

Carers' Health & Wellbeing



Carers
in Hertfordshire

charity registration number 1085491

80%
of carers had
negative effects
on health and
wellbeing

We carried out a survey on the State of Caring in Hertfordshire between January and March 2018. 1,434 carers responded using a variety of media, including; online, post, telephone and through face-to-face meetings.

This factsheet is a summary of the results concerning Carers' Health and Wellbeing.

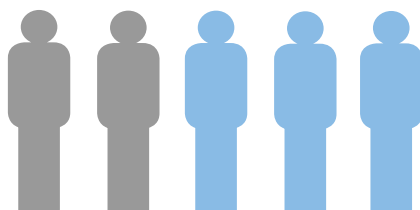
Impact

Only 11% of carers who answered these questions stated that there was no impact on their wellbeing as a result of caring. The greatest impact was feeling more stressed (74%), followed by feeling anxious (66%) and not getting enough sleep (57%). All of these have increased since the last survey in 2015 when the results showed 71%, 63% and 53% respectively.

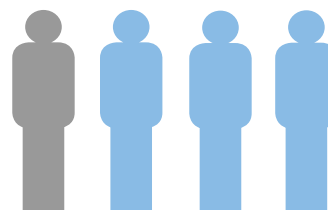
"Initially I felt very isolated but finding groups such as C4A helped tremendously."

74%
of carers are
feeling more
stressed by
caring

The number of carers who have suffered from, or been treated for, depression has also risen from 24% to 26%. All of these results are a worrying trend showing that the negative effects of caring are increasing.



2 in 5 carers have neglected their own health because of caring responsibilities



1 in 4 have missed or not made a health appointment

"I used to be an active outdoor type, very involved in administration/organising a sporting activity and other pastimes, but am now almost housebound."

This would indicate that carers are more likely to be heading for a health issue themselves, which may result in more care having to be provided by statutory services in the future, or picked up by other family members.

Breakdown

The number of carers who have been close to, or had carer breakdown has remained similar to three years ago at 37%, and those thinking that they may reach breaking point soon has also stayed the same at around 16%. However, the result of having a carer breakdown seems to have resulted in slightly less statutory services being accessed, and more falling on the carer or their family, with a significant increase in the numbers having to leave their job (23% compared to 15% in 2015).

37%
of carers
have had a
breakdown

This would bear out the fact that statutory services are more stretched and therefore less able to provide support to the carer, even in times of extreme need. Interestingly, the number of hours that a person provides care does not make any difference to the likelihood of having a carer breakdown.

"My life has been put on hold as I am always waiting for the phone to ring."

Relationships

The impact of caring on relationships shows a trend that is slightly more positive. Whilst 38% said they have lost touch with friends and family compared to 34% in 2015, there has been an improvement in the level of relationship and in new friends. 13% said they were now closer to friends and family (9% in 2015); 30% stated they were closer to the person they care for (28%) and 21% felt they had made new friends as a result of caring (18%). It may be that more local services have helped with this.

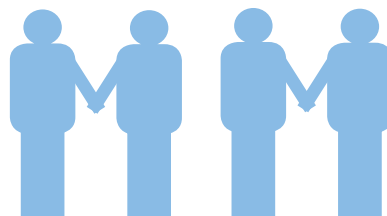
30%
felt closer to
the person
they care for

Afraid, Unsafe

An additional question was added this time about being afraid or feeling unsafe. Only 56% said that this was never the case, with 4% saying that they often felt afraid or unsafe. The main fears were about the future and "what would happen if...", but 8 carers admitted they were being harmed by someone else, and 12 were being bullied, with a number of free responses often talking about issues in the past.

"I have been driven to the point of suicide because of sheer hopelessness."

21%
of carers made
new friends
through
caring



Isolation

"I feel isolated because there is no one else to call on."

Isolation is still an issue that affects many carers, with only 37% (the same as in 2015) saying that they have not felt lonely or isolated as result of caring. However, the main reason for this has changed from not being able to get out of the house (36%) to not having time to participate in social activities (40%). This ties in with the question as to when carers last had a break of more than a couple of hours. 31% of carers had had a day off within the last month, but 29% had not had a day off in over five years.

63%
feel isolated
because of
their caring
role

Taking a Break

Unsurprisingly, those who are caring for 50+ hours a week are the ones least likely in each category to have had a break, despite being the ones who may need it the most.

"As a carer, my world is ever shrinking. I don't get out. I don't get enough exercise. I have newly emergent health problems."

This can be split up by caring condition and shows the caring group most likely to have had a weekend off is those looking after someone who had needs arising from being older, and the least likely group to have time off is those looking after someone with sensory needs. When looking at having a complete week's break, the least likely caring group is those looking after someone with ADHD.

29%
not had a day
off in over
five years

Things that would make the biggest difference to carers are fairly evenly split between having access to breaks and having good quality care services (20% each), and whilst 12% stated a better income would make the most difference, only 5% chose the ability to work as a choice.

"What would make the Biggest Difference?"

Access to Breaks

Good Quality Care Services

Better Income

Work (as a choice)

57%
are not
getting
enough
sleep



Identifying Carers

14% of carers said their GP had made carers realise they were in a caring role, up from 12% in 2015. There has been a smaller but positive increase in other health professionals acknowledging they are a carer, rising from 9% to 10%.

24% of carers who responded said a health professional was instrumental in them identifying as a carer.

Carers are still significantly less likely to cite their GP as helping them first think of themselves as a carer if they care for someone with an autistic spectrum disorder or learning disability, but encouragingly this has improved since 2015.

"The NHS have not picked up on the extent the cared for person (the patient) depends on others (myself) and therefore discharge goes ahead each time without any extra support in place."

82%
of carers rated
their pharmacy
as good or
excellent

Health Services

When carers were asked about their experience of health services as a carer, discharge from hospital was the area where carers reported the highest levels of dissatisfaction, with 29% of carers who had used this service describing it as poor and another 32% reporting some good and some not so good experiences. Only 10% of carers who had used the service reported it as excellent.

Carers from the West of the county were happier than those in the East, with 45% rating their experience of discharge as excellent or good, whilst only 36% of those in the East said the same.

60% of carers who had used GP services rated their support for them as a carer as good or excellent in East and North Herts. 73% of those in the West reported good or excellent support.

Pharmacies were the services with the best ratings across the county, with 82% of carers who had used the service rating it as good or excellent.



"When you do get time to go out you haven't been out for so long on your own you don't know what to do and then when you're out I feel guilty that I'm out and they're not."



Making Carers Count

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