

# State of Caring 2021 in Wales

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 Wales is like in 2021, capturing the impact that caring has on carers' lives and evidencing the policy recommendations that 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, 36% of carers in Wales said they were struggling to make ends meet. A further 23% are or have been in debt as a result of caring and 8% 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, 36% of carers said that their financial situation had got worse since the start of the pandemic.

Caring can be expensive and 65% 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 Wales is £109.75 and with high rates of inflation and a rising cost of living, this extra spend is likely to further disadvantage carers financially.

## Support and Services

Carers often need practical and emotional support to enable them to care safely for people with complex needs, and too often they struggle to get the support they need. When asked about barriers to accessing support, the largest issue for Welsh carers was that they did not know what services were available in their area with 40% of carers reporting this as a barrier. In addition, 30% of carers were concerned about the risk of catching COVID-19 and 32% say that the care and support services did not meet their needs.

Considering the future of services, 51% of carers were uncertain about what practical support they may be able to access in the next twelve months and 66% were worried that services will be reduced.

## Health

Caring can have a detrimental impact on someone's physical and mental health. 26% of carers described their physical health as bad or very bad. 34% of carers rated their mental health as bad or very bad.

Looking at wider indicators of wellbeing, 36% 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

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 gives Welsh carers the right to a carer's needs assessment. Despite carers' rights to assessments only 21% of Welsh carers reported having an assessment in the last 12 months. Of those, 28% waited more than six months for their assessment.

Of those who hadn't requested a carer's assessment, 37% stated that this was because they didn't know what it was and 20% stated it was because they didn't think it would be beneficial. 10% 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 37% of carers stating that this made their caring role easier.

Looking to the future, 31% of Welsh carers would like to continue accessing support services digitally in the future and 44% stating they would like to continue accessing health and social care services digitally.

## Work

Working carers represent a significant proportion of the working population and 196 respondents were in paid work. The pandemic is continuing to have an impact on working experiences, with 51% of working carers are working from home part or full time.

The limited return of services continues to have an impact. 30% of working carers in Wales stated that if care services did not return, they would either need to reduce their working hours or give up work entirely.

## Recommendations

- **Welsh Government to continue to raise awareness of carers' rights under legislation, including within health and social care settings.**
- **Welsh Government to ensure that there is adequate funding for information and advice services so that carers can access the help they need including to maximise their income.**
- **Welsh Government to ensure that local authorities adequately understand carers' needs and reinstate or establish new carer services as soon as possible.**
- **Welsh Government to place a duty on primary and secondary healthcare to identify, recognise and support carers.**
- **Welsh Government to promote the benefits of carer-positive workplace practices, supported by the Wales Hub of Employers of Carers.**
- **Welsh Government to provide targeted funding to local authorities for the immediate full restoration of disrupted carer services with an accompanying increase in funding to meet the backlog of need created by the pandemic.**
- **In light of challenges within the social care workforce, Welsh Government should require local authorities to provide additional direct payments to carers so they can source alternative provision with increased flexibility around their use.**



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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