

# State of Caring in Wales 2024

The impact of caring on: Carers' health and wellbeing, and support with caring

March 2025



## About this research

### Carers Wales, as part of Carers UK, carried out an online survey with unpaid carers between June and August 2024

Carers Wales, as part of Carers UK, carried out an online survey with unpaid carers between June and August 2024. A total of 1,217 carers and former carers responded to the survey in Wales.

This report summarises their responses. As not all respondents completed every question in the survey, some figures are based on responses from fewer than 1,217 people. The survey was promoted extensively amongst both carers and organisations supporting carers.

It was shared on the Carers Wales website, on Carers Wales social media channels, and with Carers Wales members, volunteers, previous survey respondents, campaigners, affiliates, Employers for Carers Wales members, and other organisations.

Of respondents to the survey:

- 4% have cared in the past but are no longer providing care.
- Of those currently caring, 9% are caring for 19 hours or less, 24% are caring for 20-49 hours and 67% are caring for more than 50 hours a week.
- 73% of respondents were aged 18-64 years and 27% were aged 65 and over. The biggest proportion of respondents were in the 55-64 year category (33%).
- 82% of respondents were female, 17% were male. 1% said their gender was not the same as the one assigned at birth.
- 89% of respondents were heterosexual/straight, 11% were Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual, preferred to self-identify or preferred not to say.
- 33% of respondents had a disability.

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Carers Wales would like to thank every carer who took the time to complete this survey, as well as the carers who helped us test the survey.

Your responses will be used in all our policy and campaigning work over the next year.



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## Introduction

According to the census, there are more than 310,000 unpaid carers across Wales providing unpaid care for ill, older or disabled family members or friends. Research shows that the value of this care provided by unpaid carers is more than £10 billion per year in Wales.<sup>1</sup>

Caring can have a significant impact on carers' own health and wellbeing. With the increase in the cost of living in recent years, a significant proportion of carers are finding it difficult to pay for essentials like food and heating, and 76% feel stressed or anxious when they think about their financial situation.<sup>2</sup>

Carers often feel they are caring behind closed doors; that they are invisible, undervalued and forgotten about. This year's survey found that only 9% of carers in Wales feel valued by the general public, and just 4% feel valued by Governments.

Many carers need more support from the NHS, both in terms of managing the care of their family member or friend, and in dealing with their own health issues.

Carers are more likely than non-carers to be disabled<sup>3</sup> and have a higher prevalence of long-term health conditions,<sup>4</sup> yet carers are often unable to prioritise their own health and wellbeing because they can't take a break from caring.

Our research in 2023 found that 50% of carers had put off health treatment because of their caring role.<sup>5</sup>

Every year carers tell us that they need a break from caring. A high proportion of carers who complete our State of Caring survey provide a significant amount of care: 67% care for 50 or more hours a week.

For carers who provide a substantial amount of care, being able to access good quality, reliable, consistent social care services is crucial - to reduce the amount of care they need to provide themselves and provide an opportunity for some much-needed recuperation.

Breaks are essential in enabling carers to focus on their own needs and interests, spend time with family and friends, deal with other household duties, seek help for any health issues, and remain in paid employment if they wish to do so.

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1: <https://www.carersuk.org/press-releases/unpaid-care-in-wales-valued-at-10-6-billion-per-year-gwerth-gofal-di-d%C3%A2l-yng-nghymru-yw-10-6-biliwn-y-flwyddyn/>  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/unpaidcareenglandandwales/census2021>

2: <https://www.carersuk.org/reports/state-of-caring-in-wales-finances-2024-cyflwr-gofalu-yng-nghymru-cyllid-2024/>

3: ONS (2023) Unpaid care and protected characteristics, England and Wales: Census 2021.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/socialcare/articles/unpaidcareandprotectedcharacteristicsenglandandwales/census2021#unpaid-care-and-disability>

4: <https://phw.nhs.wales/publications/publications1/unpaid-carers-in-wales-the-creation-of-an-e-cohort-to-understand-long-term-health-conditions-amongst-unpaid-carers-in-wales/>

5: <https://www.carersuk.org/media/wrnf0mg/sociw23-health-design-final-eng-compressed.pdf>

It is welcome then, that the Welsh Government has committed to continue the Short Breaks Scheme<sup>6</sup> for 2025-26, but we note that only a small percentage of unpaid carers in Wales will have been able to benefit from a short break via the scheme by its proposed end date in March 2026.

Ensuring carers' needs are assessed is a key part of ensuring carers are able to receive support including, but not limited to, respite and breaks. So, it is disappointing and concerning that our Track the Act<sup>7</sup> report in 2024 found that only 0.3-8% of carers in Wales who need an assessment received one during 2023-24.

These findings were echoed by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Are we caring for our carers?<sup>8</sup> report in 2024, which found that only 2.8% of the carer population in investigated authorities had their needs assessed and only 1.5% of the carer population had an assessment that led to a support plan.

The lack of knowledge about carers' needs and lack of supporting reaching unpaid carers in Wales makes for bleak reading yet again. Our 2024 findings show that 60% of carers often or always feel overwhelmed by their caring role, nearly 4 in 10 report bad or very bad mental health and nearly 1 in 3 report bad or very bad physical health.

It is simply not acceptable that so many carers are experiencing poor health and feeling overwhelmed whilst providing transformative care for people in Wales and contributing over £10 billion per year to the economy. We will only begin to see improvements in carers' health and wellbeing with sufficient support from statutory services, such as the NHS and local councils – but this work must be led by the Welsh Government.

This report sets out the challenges facing unpaid carers and makes recommendations to governments and services on how to better support carers across Wales.



6:<https://www.gov.wales/525m-welsh-government-funding-benefit-unpaid-carers>

7:<https://www.carersuk.org/wales/policy-and-research/track-the-act/track-the-act-home-page/>

8:<https://www.ombudsman.wales/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/OI-report.pdf>

## Executive Summary



- Many carers have poor mental health, and this is getting increasingly worse. Over a third (38%) of carers who completed the survey this year said they had bad or very bad mental health, compared to 28% the previous year – a 36% increase.
- Carers need more support with their health and wellbeing. 69% of carers reported that they need more support with health and wellbeing. This was the top need cited by carers, and an increase from 58% in the previous year. 82% of carers said the impact of caring on their physical and/or mental health will be a challenge over the next year.
- Carers who are struggling financially are more likely to report poor mental health. Two in 3 (66%) carers said their financial situation is having a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.
- A significant majority of carers feel overwhelmed. 60% of carers reported that they feel overwhelmed often or always.
- The main reason carers feel overwhelmed is because they are not getting a break from caring. 66% of carers said that they felt overwhelmed because they haven't been able to take a break from caring. Half (50%) of carers said they needed more breaks or time off from caring, and 54% said being able to have regular breaks from caring would be a challenge over the coming year.

- Carers need more recognition for the important role they are playing in supporting health and social care systems. 57% of carers said they needed better understanding and recognition of unpaid carers from the general public. This was the second most important need cited by carers.
- More carers need to know where they can get support. 54% said they needed to know what support is available – an increase from 48% in the previous year.
- Carers are in increasing need of support from their local authority. 57% of carers said they needed more recognition of their needs from their local authority compared to 46% in the previous year, and it's now the third most important need reported by carers.
- The majority of carers have not had a Carers Needs Assessment. Only 17% of carers responding to the survey had received a Carers Needs Assessment in the last 12 months.
- Most carers who have had a Carers Needs Assessment find the process unsatisfactory. 51% of carers who had had a Carer's Assessment said their local authority had not supported them after the assessment.
- Local authorities are often signposting to resources rather than providing practical support for carers after a Carer's Assessment. 52% of carers who felt they had not been supported said the assessment identified areas where they needed more support, but this had not been provided.
- Carers are not always able to access good quality social care services when they need them. 63% of carers who'd tried getting support had experienced long wait times, and 57% said that services were not available when they needed them. 39% of carers said that there was a lack of consistency in who was providing care and 35% of carers said they had concerns about the quality of care.
- Challenges with social care services are having a negative impact on carers' mental health and outlook on the future. 92% of carers who had experienced challenges with services said it has made them worry more about the future, and 85% said it had negatively impacted their mental health.



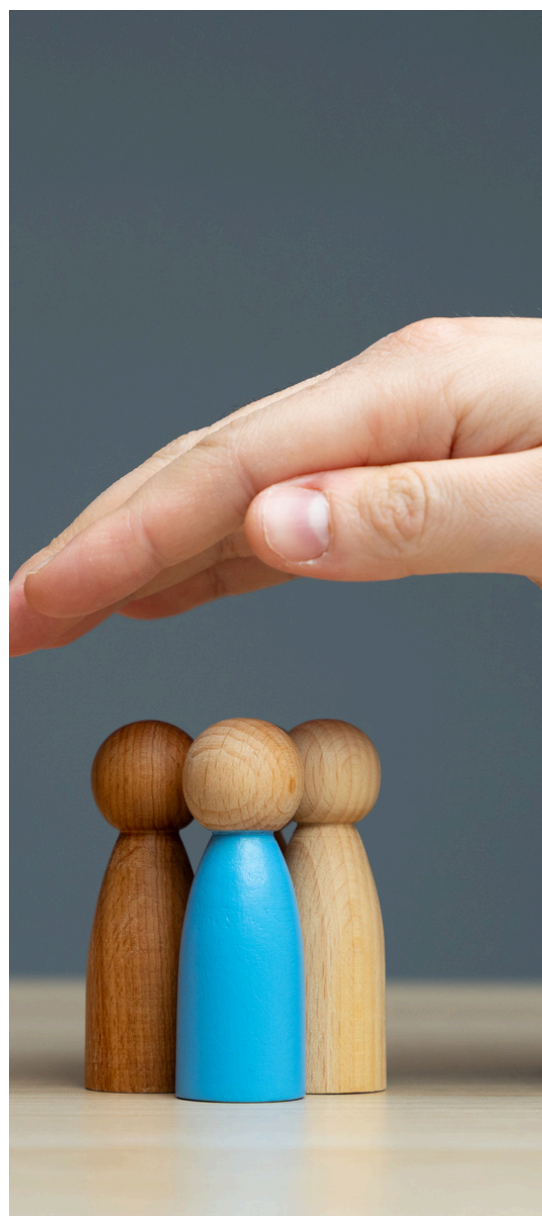
**60%** of carers reported that they feel overwhelmed often or always.

## Recommendations

The Welsh Government must commit to the production of an Action and Implementation Plan for unpaid carers in relation to the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. This plan must be published before the end of the 6th Senedd in May 2026 and should:

- Be fully co-produced with unpaid carers and carer representative organisations.
- Utilise and address the findings of the Welsh Government-commissioned Evaluation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, published in 2023, the findings of the 2024 Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Are we caring for our carers? report and the 2024 Track The Act report from Carers Wales.
- Set out how the Government intends to ensure effective monitoring of the implementation of the Act in Wales and how this will be transparently reported on.
- Ensure that the Welsh Government takes greater leadership in the successful implementation of the Act, ensuring a consistent minimum level of support across local authority areas in Wales.

- Address the inconsistencies in terminology relating to Carer's Needs Assessments and the carer journey through statutory support services across local authority areas in Wales.
- Include plans for a large scale and coordinated awareness campaign, co-produced with unpaid carers and carer organisations, to improve carers' awareness of their rights and to help more people identify as unpaid carers.





## Recommendations

The Welsh Government must ensure that there is sufficient capacity within statutory bodies to deliver on their legal duties as outlined in the Act.

Consideration should be given as to whether additional resource should be provided to local authorities in a ring-fenced manner to support unpaid carers.

In March 2024, the then Welsh Government committed to co-producing guidance for professionals in healthcare settings to better identify and support unpaid carers. Successive reports demonstrate the need for this and we believe Government should outline a plan for the creation and dissemination of these resources during 2025-26.

While the continuation of the Carer Support Fund and Short Breaks Fund are welcome, the Welsh Government must commit more to these funds to reverse the decline in respite support demonstrated in our State of Caring in Wales reports. The evidence of need for further investment is overwhelming.

Welsh Government must use their influence with the UK Government to drive reform to Carer's Allowance and the welfare benefits system for unpaid carers. This should also extend to the introduction of paid Carer's Leave for all unpaid carers balancing their roles with paid work.



## Recommendations

### Local authorities

- All local authorities in Wales should ensure that public-facing staff receive appropriate carer awareness training to better enable them to identify and support unpaid carers. This must include training at the point of induction as well as regular refresher training and be co-produced with unpaid carers.
  - Local authorities must ensure greater consistency in the manner that information, advice and support is offered and provided to unpaid carers. We believe that Regional Partnership Boards are a key method to achieving this.
  - Should build on the regional-level population needs assessment and assess the needs of carers across their local authority areas. Mapping carer need must then inform budget allocations, ensuring sufficient resource is dedicated to meet local authorities' statutory duties and obligations under the Act as a minimum.
  - Must prioritise capacity and resource to ensure a greater proportion of unpaid carers within their area receive a Carer's Needs Assessment. Timescales between referral and assessment must also be reduced as a priority.
- Assessments must be provided flexibly, in a carer-centred way. Outcomes and decisions should be committed to transparently and next steps should be clearly co-produced with the unpaid carer receiving the assessment.
  - All carers who have their needs assessed should be able to co-produce a contingency plan with the local authority at the very minimum. This should be transparently shared with the carer and can then be actionable upon the carer becoming unable to continue providing care for any reason.
  - Reviews of services and support for carers should be regularly carried out in a co-produced manner with unpaid carers. The outcomes of these reviews should be publicly available.



## Recommendations

### Health Boards

- Must work urgently to improve carer awareness among staff, to better identify and support carers navigating healthcare settings for themselves or in support of the people they provide care for.
- Must improve data collection relating to unpaid carers in health settings and use this data to ensure any support for carers is appropriate and effective. These reviews must be co-produced with unpaid carers.
- Via RPB's, Health Boards should work within regions to ensure greater consistency in the manner that information, advice and support is offered and provided to unpaid carers.
- Must better monitor and evaluate the impact of funding allocations to support unpaid carers, including any collaborative projects and initiatives.



## The impact of caring on Carers mental health



### Key points

- Over a third (38%) of carers who completed the survey said they had bad or very bad mental health, compared to 28% the previous year – a 36% increase.
- Carers who are struggling financially are struggling more with their mental health. Two thirds (66%) of carers struggling to make ends meet had bad or very bad mental health.
- Over half (60%) of carers said they feel overwhelmed ‘often’ or ‘always’. 36% feel overwhelmed ‘sometimes’. Only 5% said they ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ feel overwhelmed.
- The main reason carers feel overwhelmed is because they have been unable to take a break. 66% of carers said they felt overwhelmed because of this.
- Other key reasons carers feel overwhelmed are managing the different needs of the person they care for (58%) and struggling with their own health condition (52%).

The significant increase in carers reporting bad or very bad mental health paints an alarming picture in Wales. Many carers spoke of how their caring role was a direct contributor to their mental health challenges:

“*My husbands mental health as well as physical disabilities can be very stressful. I get shouted at a lot but even on good days I am anxious because I never know when something will trigger a meltdown.*”

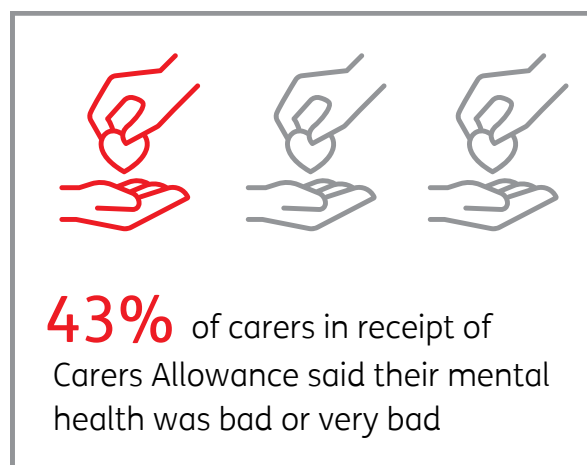
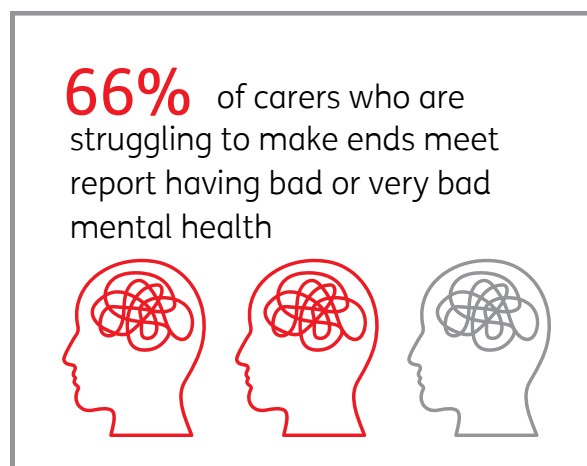
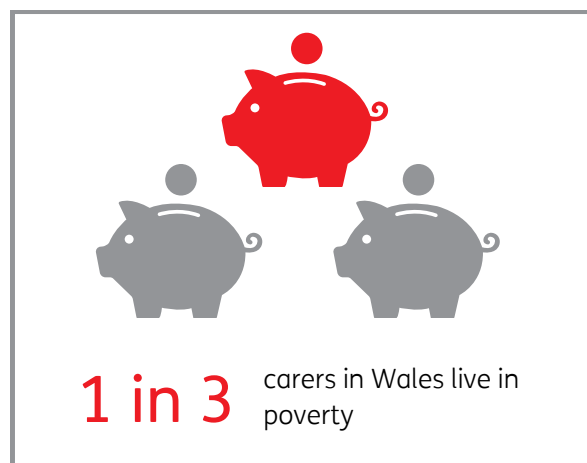
“*I have terminal Cancer. I worry about my wife who is on the late stages of dementia and what will happen to her care if I die first.*”

“*Being a mum at the same time and looking after the house as well as being a daughter. I barely leave the house for my husband's safety. This impacts my physical, mental and emotional health.*”

## The link to finances

Caring has a disproportionate financial impact on the people providing care. Our 2024 “Poverty and financial hardship of unpaid carers in Wales” report<sup>9</sup> found that over a quarter of unpaid carers (26%) live in poverty in Wales and that the poverty rate for unpaid carers in Wales is 30% higher than it is for people not providing care.

This extends to 50% higher for unpaid carers experiencing deep poverty compared to the general population. The impact of this means 2 in 3 (66%) carers struggling to make ends meet report having bad or very bad mental health.



9: [https://www.carersuk.org/media/bvdg2fvh/poverty-and-financial-hardship-of-unpaid-carers-in-wales\\_web.pdf](https://www.carersuk.org/media/bvdg2fvh/poverty-and-financial-hardship-of-unpaid-carers-in-wales_web.pdf)

43% of carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance and 47% of carers receiving Universal Credit with Carer Element said their mental health was bad or very bad.

“ I have used my savings & private pensions to fund looking after my mother. I'm 62 with no financial stability

“ I can't work full time because I need to be home. I earned £1 too much for 19 weeks and have to pay all the carers allowance from that time. I ended up using credit cards to cope. I've had to give up carers allowance to get another job to cope financially. My husband is 70 and on state pension. This is crippling us mentally and physically.

“ I do not have a life outside of caring because there is no money for anything but the essentials. My only time away from home is when I go to paid work which I have to do because there is no other money coming in.



## Not being able to take a break

Carers often feel they are unable to spend time with friends and family because they are too busy caring, and this can cause loneliness. Carers can also struggle with depression when they are unable to focus on their own needs and pursue their own hobbies and interests.

Our survey found that carers who were caring for more hours per week were more likely to have poor mental health. 38% of carers caring for over 35 hours per week had bad or very mental health compared to 26% of those caring for less than 35 hours per week.

“ 40% of carers caring for over 35 hours per week had bad or very bad mental health, compared to 24% of those caring for less than 35 hours per week.

“ Being a working carer and also looking after young children. Life is constantly busy.

“ I could cope do much better if he had activities with others (not just going out with one carer to fill time).

“ Death is the only escape.

## Not getting enough support with caring

Not getting enough advice and guidance about a caring role or how to support the people they care for can be another emotionally and mentally tiring experience for carers.

Many carers reported feeling left alone to perform clinical tasks or manage the changing caring needs of the people they care for. Only 27% of carers who care for somebody who had been discharged from hospital in the last 12 months agreed that they had been involved in decisions about the discharge and what care and treatment was needed.

Only 15% agreed that they were given the relevant information and support by NHS staff to care safely and well.

“The focus is on the cared for person and not the carer. Whilst I understand the reasons for this, there have been many times when I did not know how I would carry on.

“Stress, guilt and anger - if I had a pound for the number of times I've heard a phrase like 'can't your daughter do that for you' I'd be able to afford a decent care home!

“I was ignored by most staff during my mother's stay in hospital, despite me raising concerns. No help was offered at all on her return home, I was just expected to "get on with it".

“My dad was discharged from hospital on a Saturday afternoon with 1 hrs notice. He was doubly incontinent at that time and was discharged wearing a pad, but with no others given to take home. He was also extremely confused and could not do much for himself (e.g couldn't get washed or dressed, manage the toilet, make a bowl of cereal) I was given no advice or support, and no information about who to contact if there were any problems. No services were open until Monday morning for any help. He had not previously required care so nothing was in place at home.

“I've had to spend time and energy doing my own research on things, I feel the need to prepare for each appointment like I'm going into battle. It's exhausting and I constantly feel that I'm not being listened to or believed, it's like being gaslit by the NHS.

Our Track the Act 2024 report also identified serious concerns in relation to carers' experience with NHS services. The report found that only 12% of carers were identified in medical settings, only 8% of carers reported seeing information in hospital settings and just 23% of carers who had seen information in a hospital setting went on to receive advice about their caring role.



only  
27%

of carers who care for somebody who had been discharged from hospital felt involved in decisions

## Worrying about the future

Carers also need more support in planning for the future. It is the oldest carers who provide the highest number of hours of care a week<sup>10</sup>, yet many older carers worry about how they will continue to support the person they care for as their health declines, particularly if they are not currently receiving any practical support with caring.

“ I never switch off. I'm 71 now, and I and my husband are extremely worried about what will happen when we get too ill ourselves.

“ My caring role will never end unless my son dies before I do. I worry about what will happen to his care when I die.

“ Worrying about what will happen to my son when I die. I am 80.



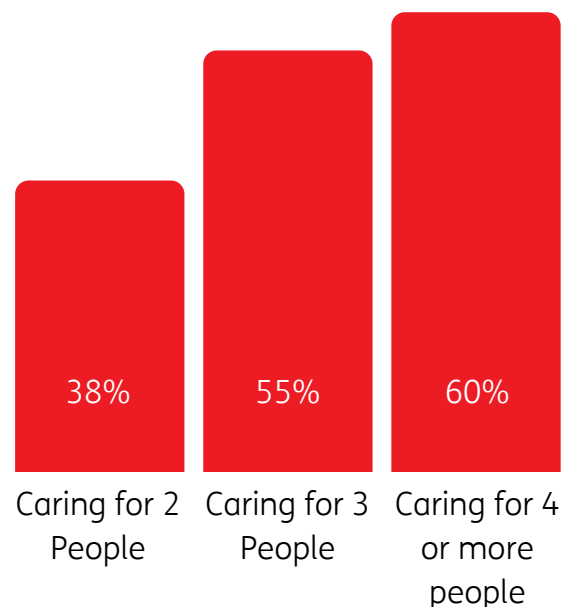
## Caring for multiple people

Nearly a quarter (22%) of carers who responded to our survey are caring for more than one person. 35% of respondents who care for one person said their mental health was bad or very bad.

This increased to:

- 38% for those caring for 2 people
- 55% for those caring for 3 people
- 60% for those caring for 4 or more people.

The increase in respondents reporting their mental health as bad or very bad by number of people cared for





This increase is also reflected in carers feeling overwhelmed due to their caring role.

57% of people caring for one person reported feeling often or always overwhelmed by their caring role. This then increased to:

- 59% for those caring for 2 people
- 79% for those caring for 3 people
- 81% for those caring for 4 or more people.

Our data clearly shows an increase in the impact of caring for multiple people on people's mental health and wellbeing.

Managing multiple people's caring needs causes additional strain and anxiety, particularly when those needs are different in their nature.

*I feel like I'm constantly in a battle to get support for someone. No sooner have I sorted healthcare or education for one person, I then have to start again for another. The biggest challenge in my opinion is that local authorities will do everything possible to avoid spending on providing support so you have to fight for everything which is stressful and exhausting.*

*Two completely different support needs, two different set of medical professionals to deal with. My own health and well-being is sacrificed as I have no time to visit a GP, dentist by myself.*



*I am constantly in demand and have no time for myself. I am unable to work which means that financial stresses adds to all my other stresses. At times I have to choose between them which is really difficult as they both need me most of the time but in different ways. It's never ending. My mental health suffers a lot from all the things I want to do but can't as I would feel worse if the people I care for where not being cared for properly.*

Carers spoke of the guilt they faced when having to spend time away from someone they care for to provide care for another person. They spoke of the impact this has on them as carers, but also on the people they provide care for.

“When more than one of them needs urgent help but I am already doing something with another one. The jealousy between them if they think I’m “favouring” one over the other. I am working harder now than I did throughout my nursing career (where I often did extra shifts to boost my income) unlike a paid job I get no days off or holidays. I am exhausted and fully expect to die first.

“

*Juggling everything that needs doing. I often feel I have to choose between family members over who I prioritise. Insecurity, I know if one has a crisis the others care is affected. If more than one has a crisis I don't know what to do first, it makes me feel panicky and they feel guilty because I'm the only carer. It's exhausting. I can't plan ahead. We can't go on holiday together because of differing needs. I can't keep up with or get to carers groups quite often.*



## Not receiving enough recognition

Feeling undervalued can have a negative impact on health and wellbeing. 57% of carers said they needed better understanding and recognition of unpaid carers from the general public.

Many carers feel they are invisible – that they are caring behind closed doors, and that there isn't enough recognition of the vital role they are playing in supporting the health and social care systems.

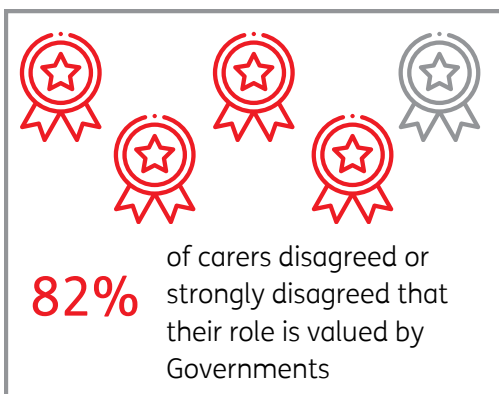
57% of carers also said they needed better recognition from their council regarding their needs as a carer and 52% said the same of the NHS.



“*Recognition instead of people thinking we are benefit bums we do a job of several nurses at once. And can provide care the ward staff can't. I can't leave my son in hospital due to lack of staff. He needs 2 to 1, 24 hrs a day.*

“*Nobody has recognised me as an unpaid caregiver.*

“*Poor recognition by employer of the role of unpaid carers, seen by some as just long-term unemployed.*



Concerningly, 82% of carers disagreed or strongly disagreed that their role as a carer is valued by Governments.

This frustration with decision makers, across each layer of government, was something that shone through as a key theme of our All Wales Carers Assembly 2025, with carers in attendance saying:

“*Unfortunately we just keep saying the same thing and nothing changes.*

“*I'd like to see actions and political change.*

“*Fed up with same old talk - want something done. Prepared to step up myself encourage others. No more waiting for it to happen.*

## Carers feeling overwhelmed

60% of carers said they felt overwhelmed 'often' or 'always'. 36% feel overwhelmed 'sometimes'. Only 5% said they 'rarely' or 'never' feel overwhelmed.

Carers struggling financially were more likely to feel overwhelmed. Nearly three-quarters of carers (72%) struggling to make ends meet said they feel overwhelmed often or always compared with 43% of those who are not struggling financially.

Carers caring for more hours were more likely to feel overwhelmed. 61% of carers caring for 35 or more hours a week said they feel overwhelmed often or always compared with 48% of people caring for less than 35 hours a week.

The main reason carers had for feeling overwhelmed was not being able to take a break from caring (66%). The second most reported reason for carers feeling overwhelmed was managing the different needs of the person they care for (58%).

Some carers said that the person's needs were changing over time, and that as their condition worsened it was harder to cope.



“ Just not getting enough support, caring's not easy and I don't think anyone really understands.

“ Multi-generational caring responsibilities (elderly family and a young child) who have very different needs.

“ Just sometimes when it gets too challenging just want to go and sleep for a bit and then hopefully can cope a bit better after.



The third most reported reason for feeling overwhelmed was carers struggling with their own health condition (52%). Nearly 1 in 3 carers (31%) said their physical health was bad or very bad.



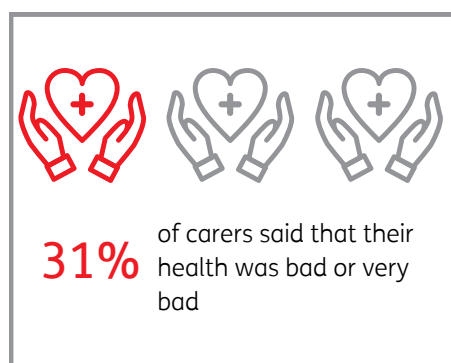
*I struggle to maintain my own health. I also have trouble picking up medications from the GP and there doesn't seem to be any help with this. I also think GP practices don't understand how hard it can be for carers to make an appointment at all and wish this was recognised and we could be more supported in this - for example I can only make appointments on the 1 day a week that I'm not with my child.*



*My physical health is declining due to lifting my 8 year old daughter all the time. Occ Therapy team/social services are too slow to provide support.*



*I've had to take time off work and pay privately for therapy - no NHS help with my mental health. I can't get to the doctors or dentist as I'm fully occupied with appointments for my dad and my son.*



**Table 1: Reasons why carers feel overwhelmed**

Reasons for feeling overwhelmed	Percentage of respondents
Not getting enough support from social care services (eg paid care workers, respite services)	39.90%
Not getting enough support from health services (eg GP or hospital staff)	34.94%
Not getting enough support from other organisations (eg education provider or employer)	16.48%
Not being able to take a break from caring	65.80%
Struggling with my own health condition	52.42%
Struggling to manage financially	39.65%
Juggling paid work and care	28.75%
Dealing with all the administration involved in caring (eg arranging and managing paid care, claiming financial benefits)	36.68%
Not getting enough support from friends and family	34.08%
Not knowing where to go to access support	31.85%
Managing the different needs of the person I care for	57.87%
Not knowing how to support the person I care for	22.18%
Caring for more than one person	29.00%
Worrying about the future when my caring role comes to an end	29.37%

## Support needed with health and wellbeing



### Key points

- 69% of carers said they needed more support with their health and wellbeing – this is carers' most important need, and a significant increase from 58% the previous year.
- 82% of carers said the impact of caring on their physical and/or mental health will be a challenge over the next year.
- Nearly half (49%) of carers need more support from NHS or healthcare professionals.
- 54% of carers said being able to have regular breaks from caring would be a challenge over the coming year.

The significant increase in the number of carers saying the need more support with their health and wellbeing compared to last year should be cause for concern. That 82% of carers said their caring role will have an impact on their physical and/or mental health demonstrates the scale of the challenge facing carers in Wales.

85% of carers who said their mental health was bad or very bad said that more support to be able to look after their own health and wellbeing was their priority. This was identified as even more important than financial support (71%) among this cohort.

As identified in the previous section, many carers sacrifice their own treatment or support to prioritise the people they provide care for. Many carers feel that their health and wellbeing is not a consideration when engaging with health and social care professionals.

“*The focus is on the cared for person and not the carer. Whilst I understand the reasons for this, there have been many times when I did not know how I would carry on.*”

“*I'm now too ill to do caring duties but there's no help from social services at all.*”

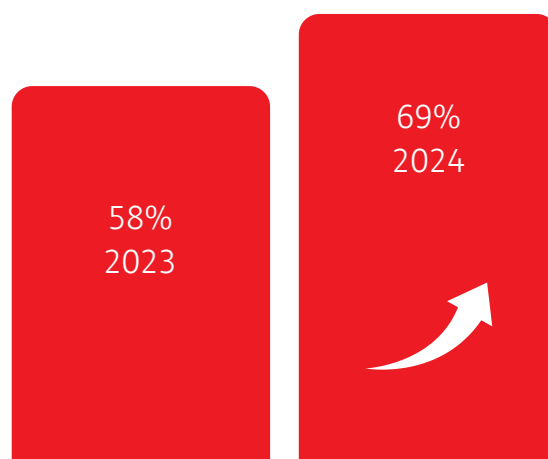
“*I'm disabled myself and the things I am forced to do are making me even more unwell.*”

When carers do seek treatment and support for themselves, they often have to contend with long waiting times for appointments, inflexibility from services and a lack of replacement care. These all add barriers to carers being able to preserve and protect their own health and wellbeing, which are vital to carers' ability to continue to provide care.

“*I have been offered counselling because my husband's mental health and mood swings cause me massive stress and continual anxiety. I have been waiting for 5 months so far.*”

“*On discharge from a four month stay in hospital I pleaded with a discharge co-ordinator and staff nurse for the person I care for to have a brief spell of respite care. They point blank refused citing her having capacity and had said she wished to return home which to me she denied.*”

“*GP service is abysmal no appointments access difficult only acknowledgement of carers is poster in the waiting room.*”



The increase in carers who report needing help and support with their health and wellbeing

## Social care support



### Key points

- Over half (54%) of carers said they needed to know what support might be available and how to access it – an increase from 48% in the previous year.
- 63% of carers who'd tried getting support from social care services had experienced long wait times, and 57% said that services were not available when they needed them.
- 39% of carers who had tried to access help or support from social care services said that there was a lack of consistency in who was providing care.
- 35% of carers said they had concerns about the quality of care.
- 92% of carers who had experienced challenges with social care services said it has made them worry more about the future (including 54% who strongly agreed).
- 85% of carers who had experienced challenges with social care services said it had negatively impacted their own mental health.
- 49% of carers who had experienced challenges with social care services said it negatively impacted their ability to work.





When we asked carers what their main needs were, 54% of carers said they needed to know what support might be available and how to access it – an increase from 48% in the previous year.

“ A black and white explanation of exactly what we are legally entitled to as it's a case locally of who shouts loudest gets noticed.

“ They keep passing us to other services who keep passing us back to them. Still don't have the support we need.

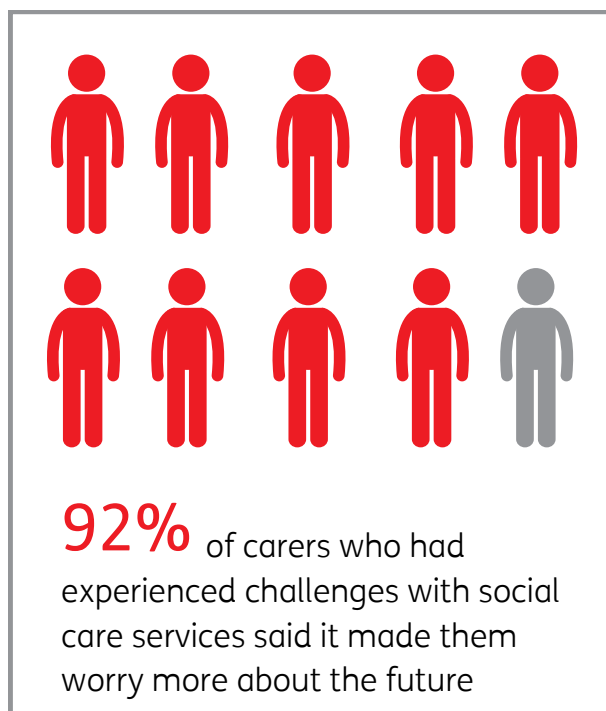
“ Inaccuracy of information from council, high turnover of staff, lack of review of carers assessment.

These findings are unsurprising when one considers the findings of our 2024 Track The Act report. This report showed that in Wales, only 9% of carers were seeing information about unpaid care in council settings or meeting council workers.

This figure actually decreased to 8% in hospital settings and 7% in pharmacies. This compares to 51% of carers who saw information via national carers charities and 28% who saw information via local carers charities and groups.

In our State of Caring survey, we asked carers whether they had tried to access any help or support with their caring role from social care services in the last 12 months. The majority (58%) had not, but 42% of carers had.

We asked those carers whether they had experienced any challenges when accessing social care services.



The main challenge was around waiting times – 63% of carers said they had experienced long wait times for assessments, reviews, care or support.

“ Applied for carers assessment in January this year (2024), still awaiting reply (August 2024).

“ I managed to access a care and needs assessment - referral from specialist children’s services. The social worker came in January 2024 - I have yet to hear back (August 2024)....completely pointless exercise.

“ I suffered a stroke and brain haemorrhage approximately 6 months ago and was referred to Social Services by the Stroke team for help to care for my 2 sons. Despite further calls to chase up this referral I am still waiting for an assessment. As I completed my stroke rehabilitation throughout this time I really needed help with my caring role then to aid my own recovery.

Many carers spoke of their frustration at being passed between organisations and departments within organisations, or simply never hearing from services about their requests for information, advice and support.

“ No communication, our case feels like a number, 4 years after asking I still have no help. I've lost my marriage and half my job.

“ Applied 3 times for an adult social services assessment and ignored each time. Application is not processed. Appalling!

“ They keep passing us to other services who keep passing us back to them. Still don't have the support we need.



“ Passed from 1 person to the other. No one giving me answers. Being told they're short staffed, so cannot offer the support needed.

“ I am being passed between adult social care, learning disabilities social care, home from hospital care. No one can actually help.

57% of carers who tried to access support from social care services said that services were not available when they needed them. This is a particular issue with respite care.

“ Needed help over a weekend as the person I care for couldn't mobilise- only suggestion was to call an ambulance and have the admitted to hospital.

“ Been given extra hours for PA but finding another PA to do the hours seems to be impossible.

“ Being told " no issues identified" "there isn't anything available in your area anyway" by disability social worker .

“ Caerphilly social services give us 2 hours a week but the person they assigned to my son was unable to meet his activity needs.

“ There isn't a service available in my area that can provide type 1 diabetic care to a person with learning disabilities

“ I have not had respite from my son in the past 4 years.

51% of carers said they do not know who to contact or what support might be available.

“ I feel abandoned by the system. I don't know who to turn to. Keep getting moved on to another service.

39% of carers said a lack of consistency in who is providing care is an issue for them.

“ As soon as the support of a temporary social worker comes to an end, you are left in limbo and don't know what to do next. Especially if you have been left in a mess from the social worker.

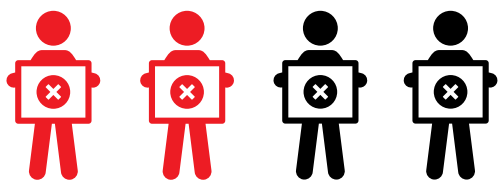
“ No continuity with social workers (if you're lucky enough to have 1!)

“ Inaccuracy of information from council, high turnover of staff, lack of review of carers assessment.

Support services not being affordable were a lower priority than most issues, however still represented a challenge for more than 1 in 4 (26%) carers responding to the survey.

“ There is no help with care in the Vale of Glamorgan. It all has to be paid for. We cannot get any kind of support from adult social services, we cannot get a social worker or any help.

“ Not sure that we can afford the cost of any additional care.



**57%**

of carers who tried to access support from social care services said that services were not available when they needed them

Table 3: Challenges with social care services

Challenges with social care services	% of carers who had tried to get support who found this a challenge
Long wait times for assessments, reviews, care or support	63%
Support services not being available when I need them	57%
Not knowing who to contact or what support might be available	51%
A lack of consistency in who is providing care	39%
Concerns over the quality of care provided	35%
Support services not being affordable	26%
None of the above	9%

The impact of a negative experience or lack of support from local authorities is profound on unpaid carers.

Table 4: Impact of challenges with social care services

Impact of challenges with social care services	% of carers who agreed/strongly agreed
It has made me worry more about the future	92%
It has negatively affected my mental health	85%
I have been unable to take a break from caring	84%
It has made me feel isolated	86%
It has negatively affected my relationships	74%
It has negatively affected my ability to work	49%

## Carers Needs Assessments



### Key points

- Only 17% carers had had a Carer's Needs Assessment in the last 12 months.
- More than half (51%) of carers who'd had an assessment said their local authority had not supported them after the assessment.
- 52% of carers who said they hadn't been supported by their local authority said that the Carer's Assessment identified areas where they need more support, but this hadn't been provided.

## Cost of care

Under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, all unpaid carers in Wales have a right to a Carer's Needs Assessment by their local authority or a provider commissioned by their local authority.

The assessment should consider what support a carer needs to be able to continue to provide care, should they wish to. This should include areas such as their health and wellbeing, housing situation and how to support a carer to live a life alongside caring.

Our Track the Act report published in 2024 tracks the implementation of the Act across Wales in detail, painting a concerning picture of the gap between carers' rights according to Welsh law and the daily reality for unpaid carers.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Are we caring for our carers?11 report in 2024 echoes these findings and paints a similarly alarming picture.

Our findings in State of Caring unfortunately show little difference and continue to show a system which is fundamentally failing unpaid carers across Wales.



“ Pointless exercise having a Carer’s assessment, not worth waiting for it, no help offered and then closed on the system.

I applied for carers assessment in May 2022. It was completed in Nov 2022. I chased it up in Feb '23 and was told it had been lost. I then was told someone would contact me to do another one. I was contacted in Sept '23 and a carers assessment completed in Nov '23. It was recommended that I have 6 hours per week to support me as a Direct Payment. I have heard nothing since. I have tried chasing it but I still have no outcome.

“ Assessment identified I need more support. Direct payment for respite given but not enough care staff available to provide the care.

The carer needs assessment made no difference to the support offered. Even though I was specific that I wasn’t willing and able to provide so much support and that I detailed the issues I had with the current package of care and why it wasn’t meeting needs. It was not worth the paper it was written on. It stated the hours given previously to my brother was now being given for BOTH of us.

“ Respite was expected to be available but later told it’s not available.

Table 2: Reasons why carers do not feel supported by their local authority, following their Carer’s Needs Assessment

Reason for not feeling supported	% of carers who responded
The assessment identified areas where I need more support, but this has not yet been provided	52%
The assessment did not sufficiently consider my needs	42%
The assessment identified areas where I need more support, but I am not satisfied with the support provided	22%
The assessment found I was not eligible for support	21%

## Conclusion

Every year our State of Caring survey data paints a picture of desperation and despair for many of Wales's over 300,000 unpaid carers. Every year, carers tell us of the impossible choices they've been forced to make as a result of the lack of support they're able to receive. Every year, hundreds of thousands of people in Wales provide life-changing care to friends, family and neighbours – often at great personal cost to their finances, health and wellbeing. To replace this care would cost over £10 billion per year in Wales alone.

Every year we hear from decision makers that unpaid carers are a priority for them and that they recognise the work unpaid carers do and value the contributions they make. Yet the reality is little changes for so many unpaid carers across Wales.

Successive surveys and reports show the same issues facing unpaid carers. We know that carers are overwhelmingly impacted by poverty compared to the general population. We know that a very low number of carers are being identified and go on to receive information and advice.

We know that an even pitifully lower number go on to have their needs as carers assessed – despite this being a legal right for all carers in Wales – and an even lower number than that ever receive support from statutory services for their caring role.

**Is this really the best we can do for our carers?**

It's no wonder then, that unpaid carers in Wales are demanding action to reverse years of injustice.

We urge decision makers in governments, parliaments, councils and health and social care settings to sit up and take notice of these reports and their findings. Time is simply up on the need to make change to make life better for unpaid carers in Wales.

**“I am now under the care of the crisis team after having this role forced on me. I don't think I will be alive much longer. There needs to be recognition that severely disabled people cannot be carers (whether officially or not). It is killing me.”**

**Carers need urgent action and they need it now. There is no time to waste.**



This is the second of a series of reports based on data from State of Caring 2024



Across Wales today 310,000 people are carers - supporting a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill

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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