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Refresh Carers
Empowering unpaid carers for positive change

**Report findings for unpaid parent carers survey in
Leeds regarding paid work, volunteering or pursuing
a hobby.**

Prepared by Refresh Carers.



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Part 1: About the survey

Executive summary

This report explains the findings of the research about unpaid parent/carers in Leeds who are caring for children, young people and adults with disabilities or long-term health conditions. It notes that many key themes are evident throughout and this emphasis on the need to support unpaid parent carers is paramount if they are to feel valued in society.

Introduction

A person is a provider of unpaid care if they look after or give help or support to family members, friends, neighbours, or others because of long-term physical or mental ill-health or disability, or problems related to old age. Across the UK today, 6.5 million people are carers, supporting a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill (Carers UK, 2022). It should be noted that according to the census 63,182,178 unpaid carers are providing care within the UK (Census - Office for National Statistics, 2022). According to Carers Leeds, there are 74,000 unpaid carers in Leeds and 1500 of these carers are parent carers (Carers Leeds, 2022). 'Hidden carers' refer to carers who may not recognise themselves as carers and so do not, or struggle to access support. These carers are not part of these numbers.

Refresh Carers wanted to specifically look at the views of unpaid parent/carers in Leeds regarding their future regarding work, volunteering or pursuing a hobby. The survey aimed to understand the impact caring has on the well-being of the carer that may prevent them from achieving future goals and what is needed to help carers achieve those goals that may enable them to return to the workplace and pursue volunteering opportunities or hobbies.

Acknowledgements

Refresh Carers wish to express thanks and appreciation to the following:

- The parent carers who took the time to complete the questionnaires
- All the services/individuals who shared the survey across their social media channels, newsletters, and emails
- Leeds Community Foundation for providing the funding to carry out the survey

Methodology

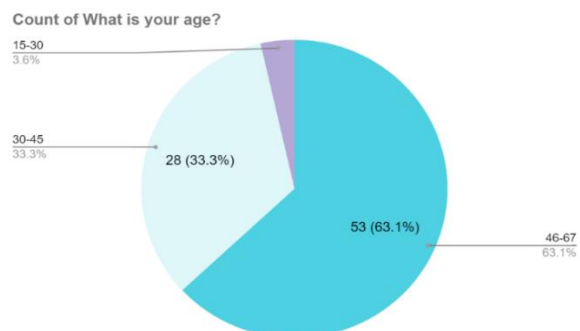
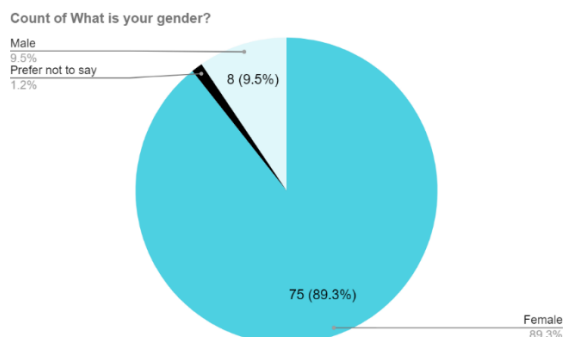
Quantitative and Qualitative methods were used to obtain numerical data and to gather individual experiences and opinions. The survey obtained 84 responses in total; however, we recognise that many carers are hard to reach due to caring responsibilities or not recognising themselves as carers. We distributed surveys through the internet, telephone calls and using paper copies. We shared the survey with various organisations across Leeds that had access to carers. 83 surveys were conducted online. One parent carer needed help to fill the survey in, one parent carer requested a paper copy in the post. The survey was available for six weeks to enable us to try to reach more carers across Leeds. We did take into account groups from diverse backgrounds, ethnicity, cultures, or hidden groups and by targeting relevant organisations we were able to ensure we included all parent carers from diverse communities which historically have been excluded.

Participants were asked questions about their caring role and if caring had impacted their ability to continue working and what factors had contributed to preventing them from working.

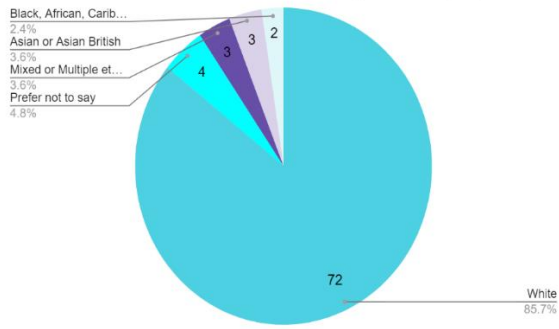
Respondents

84 unpaid carers filled in the survey from the Leeds area:

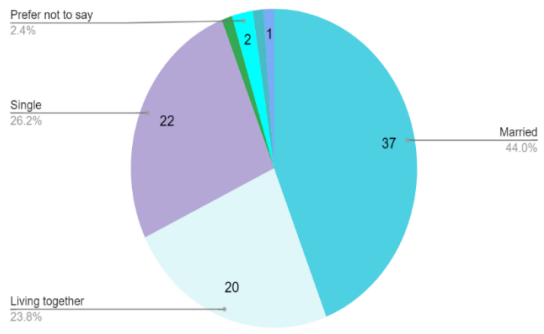
- 75 of the respondents were female carers and 8 were male
- 53 of the carers were aged between 46 and 67 years
- 72 of the respondents described their ethnicity as White British
- 37 of the respondents were married
- 66 of the respondents are caring for someone with a learning disability
- 57 of the respondents have cared for more than 10 years
- 41 of the respondents are caring for a child aged between 0 -15
- 39 of the respondents are caring for a young person aged between 16 - 25



Count of Which of these below best describes your ethnic group?

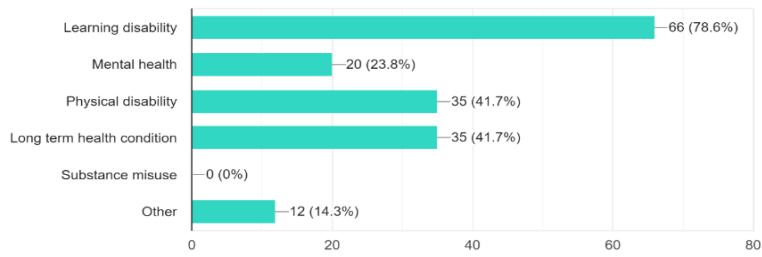


Count of What is your status?

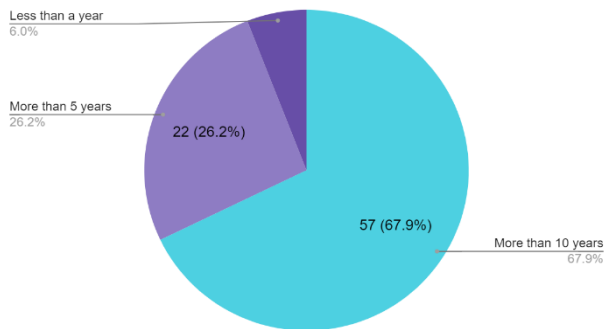


Are you caring for someone with any of the following?

84 responses

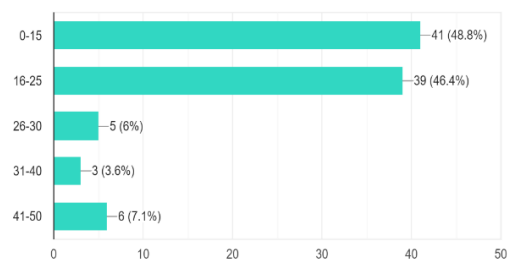


Count of How long have you been a carer ?



What is the age of the person you care for?

84 responses

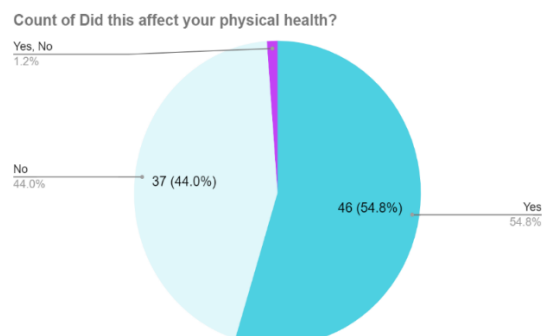
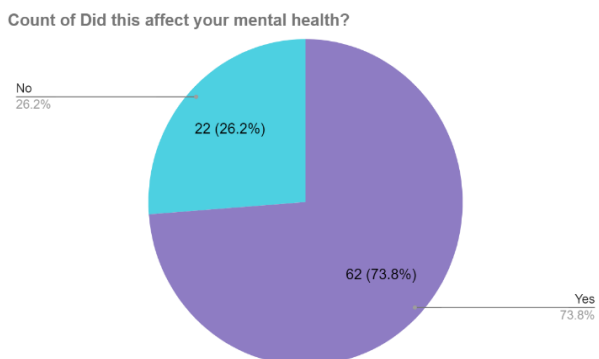
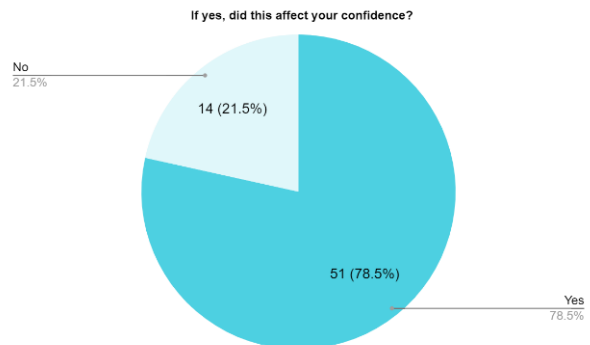
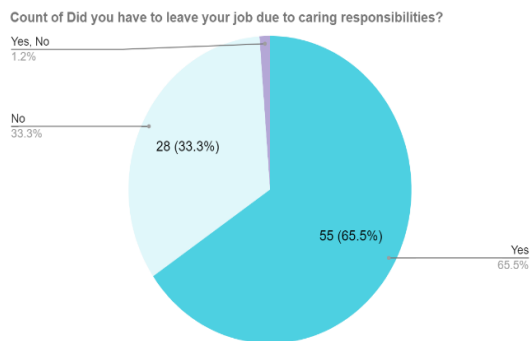


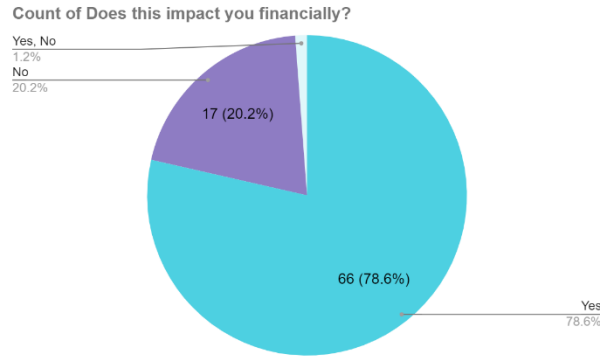
Part 2: What did we learn from the survey findings?

Results

Participants were asked if they had to leave their jobs to care and if it impacted their confidence, mental health, physical health, relationships, and finances.

- 56 respondents said they had to leave their jobs to care
- 51 respondents said leaving their job had affected their confidence
- 62 respondents said leaving their job had affected their mental health
- 47 Respondents said leaving their job had affected their physical health
- 58 respondents said leaving their job had affected their relationships
- 67 respondents said leaving their job had impacted them financially





Participants were asked if they were still caring and would they like to work, volunteer, or pursue a hobby and what support they would need. They were asked if they felt carers should be given the support to enable this.

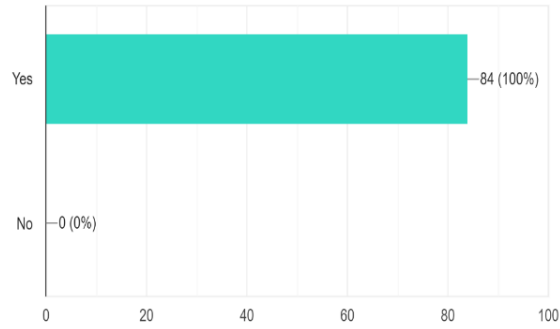
- 84 respondents said they are still caring
- 43 respondents said they would like to work
- 20 respondents said they would like to volunteer
- 37 respondents said they would like to pursue a hobby
- 25 respondents said they would not be able or would not want to work, volunteer, or pursue a hobby

Out of the 25 respondents who said they would not work, volunteer, or pursue a hobby

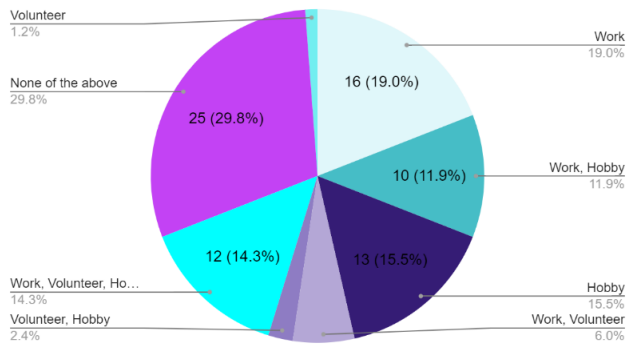
- 19 said they couldn't do any of the above due to caring responsibilities
- 7 said they couldn't do any due to financial reasons
- 8 said they couldn't do any due to loss of confidence due to caring

Are you still caring?

84 responses

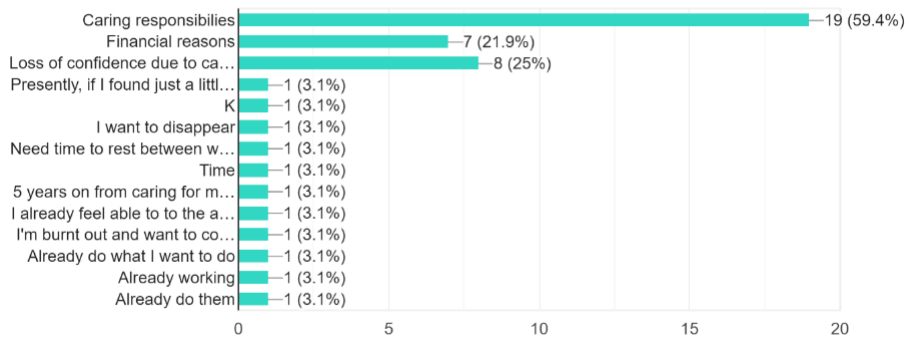


Count of Would you like to work, volunteer, or do a hobby?



If you answered none of the above in the previous question, why?

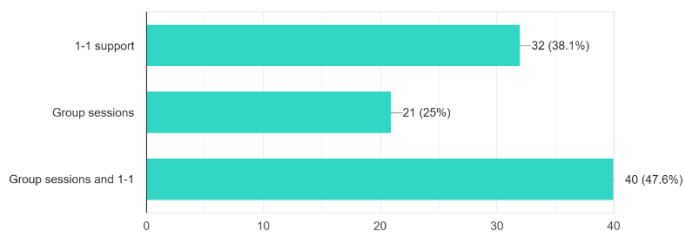
32 responses



Participants were asked what support they would need to enable to achieve work, volunteer or pursue a hobby.

- 32 respondents said they would need 1-1 support
- 21 respondents said they would need group sessions
- 40 respondents said they would need group sessions and 1-1 support

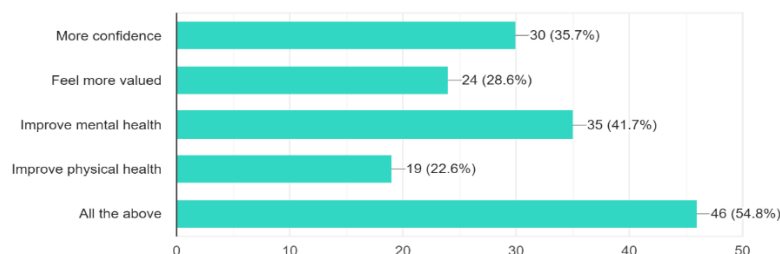
What support would you need to enable you to achieve work, volunteering or gain a hobby?
84 responses



Participants were asked if getting the support would help with confidence, feeling valued, improve mental health, and improve physical health.

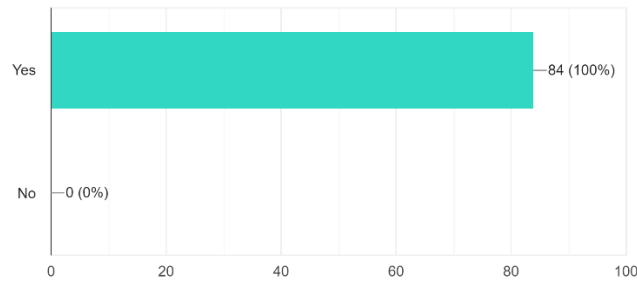
- 30 respondents said it would improve their confidence
- 24 respondents said they would feel more valued
- 35 respondents said it would improve their mental health
- 19 respondents said it would improve their physical health

Do you think getting the support would help with any of the below?
84 responses



- Overall, 46 participants stated they would see improvements in their confidence, mental health, physical health and would feel valued
- All 84 participants feel carers should be given the support to get back into work, volunteer or pursue a hobby

Do you feel carers should be given the support or guidance to get back into work, volunteer or gain a hobby?
84 responses



Part 3: What can we learn from the survey findings?

Conclusions

The survey findings highlight many carers often have to give up their jobs to enable them to care, while doing this it also is evident from the findings that the carer loses their confidence and often loses their identity alongside feeling undervalued and 'worthless.' All these factors will contribute to a carer's overall well-being and impact their future aspirations and personal goals. All the added factors may lead to long term mental health, physical health and financial inequalities that will put extra pressure on the NHS, social care, and DWP departments. The overall findings of this survey concluded that regardless of the needs of the person being cared for, most carers will encounter if not all the below.

- Isolation
- Economic disadvantages
- Physical challenges
- Poor mental health
- Poor physical health
- Loss of confidence
- Loss of identity
- Relationship breakdown
- Marginalised
- Disempowered
- Exhaustion
- Restricted lives

Recommendations

Providing unpaid parent carers with the support to build up their confidence and provide them with the skills they need will give them the opportunities to enable them to either gain a hobby, volunteer or even go back into employment. Employers also need to be mindful of unpaid carers and allow cultural changes to enable carers to work, feel valued, and contribute economically to the system. After researching what support is available to unpaid parent carers there are very few programmes of support that would look at the factors that contribute to preventing the unpaid carer from returning to work, furthermore, it is evident that plenty of schemes and support is available for young people through various Government schemes and it is evident many other schemes are set up to support employment but nothing specific for unpaid parent carers who need certain support in different areas to achieve their future goals and aspirations, so they feel valued, have an identity, have a purpose and feel empowered to achieve.

However unpaid carers would need a carers assessment to identify what support would be needed to achieve their future goals and ambitions and in relation to carers caring for adults – the duty in section 10 (6) of the (Care Act 2014) includes considering whether the carer wishes to work or to participate in education, training or recreation activities, so this should be taken into consideration. There is a legal obligation on children’s services in authorities to undertake parent carer needs assessments but research highlighted in the institutionalising parent carer blame report that only 3% of local authorities in England were flagging up this duty under section 17 ZD (Children Act 1989) in their assessment protocols, (Clements and Aiello, 2021). It is evident from this survey and research literature available that unpaid carers are forgotten in the system and their needs should be central to the current strategy to maximise the economic potential of all unpaid carers.

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