

State of Caring 2021 in Scotland

Each year, Carers UK carries out a survey of carers to understand the current state of caring in the UK. This report contains a snapshot of what caring in Scotland is like in 2021, capturing the impact that caring has on carers' lives and providing evidence for the recommendations about what would improve this.

Finances

Caring often brings with it additional costs, from equipment and care costs to increased expenditure on fuel and transportation. When asked to describe their current financial situation, a third (33%) of carers in Scotland said they were struggling to make ends meet. A further 21% are or have been in debt as a result of caring and 7% cannot afford utility bills such as electricity, gas, water or telephone bills.

When asked about how their financial situation had changed since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 42% of carers said that their financial situation had got worse since the start of the pandemic.

Caring can be expensive and 60% of carers are spending their own money on care, support services or products for the person they care for. The average monthly spend for carers in Scotland is £92.22 and with high rates of inflation and a rising cost of living, this extra spend is likely to increase and further disadvantage carers financially.

Support and services

Carers often need practical and emotional support to enable them to care, and too often they struggle to get the support they need. When asked about the barriers they face in accessing support, the largest issue for Scottish carers was that care and support services in their area did not meet their needs, with 32% of carers saying this was a barrier. In addition, 28% of carers were concerned about the risk of catching COVID-19 and 31% did not know what services were available in their area.

Considering the future of services, 50% of carers were uncertain about what practical support they may be able to access in the next twelve months and 65% were worried that services will be reduced.

Health

Caring can have a detrimental impact on someone's physical and mental health, the pandemic has exacerbated this with 72% of carers reporting that their mental health has deteriorated, and further 72% that their physical health has got worse as a result of caring in the pandemic.³¹ Currently 30% of carers in Scotland described their physical health as bad or very bad. 35% of carers rated their mental health as bad or very bad.

Looking at wider indicators of wellbeing, 38% of carers reported that they are often or always lonely, otherwise known as being 'chronically lonely'. Carers also rated their overall satisfaction with life at an average of 4 out of 10 and their level of anxiety at 6 out of 10.

Carer's assessments

Local councils in Scotland carry out Adult Carer Support Plans and Young Carer Statements to help carers understand what help is available and identify what support can be provided. Despite all carers having a right to these assessments, only 26% of Scottish carers reported having an assessment in the last 12 months and, of those, 19% waited more than six months for their assessment.

Of those who hadn't requested an assessment, 39% stated that this was because they didn't know what it was and 17% stated it was because they didn't think it would be beneficial. 11% of carers said their assessment had been postponed or they were still waiting.

Technology

When asked about their current use of digital technology, remote healthcare such as online GP appointments was the most popular technology listed with 41% of carers stating that this made their caring role easier.

Looking to the future, 28% of Scottish carers would like to continue accessing support services digitally in the future and 40% stated they would like to continue accessing health and social care services digitally.

Work

Working carers represent a significant proportion of the working population, and 175 respondents were in paid work. The pandemic is continuing to have an impact on working experiences, with 34% of carers in paid employment working from home part or full time.

The limited return of services continues to have an impact. 18% of working carers in Scotland stated that if care services did not return, they would either need to reduce their working hours or give up work entirely.

Recommendations

- **A double payment of Carer's Allowance Supplement is to be provided to carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance in December. This is welcome but will benefit only around 10% of carers. Therefore, the Scottish Government should provide a dedicated Carers Hardship Fund, available to all unpaid carers, to support them with financial hardship.**
- **The Scottish Government must, as a priority, invest more in replacement care services including building-based day services, supporting with additional costs to enable increased capacity in the services that support carers and those they care for. This includes increasing both funds and flexibility of self-directed support to enable carers and those they care for to have greater choice and control over what support would help them most.**
- **The Scottish Government and local partnerships must provide additional funding to increase the capacity for carers centres and young carers services that provide vital emotional and practical support for carers.**



Across the UK today 6.5 million people are carers – supporting a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill.

Caring will touch each and every one of us in our lifetime, whether we become a carer or need care ourselves. Whilst caring can be a rewarding experience, it can also impact on a person's health, finances and relationships.

Carers UK is here to listen, to give carers expert information and tailored advice. We champion the rights of carers and support them in finding new ways to manage at home, at work, or in their community.

We're here to make life better for carers.

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