

The experiences of unpaid carers in London

Key information

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Introduction

The London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee is investigating the experiences of unpaid carers in London.

Investigation aims and objectives (Terms of Reference)

- Understand the experiences of unpaid carers in London and the particular challenges inherent to being an unpaid carer in London.
- Understand how providing unpaid care affects people's wellbeing, as well as their personal finances, education and employment prospects.
- Understand which groups of people are most likely to provide unpaid care in London.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of current support available to unpaid carers in London.
- Identify which interventions in London or outside of London have proven effective in supporting unpaid carers.
- Understand whether current Mayoral initiatives are sufficient and what the Mayor can do to support unpaid carers in London

Key issues

- There is no official register for carers. According to the 2021 Census, 7.8 per cent of Londoners provide unpaid care, defined as giving any help or support to anyone because they have long-term health conditions, or problems related to old age. This is the lowest proportion of any region in England and Wales.
- Carers are more likely to be in poverty than the general population. According to Carers UK, as of 2021/22, 29 per cent of London carers are in poverty, compared to 21 per cent of all Londoners. In 2024, 61 per cent of carers reported feeling worried about finances and 28 per cent have cut back on essentials like food or heating.
- Long periods of care make it difficult for carers to stay in employment. Data from 2023 shows that 40 per cent of carers had given up work to care and 22 per cent had reduced their working hours. Unpaid carers report negative attitudes in the workplace and some experience a lack of support, making it difficult to combine the demands of unpaid care with paid work. Caring is also associated with a ‘pay penalty’. Unpaid social carers experience a pay penalty of £5,000 per year, reaching £8,000 per year after six years.
- The two main support mechanisms for carers are benefits such as Carer’s Allowance (CA) and Respite Care through a carer’s local authority. However, these benefits are often not sufficient, as 62 per cent of people in receipt of CA live in poverty. Respite care has become less generous and variable in recent years due to funding cuts to local authority budgets.
- Set against what we know about carers in general, evidence is growing that the experiences of Black and minority ethnic carers are frequently different and may be more challenging than those of their White counterparts. Black and minority ethnic carers are more likely to struggle financially and to provide for longer periods, which can increase their risk of health difficulties. Ethnic background also intersects with gender. For example, female carers from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds have significantly higher levels of economic inactivity compared to other groups, linked to unpaid caring responsibilities in the home.

Key questions

- How does providing unpaid care affect people living in London?
- Who in London is likely to provide care and what are their characteristics?
- What additional challenges do unpaid carers in London face, as opposed to those in the rest of the country?
- How effective is the current support available to unpaid carers in London and how does it differ depending on where in London they reside?
- Which interventions in London or outside of London have proven effective?
- Has the Mayor used all his available powers and influence to improve support for unpaid carers?
- What more can the Mayor do to support unpaid carers in London?

Call for Evidence

As part of this investigation, the Committee issued a [Call for Evidence](#).

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