



West Lothian Unpaid Carers Survey 2025 - Results Summary

Introduction

As part of West Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership a carers survey has been undertaken to help measure the impact of the West Lothian Carers Strategy for 2023-2026 as well as developing key actions for the coming year.

Who responded?

Total of 103 responses to this year's survey of which 101 of the respondents identified as an unpaid carer. This is considerably lower than the previous survey in 2022 (592 responses) but is in line with the national survey response rate.

85% of respondents identified as female, 9% male and 2% preferred not to say, 1% other and 3% no answer.

There were no respondents under the age of 18, which is a change from previous years (4 young people responded). All the survey results therefore are regarding services provided for Adult Carers and not Young Carers. The majority of respondents were aged 55+ (48%)

94% were White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. The remaining 6% were white Irish, Black African / Caribbean/ Black British – African or preferred not to say

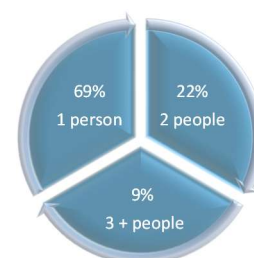
66% of respondents reported having a long-term health condition of their own, which is 17% higher than the last carer survey.

49% of respondents were in paid employment either, self-employed full or part time. 20% identified as full-time carer /parent/ guardian and 15% were retired.

Spread of respondents from across West Lothian with most respondents coming from Livingston (37%) and Bathgate area (28%).

Who are you caring for?

69% of respondents care for 1 person, with a further 22% caring for 2 people. 9% of respondents care for 3 or more people.



36% of respondents care for one or both parents, with a further 30% caring for a child. 14% of respondents cared for their Spouse or Partner with 11% caring for a sibling or other relative. Since the last survey there are less people caring for a spouse or partner (-10%).

The number of people caring for a parent is similar to the previous survey. Nobody who responded provided any informal care for a friend or neighbour compared to 4% in the last survey.



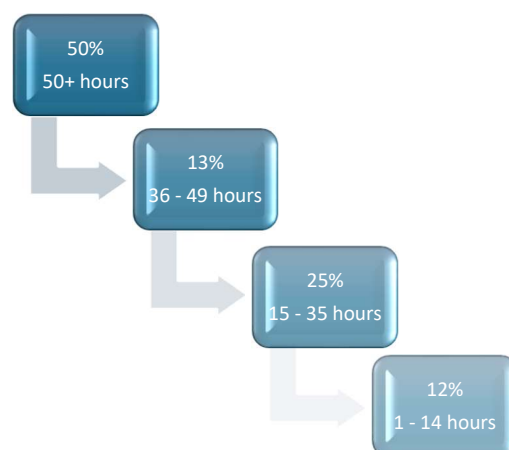
Where you live

The majority of respondents (53%) lived in the same house as the person they care for with 35% of those not living in the same house as the person they care for. 12% of respondents care for more than one person both within their own home and out with their home.

Approximately how many hours per week spent caring?

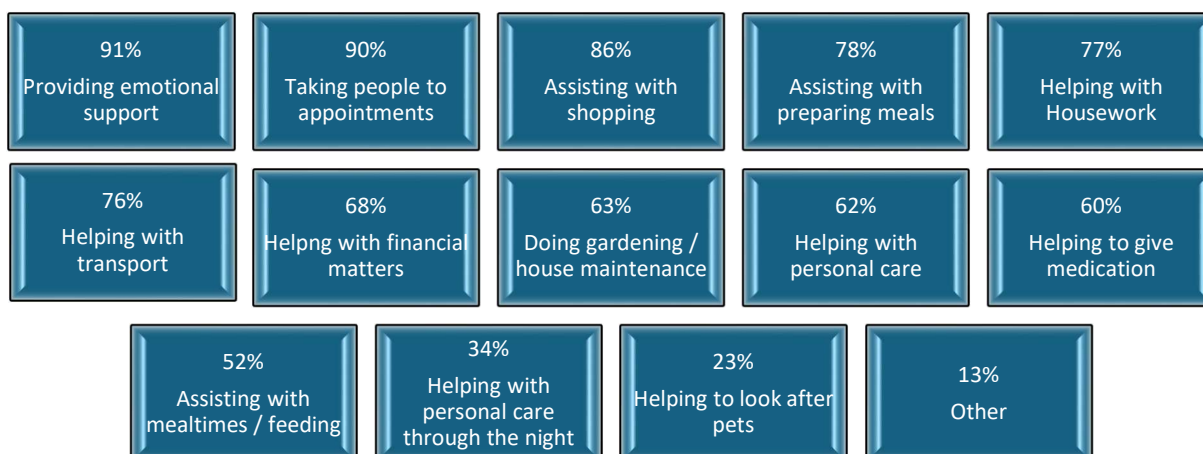
We asked about the amount of time people spent caring each week, 50% of carers reported providing over 50 hours a week of care. This is a 10% increase on the last survey (40%).

The amount of time spent caring for someone has also changed of the past year, with 54% of respondents indicating the amount of time they spend caring has increased over the past year with 45% saying the level of care they provide has remained the same over the past year. 2% of respondents say the number of hours caring decrease.



The type of care provided

What type of care or help do you provide? In responding to this question people could tick all tasks that applied with;

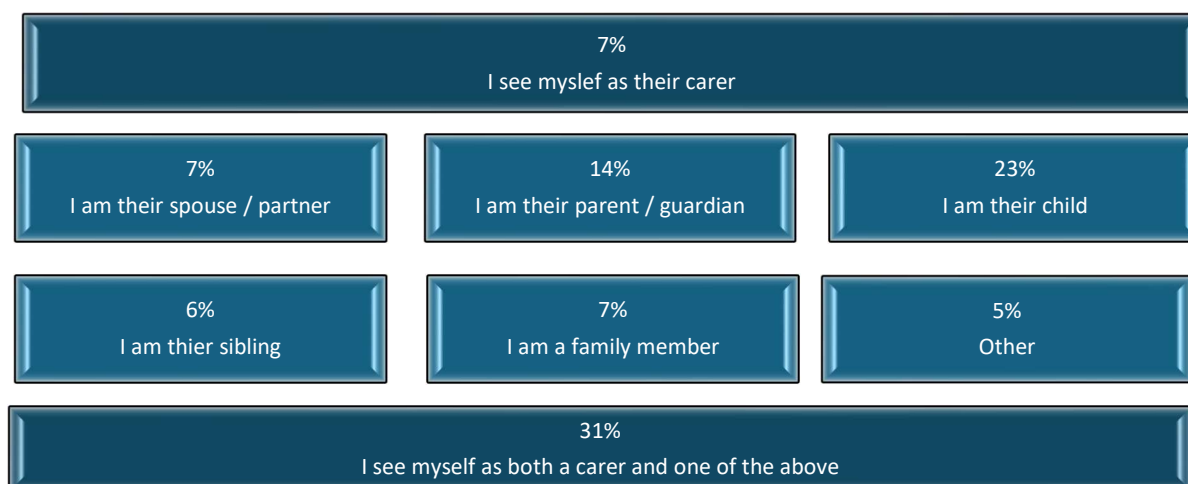


58% of respondents do not expect that the amount of time that they support their cared for person to change over the coming year with 42% expecting this to increase. Only 1% respondents expected the time that they provide care to decrease.

When asked many people believed the time spent caring would increase due to the progressive & deteriorating nature of peoples conditions, some people also recognised that the reduction of services within communities such as day care will impact on the level of care they are required to provide.

How do you identify yourself in relation to the person you look after/care for?

Overall individuals identify themselves by their relationship to the cared for person, with only 7% of individuals identifying as an unpaid carer. This is lower than the last survey where 20% of people identified as a carer but 31% of people identify themselves as both a carer and a relation.



What impact does caring have on you?

We asked if providing support and/or care for someone had had a negative impact on their physical, and/or mental health, their financial situation, their employment or education and if it had made them more socially excluded or isolated.



The greatest impact was on carers mental health with 88% of those who responded to this question advised that their mental health had been impacted negatively. This is a 4% increase on the last survey. Carers have also reported a greater amount of feeling of social exclusion and isolation (75%) and increase in financial pressure (62%).

Feeling Valued

75% of respondents indicated that they did not feel valued as an unpaid carer, with 66 individuals providing further feedback on the reasons for this;

Lack of Support – Many unpaid carers articulated that they feel there is inadequate support from social services, government agencies, and healthcare providers. They advised that they struggle to access financial assistance, respite care, and other essential services.

Financial Struggles – Carers advised that they often cannot claim benefits due to working full-time, yet they still struggle financially. Some believe that the current Carer's Allowance is seen as insufficient, with some lose eligibility upon reaching pension age.

Emotional and Mental Strain – Many carers articulated that they experience stress, exhaustion, and even depression due to the overwhelming responsibilities and lack of recognition.

Lack of Recognition – Carers advised that they feel undervalued by society, the government, and sometimes even their own families. With many advising that their contributions are often taken for granted.

Difficulties Accessing Help – The process of accessing support is seen as overly complicated, with long waiting times for services and bureaucratic barriers. Some carers report to having to "fight" for every bit of help.

Balancing Responsibilities – Many carers advised that they juggle their caring duties with employment and their own personal lives, often without any flexibility or assistance.

Impact on Personal Life – Many carers advised that their caring responsibilities limited their social interactions, personal time, and career opportunities. With some carers feeling isolated and struggle with self-care.

Systemic Failures – A number of carers advised that they believed the current system is broken, relying too much on unpaid carers without providing sufficient resources or practical support.

What support are carers receiving?

Information Advice and Support

25% of respondents advised that they had been offered an Adult Carers Support Plan (ACSP) or Young Carer Statement (YCS), this is lower than previous years.

Of those who have been offered an ACSP/YCS 48% of individuals had an ACSP/YCS completed which is higher than last year (up by 36%).

Unfortunately, only 66% of people with an ACSP/YCS believe that this meets their needs as an unpaid carer with many indicating that a lack of available respite and a general lack of help and support not being available impacts on them.

59% of respondents indicated that they have received support information or advice to help with their caring role. This is a similar position to the previous survey.

The majority of people (49%) indicate Carers of West Lothian as their main source of information and advice and support, followed by National Health Service (NHS) services/GP (21%) and then West Lothian Council (15%). Interestingly 10% of individuals cited their employer as a source of information advice and support. Other sources of support include; dementia services, cancer services, mental health services, autism services, and Parkinsons services. 10% responded on line information and 6% said they did not need support.

We asked people if they felt supported as a carer?

Only 13% of individuals who responded indicated that they feel supported as an unpaid carer, with 56 respondents leaving additional feedback.

Many of those who left additional feedback advised that services need to be more streamlined and effective to support people to manage their responsibilities without excessive stress. This includes properly tailored care and support plans for the cared-for individuals, tailored support for families as well as access to information, resources, and services for carers themselves.

Many respondents reported to feeling undervalued and unsupported by healthcare professionals, government, and society. They also noted their appreciation for organisations such as Carers of West Lothian. Many advised that they felt let down by social services, family, and friends. Overall, better resources, breaks from caring and support structures are needed to prevent Carer exhaustion and ensure sustainable care.

What people told us they needed to support their caring roles:



What Carers felt would help them feel more supported or to remain happy and healthy in their caring role.

- Respite and Time Off
- Employment Support
- Legal Rights and Guidance
- Health Services for Carers
- Systemic Improvement
- Financial and Practical Support
- Improved Carer Support Plans
- Better Local Services:
- More Information and Resources
- Improved Communication
- Access to Emotional and Practical Support
- Opportunities for Disabled Young Adults
- Education Support Gaps

Next Steps

As the demands of caring become greater and more challenging it is important that carers are aware of the support available to them to continue in their caring roles as well as staying in good health themselves.

The Carer Strategy Implementation Group utilise both the local and national survey results identifying the key areas of priority for 2025/26.

Supporting **people** who care for others

