

General Election 2024

Time for a new Social Contract
to transform unpaid carers' lives
and support families



Unpaid carers across the UK are facing significant challenges and need to see wide ranging reform and additional support from whichever party forms the next Government.

Without a transformation in our approach to supporting unpaid carers, ever more people will reach breaking point, with huge implications for themselves, the people they care for, as well as the NHS and the adult social care system, and society as a whole.

To ensure their huge contribution to society is properly recognised, over the next five years and beyond the next Government must do much more to ensure that every carer has the financial, practical and workplace support they need.

Supporting carers to continue providing care and to participate in everyday life through work, education and leisure is economically beneficial and in everyone's best interest.

Unpaid carers' support is worth a staggering £162 billion a year, and they need more from Government and society. That's why we are calling on all political parties to commit to transforming the lives of millions of unpaid carers through a new Social Contract for carers, ahead of the upcoming General Election in 2024.

A snapshot of unpaid care in 2024:

- Every year 4.3 million people become unpaid carers – 12,000 people a day.
- The majority (59%) of carers are women.
- 3 in 5 carers are worried about living costs and how they will manage in the future.
- A quarter of unpaid carers have 'bad' or 'very bad' mental health.
- Nearly 3 million carers are juggling work and care across the UK
- 600 carers have to give up work to care every single day.
- 61% of carers are uncertain about what practical support they can access.
- More than half of carers say they do not have a life outside of caring.

**5.7 million
people in the
UK are providing
unpaid care –
9% of the
population**



Carers' priorities for the future:

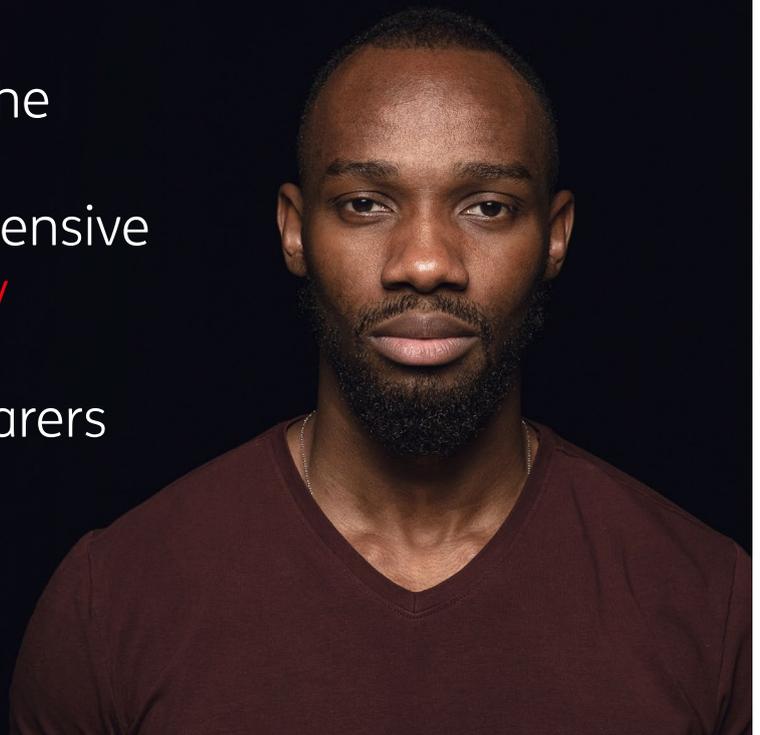
Through our engagement with over 11,000 unpaid carers, Carers UK has identified six themes where we want to see all political parties commit to significant and meaningful policies to transform the lives of millions of carers:

1. Supporting carers' health and wellbeing
2. Preventing financial hardship
3. Better identification and recognition
4. Improving care and support
5. Support to juggle work and care
6. Equality for carers

Unpaid carers want all political parties to commit to:

1. Reform Carer's Allowance and other social security payments for carers
2. Invest in carers' breaks and respite services, and legislate so all carers have a right to a break in England.
3. Make the NHS the most carer-friendly health service in the world, with new rights and practical support.
4. Introduce a statutory right to two weeks of paid Carer's Leave for working carers.
5. Recognise caring as the 10th protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.
6. Provide sustainable funding and investment in social care services.
7. Support carers to manage their health and wellbeing.

We are also calling for the development of a new, ambitious and comprehensive **National Carers Strategy** to transform the way Government supports carers over the next 10 years



“If the next Government doesn't make sufficient changes, unpaid carers will need carers themselves.”

Christie, 40, has been caring for her mother, Maria, since she was a child, and around twenty years ago she gave up work to care for her full-time.

“One of my earliest memories as a child was calling 999, because my mum had passed out. I was about four at the time.”

Maria has numerous complex conditions, including Epilepsy, Type 2 Diabetes, mixed dementia, kidney and heart failure, and depression. Christie does almost everything for her mother, from household chores and finances, to handling medications and hospital appointments.

She constantly monitors Maria's oxygen levels and heart rate and administers daily finger-prick tests.

“I'm not a trained nurse...but it's almost like I've got Mum's life in my hands. It's really stressful and I'm always on high alert. I can't rest because I'm worried something is going to happen.”

Christie struggles with insomnia, as well as anxiety and panic attacks. She's unable to take a break from her caring role, even when her own chronic health conditions are causing her pain.

“I get flare-ups every day, but I have to push through the pain, or mum won't get her food or medication.”

The stresses Christie faces daily mean her mental health has worsened, and she often feels isolated and depressed, going months at a time without leaving the house, except for medical appointments.



“People think that if you're with someone every day, then you're with them, but I don't have any quality time with her as a daughter... there are times when I need my mum, and I can't rely on her in that way.”

Christie would like to see more support and funding for carers in her local area.

“There needs to be a lot more carer day centres. We could meet with other carers and have a coffee and a chat; they could do day trips and help me find care cover.”

Christie wants the next Government to provide more funding for health and social care, and to be more understanding of carers' needs.

“I know funding is tight, but if community nurses were more involved and able to stay with patients for longer it would help me to feel better supported as a carer.”

“Becoming a carer for a loved one could happen to anyone, even politicians. They should think about how that would affect their lives, and the support they would want and need. If the next Government does not make sufficient changes, unpaid carers will need carers themselves. That will cost them more money in the long run.”

Download our full manifesto and join our campaign at go.carersuk.org/election24

For more information, please contact policy@carersuk.org

