Carer's Leave a year, promote flexible work practices, and include carers in employment and return-to-work initiatives to help them remain in or re-enter the workforce.

5. Enhance carers' health, wellbeing, and equality

Make the NHS more carer-friendly, invest in carers' mental health, improve identification and awareness of carers' rights, and add caring as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.



See our report and our detailed recommendations in full by downloading our report at go.carersuk.org/cost_of_caring

