

Carers UK's *Manifesto for carers*

UK General Election 2019



Carers UK has created a manifesto that outlines the top priorities unpaid carers would want to see delivered in the future.

These priorities are based on years of evidence, consultation and involvement with unpaid carers, including more than 7,500 carers who completed our State of Caring Survey 2019.

Our vision is of a society that respects, values, and supports carers

Caring, unpaid, for older and disabled people is affecting more families and friends than ever in the UK

Caring is an important part of life, it's simply part of being human. Carers hold families together, enable loved ones to get the most out of life, and make an enormous contribution to society. Caring will affect most of us at some point in our lives. Every day 6,000 people become carers. Many don't know how or where to get help which can be frightening and isolating.

Demographic changes and an ageing population mean that the number of unpaid carers looking after family members and friends is increasing. Recent polling by Carers UK suggests there could be as many as 8.8 million adult carers in the UK, compared to 6.3 million adult carers in the 2011 Census¹. Most people will be a carer at some point in their lives.

The number of people aged 65 or over and caring for a loved one has also grown from 1.4 million to potentially over 2 million; a 43% increase from 2011 to 2019⁴. Meanwhile, a further 1.3 million sandwich carers look after an older or disabled person whilst they also have young children. The amount of people providing substantial care has risen; we know that 1.4 million people now provide over 50 hours of unpaid care per week⁵.

Carers play a vital social role by providing care worth £132bn each year⁶ – equivalent to a second NHS. In spite of this, they are in need of more support and recognition to enable them to make decisions about how they care, and so they can live a life alongside caring.

Our vision for a society that respects, values and supports carers

We believe we need to change the way we support and recognise carers so they can continue to care whilst also living a fulfilling life beyond their role as a carer. Our vision is of a society that respects, values, and supports carers. The time has come for a new social contract between carers, public services, employers, and wider society to achieve this vision.

This need for increased support and recognition comes in many forms:

- **Health and wellbeing** – carers are more than twice as likely to be in bad health as non-carers⁷, and seven times more likely to be experiencing loneliness and social isolation than the general public⁸.
- **Finances** – carers struggle financially because of their caring role; 1.2 million carers are estimated to be living in poverty. Two thirds of carers providing substantial care pay towards the cost of care for their loved one, and over half (53%) are unable to save for their future or for retirement⁹.
- **Working and caring** – Carers UK's recent polling suggested 5 million people now combine paid work and caring. Over 2.6 million people have given up work at some point to care, and 2 million have reduced their working hours to care. Every day 600 people have to leave work in order to care¹⁰.
- **Carer's Assessments** – many carers face long waits for Carer's Assessments and too often insufficient tailored support is available post-assessment.

Priorities for lasting change

We want all political parties to support the millions of unpaid carers by committing to the following:

- 1 **For carers to be placed at the heart of a reformed and properly funded system of social care**
 - Invest short term funding into the social care system until longer-term reforms are implemented.
 - Set out a long term solution to funding social care that has unpaid carers at its heart. A reformed system for social care must be sustainable, deliver better access to high quality person-centred care to people of all ages, be well-funded and sufficiently resourced, better share the risk of social care costs across society, and meet increasing demand in the future.
- 2 **Ensure that carers and their families do not suffer financial hardship as a result of caring**
 - Carer's Allowance must be raised urgently, with equivalent increases to carer premia.
 - Allow carers to earn more and keep their Carer's Allowance.
 - Auto-enrol carers into a second pension; a Carer's Pension, which recognises the value of unpaid work and reduces the likelihood of financial hardship later in life.
- 3 **Funding for carers' breaks needs to be increased, ring-fenced and made more transparent to ensure that many more carers are able to take a break**
 - Increase carers' breaks funding in England in local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) by doubling the existing funding available to £260 million, with further increases in future years.
 - Councils and Clinical Commissioning Groups need to be more transparent about how they spend money on carers' breaks.
- 4 **A National Health Service that recognises, values and supports carers**
 - Create a duty on the NHS in England to identify carers and promote their health and wellbeing, including their own employees who juggle work and care.
 - In England, develop a programme with the NHS to introduce a Carers Social Prescription based on local good practice to ensure early intervention and support for carers.
 - Deliver a training programme in England to ensure all NHS staff not only recognise and support unpaid carers as key partners in care, but also identify the needs of the carer.

1. 'Juggling work and care – a growing issue', (2019), Carers UK
 2. 'It Could Be You', (2001), Carers UK
 3. Census, (2011)
 4. 'State of Caring 2019', (2019), Carers UK
 5. Census, (2011)

6. 'Valuing Carers 2015', (2015), Carers UK
 7. Census, (2011)
 8. 'Getting Carers Connected', (2019), Carers Week
 9. 'State of Caring 2019', (2019), Carers UK
 10. 'Juggling work and care – a growing issue', (2019), Carers UK

- 5 Ensure carers are able to juggle work and care with support to return to work alongside or after caring**
- Create a new right to paid care leave of at least 5–10 days.
 - Create tailored support for carers looking to return to work, including promoting to employers the importance of recognising the skills carers have developed through their caring role.
 - Work with employers to include carers in health and well-being support at work.
 - Invest in good quality and affordable care services as an essential part of enabling carers to remain in or return to work alongside caring.
- 6 Ensure a strategy or action plan is in place to support carers**
- Develop a continuous cross-government programme of work to support unpaid carers. This should set out future commitments to supporting carers and identify specific actions that focus on delivering tangible progress and additional support for carers, their families, and those they care for.
- 7 Raising public awareness of carers and caring**
- Review the Equality Act and introduce caring as the tenth protected characteristic to improve the visibility and equality of carers in our society.
 - Introduce a national public campaign aimed at increasing awareness, recognition and support for unpaid carers and the support they provide, to raise awareness of carers, and caring amongst health and care professionals and the general public.



Carers UK is the national membership charity for carers. We work to represent and support the 6.5 million people in the UK who provide unpaid care for ill, older or disabled family members, or friends.

We will continue to fight for increased recognition and support for all carers, and to ensure they have a voice. Our mission is to make life better for carers by delivering lasting change.

20 Great Dover Street, London SE1 4LX

T 020 7378 4999 E info@carersuk.org

carersuk.org



@carersuk



/carersuk