

The Accidental Carers **Statistics Report**

Accidental Carers: A study into the wellbeing of the UK's unpaid carers

In August 2015, independent research was commissioned by National Accident Helpline to examine the impact that being an unpaid carer has on people's health and wellbeing. It is estimated there are around 5.8million unpaid carers in the UK, looking after friends and relatives who are unable to care fully for themselves, many of whom have become 'accidental carers', looking after those who have suffered an unexpected illness or injury. The research specifically considered how rarely these individuals have a break from their caring responsibilities, the reasons why they are unable to do so, and what impact this is having on their health and wellbeing. The national survey of 1,000 unpaid carers looked into the lack of respite carers receive and the reasons why it is so important for them to get the breaks they need.

The results

How much respite are the UK's unpaid carers getting?

- **42%** of unpaid carers **never have a holiday** away from their caring duties
- **35%** of unpaid carers **never have an evening off** from their caring duties, and 61% have fewer than two evenings off a week
- **1 in 3 (34%)** unpaid carers **never have a weekend break away** from their caring duties
- **73% responded that they have a week or less a year** (compared with the 25 days a year - plus weekends - that the average Brit takes)

Is this respite actually beneficial for the carers?

- **21% of carers** say that the last time they had respite that really benefited them was **more than five years ago**
- While **34%** say the last time they had beneficial respite was **two or more years ago**

What factors are preventing these carers from taking a break?

- **35% of unpaid carers have not taken a break** when they wanted one because they **felt guilty**
- **A quarter (25%)** of unpaid carers said have not taken breaks because they **want it to be for both themselves and the person they care for**, with a quarter (25%) also saying that the person they care for does not want to be left behind
- **Over 1 in 5 respondents (23%)** pointed to the **difficulty of arranging cover** for the person they care for

Do these carers have time for any hobbies or pastimes?

- **13% say they have had to stop their hobbies**, such as exercise, music and leisure activities, completely due to their caring commitments. **70%** state that their caring responsibilities have prevented them from keeping up with their **hobbies and pastimes as much as before**.

What benefits do these carers feel a break would bring?

- **Nearly half (48%)** of carers say **a break from caring would be good for their own health**
- **1 in 3 (34%)** feel a break would be **healthy for the relationship** with the person they care for
- Almost as many (30%) felt it would help their relationship with others besides the person they care for

What is the impact of not having enough time off on the individual carer's health and wellbeing?

- **44%** say they are **stressed or anxious about their own health**
- **Nearly a third (28%)** say they are **worried about their need for some time off**
- **43%** are concerned about ensuring the person they care for is **healthy and happy**
- **38%** say they are worried about **maintaining a good relationship** with the person they care for

Are unpaid carers aware what Local Authority support is available for them?

- **1 in 3 (34%)** say they **don't know what support they are eligible** for from their Local Authority
- **1 in 10 (10%)** know there is support available, but **have no time to access it**, and slightly more (15%) say they don't know how to access it
- Only **13%** say it is **easy to find out about the financial support** available to them, with **7%** saying it's **simple to apply for financial support**
- However, **1 in 10 (10%)** say they **don't think they deserve support from their Local Authority**

How do the nation's carers feel about their role as an unpaid carer?

- **60% of unpaid carers** say they are looking after the individual in question **out of love**
- **1 in 3 (34%)** of unpaid carers say they **don't want to make a fuss** about themselves
- Only **24%** feel **their family support them** in their caring duties. Just **13%** feel **supported by friends**
- **More than half (55%)** say they **have experienced feelings of frustration** due to their caring role
- **Nearly a third (29%)** have **felt isolated** in relation to their role as a carer
- **21% of male carers** say they **don't think they need emotional support**

Many of these people have become carers to loved ones unexpectedly.

How has this impacted their relationship with this individual?

- **30%** of unpaid carers say they feel their **relationship with the person they care for has strengthened**, with 15% noting an improvement in their relationship
- **38%** of respondents say they **enjoy caring** for the individual in question
- However, **a quarter (28%)** say they **have felt frustrated** with or angry towards the person they care for

Notes to editors

The survey was commissioned by National Accident Helpline and carried out by Research Now in August 2015, with a sample size of 1,000 unpaid carers across the UK.

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