

# MDA No.: 1809

## Title: *London's Unpaid Carers Report*

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee meetings on 10 December 2025 and 12 January 2026, the Committee resolved that:

*Authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to agree any output arising from the discussion.*

- 1.2 Following consultation with party Group Lead Members, the Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee agreed the Committee's report, *London's Unpaid Carers*, as attached at **Appendix 1**.

### 2. Decision

- 2.1 **That the Chair, following consultation with the party Group Lead Members, agrees the report, *London's Unpaid Carers*, as attached at Appendix 1.**

#### Assembly Member

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

**Signature:** 

**Printed Name:** Hina Bokhari OBE AM, Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee

**Date:** 27 March 2026

### 3. Decision by an Assembly Member under Delegated Authority

#### Background and proposed next steps:

- 3.1 The terms of reference for this investigation were agreed by the Chair, in consultation with relevant party Lead Group Members and Deputy Chair, on 13 October 2025 under the standing authority granted to Chairs of Committees and Sub-Committees. Officers confirm that the report falls within these terms of reference.
- 3.2 The exercise of delegated authority approving the report will be formally noted at the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee's next appropriate meeting.

#### Confirmation that appropriate delegated authority exists for this decision:

Signature (Committee Services): *Sal Fazal*

Printed Name: Saleha Fazal

Date: 23 March 2026

#### Financial Implications: NOT REQUIRED

Note: Finance comments and signature are required only where there are financial implications arising or the potential for financial implications.


Signature (Finance): Not Required

Printed Name:

Date:

#### Legal Implications:

The Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee has the power to make the decision set out in this report.

Signature (Legal) 

Printed Name: Rory McKenna, Monitoring Officer

Date: 26 March 2026

Email: [rory.mckenna@london.gov.uk](mailto:rory.mckenna@london.gov.uk)

#### Supporting Detail / List of Consultees:

- Alessandro Georgiou AM,
- Alex Wilson AM,
- Zack Polanski AM, and
- Anne Clarke AM.

#### 4. Public Access to Information

- 4.1 Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the FoIA, or the EIR and will be made available on the GLA Website, usually within one working day of approval.
- 4.2 If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.
- 4.3 **Note:** this form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

##### Part 1 - Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If yes, until what date:

##### Part 2 – Sensitive Information:

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA or EIR should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

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#### Lead Officer / Author


Signature: 

Printed Name: Tim Gallagher

Job Title: Senior Policy Adviser

Date: 26 March 2026

#### Countersigned by Executive Director:

Signature: 

Printed Name: Helen Ewen, Executive Director of Assembly Secretariat

Date: 25 March 2026

# London's unpaid carers

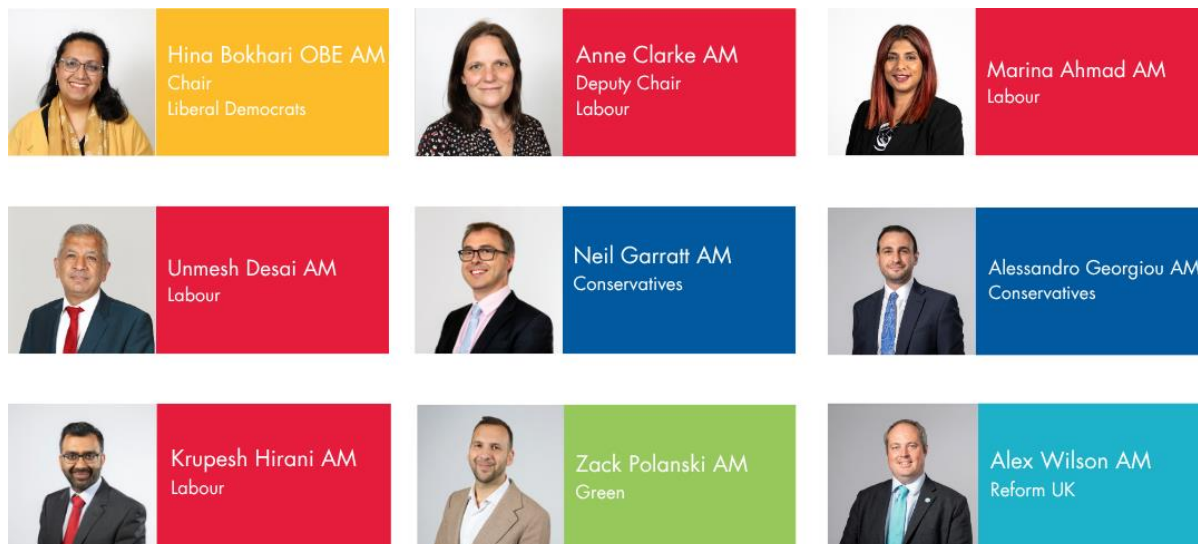
Caring for the carers

Economy, Culture and Skills Committee

March 2026



## Economy, Culture and Skills Committee



The Economy, Culture and Skills Committee examines and reports on matters relating to economic development, culture, skills, sport and tourism in London, and leads on scrutiny of any actions or decisions taken by the Mayor in these areas.

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## Foreword



**Hina Bokhari OBE AM**  
**Chair of the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee**

### **Caring for the carers**

Caring for my mother was one of the hardest things I have ever done, but it was also one of the greatest privileges. Like many people who become carers, I did not think of myself as part of a wider community of "unpaid carers" at the time – I was simply doing what any daughter would do for someone she loves. But through that experience I came to understand the immense responsibility, strength and resilience that caring requires.

And across London, hundreds of thousands of people are doing the same every day. Unpaid carers provide vital support to family members, partners and friends who need help because of illness, disability or age. Research suggests that unpaid carers across the UK provide care worth around £184 billion every year – equivalent to the entire NHS budget. Without them, our health and social care systems would collapse.

Yet despite this extraordinary contribution, too many carers struggle to make ends meet. Many have reduced their hours or left work altogether. Financial support is limited. The costs add up. As a result, many unpaid carers are living in poverty, with every day a struggle.

Nor do caring responsibilities fall evenly across society. Women are significantly more likely to take on caring roles and carers are more likely to come from minoritised ethnic communities – groups that already face structural inequalities in pay, job security and career progression. Taking on unpaid caring responsibilities only deepens these inequalities further.

If we are serious about tackling inequality in London, we must be serious about supporting unpaid carers. Improving financial support, identifying carers earlier and helping people balance work and care are essential to creating a fairer city.

We have to recognise that in London, the pressures carers face are even more acute due to the high cost of living. Time and resources are already stretched to the brink. And many carers do not even recognise themselves as carers, meaning they miss out on support they are entitled to.

This report shines a light on their experiences. Through our investigation we heard directly from carers themselves, as well as from charities, councils and experts across the city and I want to

thank every single person who shared their experience and perspectives with us. Their evidence made clear that while there are many dedicated organisations providing support, there are also significant gaps – in financial assistance, in identifying carers, and in helping people balance work with caring.

The recommendations in this report set out practical steps that the Mayor, the Government and employers can take to improve the lives of carers across our city. Behind every statistic is a person – someone caring for a parent, a partner, a child or a friend. Their work is often unseen, but it is invaluable. As a city, we must do more to care for our carers.

## Executive Summary

London's unpaid carers carry out essential work by looking after those among us who are vulnerable or in poor health. They save our health and social care system billions of pounds every year. Despite fulfilling this crucial role, many of this city's unpaid carers are struggling. Over half of London's unpaid carers are worried about living costs and whether they can manage them in the future.<sup>1</sup> Many of them have had to give up work or reduce their hours significantly and are now struggling with the cost of living and additional costs associated with providing care. Although support is available, it is not always adequate to help them with their caring role or support them financially.

The Economy, Culture and Skills Committee has carried out an investigation into London's unpaid carers. Much of the evidence we heard can be expressed in very simple terms: unpaid carers are struggling to make ends meet. In large part this has to do both with the cost of living and providing care in London. It is also due to the failure of the benefits system to effectively support unpaid carers. We propose a number of interventions to address this:

- The Mayor and TfL should work together to identify options for reducing the cost of transport for unpaid carers in London, such as by introducing targeted concessions. We would like to see the Mayor carry out an impact assessment, examining the practicability, benefits and difficulties of targeted concessions for London's unpaid carers.
- We would like to see the Government reform Carer's Allowance. This should include increasing the amount carers are entitled to and introducing a London-weighting, as well as replacing the current earnings limit with a gradual taper. Currently, to qualify for Carer's Allowance an unpaid carer has to prove they have very low earnings and provide many hours of care every week. Because of this, many recipients of Carer's Allowance are not working. As an out-of-work benefit, Carer's Allowance is simply too low to meaningfully support unpaid carers.

It is a statutory responsibility of local authorities to look after unpaid carers. There are a great number of local charities working closely alongside local authorities and other statutory bodies to support unpaid carers across London. These organisations are doing vital work. However, the effectiveness of their work is hampered by a lack of stable and predictable funding. Moreover, many unpaid carers do not know they are entitled to support because they do not necessarily see themselves as 'carers' and have never been formally identified. Both of these issues, under-funding of support and under-identification of carers, should be addressed:

- The Better Care Fund is an important source of funding for local support interventions. The Government should put in a place ring-fenced and multi-year funding settlement for carer support services in London within the Better Care Fund.

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<sup>1</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#). (p.26)

- The Mayor is well-positioned to coordinate a strategic intervention at a city-wide level to establish a unified protocol for carer identification in London by building on the work of existing initiatives within the NHS. The protocol should be aimed at enabling healthcare staff who come into contact with unpaid carers to identify them, inform their local authority of their status and put in place a support plan if required.
- The Mayor should convene multi-academy trusts and schools in London and encourage them to join the Young Carers in Schools programme, an initiative aimed at helping schools to identify and support their young carers. The Mayor should set a clear target and timeline for the number of new schools in London to be signed up to the programme.

Carers' financial difficulties are also a consequence of reduced earnings once they spend a significant amount of time caring. Many unpaid carers feel unsupported by their employers and find themselves in a position where they are unable to work as much as they used to, and many drop out of the work force altogether. Although there have been some encouraging legislative developments with regards to carer's leave and flexible working, these do not go far enough, and many employers are slow to change their working practices. There are measures the Mayor can take to support unpaid carers in the workplace:

- The Mayor should consult on strengthening the Good Work Standard to include a minimum of five days paid carers' leave per year, flexible working as default, and staff carers networks. This should be completed within the next six months.
- The GLA should lead by example and introduce more carer-friendly practices. To do this it should join the accreditation scheme Employers for Carers as soon as possible and commit to achieving the highest accreditation.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

The Mayor should instruct TfL to carry out an assessment to identify options for reducing the cost of transport for unpaid carers in London and quantify the impact of these options on TfL's financial position. This should assess the practicability, benefits and difficulties of targeted concessions for London's unpaid carers. The assessment should start before the end of 2026 and conclude by June 2027.

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### Recommendation 2

The Government should conduct a comprehensive review of Carer's Allowance with a view to increasing the amount carers are entitled to, introduce a London weighting and replace the earnings limit with a gradual taper. The Mayor should lobby on behalf of London's carers for the Government to do this. We ask that the Department for Work and Pensions responds to this report setting out any plans it has to introduce a London weighting by the end of 2026.

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### Recommendation 3

The Mayor should initiate a project with the GLA's Communities and Skills directorate to establish and implement a unified protocol for carer identification in London, building on the Carers and Hospital Discharge Toolkit and the Carers' Clinical Liaison Service. The protocol should be aimed at enabling healthcare staff who come into contact with unpaid carers to identify them, inform their local authority of their status and put in place a support plan if required. The project should involve close partnership working with London's Integrated Care Boards, London's local authorities and local carer organisations. All organisations involved should commit to adopting the new protocol once it has been agreed. The project should aim to be completed within 2026-27, with necessary funding provided from GLA reserves, underspends or contributions from partner organisations.

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### Recommendation 4

The Mayor should convene multi-academy trusts and schools in London and encourage them to join the Young Carers in Schools programme. He should work with the Carers Trust and the Children's Society to set a clear target of 100 schools by the end of 2026 and 300 schools over the coming five years, and then convene schools to achieve this target

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### Recommendation 5

The Government should put in a place ring-fenced and multi-year funding settlement for carer support services in London within the Better Care Fund or any successor fund by the end of this Parliament. We ask that the Department of Health and Social Care responds to this report setting out any plans it has in this area by the end of 2026.

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## Recommendation 6

The GLA should become a member of Employers for Carers as soon as possible and commit to achieving Carer Confident accreditation. It should inform the Committee by the end of 2026-27 in writing what steps it is taking to achieve the accreditation and set out a timeline for completion.

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## Recommendation 7

The Mayor should consult London's unpaid carers, groups representing unpaid carers and current signatories to the Good Work Standard on strengthening the Good Work Standard to include a minimum of five days paid carers' leave per year, flexible working as default and staff carers networks within the next six months. We ask the Mayor to update the Committee by the end of this year on the results of the consultation.

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## Introduction

Nobody chooses to be an unpaid carer, but many of us feel a strong responsibility to look after those close to us when they are in need of help. This means that many of us may become unpaid carers at some point in our lives. London's unpaid carers provide an invaluable service, making those they look after feel safe and cared-for, whilst also saving our economy and local healthcare systems billions of pounds every year. Research published in 2024 by Carers UK and the Centre for Care found that the economic value of care across the UK was £184 billion per year in 2021/22, equivalent to the NHS budget for all four nations.<sup>2</sup> Unpaid carers are part of an invisible workforce that keeps our city, and our country, running.

The Economy, Culture and Skills Committee set out to investigate the challenges faced by London's unpaid carers. We held meetings with a range of stakeholders working to support London's unpaid carers, including representatives from the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, local carers organisations and local authorities. We also invited written submissions from organisations working in this space.

Additionally, we wanted to hear directly from London's unpaid carers. Working with Carers Trust and Carers UK, we organised a roundtable with unpaid carers in City Hall. Carers present at the roundtable told us about their experience of providing care, the challenges they face, the support they require and what needs to change. We ran a survey open to all unpaid carers in London to tell us what providing unpaid care has meant for them and their lives. We are particularly grateful to the carers who shared their experiences with us and informed the findings in this report.

Our report takes a closer look at this invisible workforce of unpaid carers. We set out to understand who London's unpaid carers are and to what extent they differ from unpaid carers in the rest of the country. We wanted to take a closer look at the impact of providing unpaid care on an individual's life in London. We also wanted to understand what support is currently available to unpaid carers across London and whether it is effectively meeting their needs. Finally, we aimed to understand what the Mayor and the Government can do to support unpaid carers in London.

Despite being a vital part of London's social and economic fabric, we heard that unpaid carers are struggling. Many are in severe financial difficulties after giving up work or drastically reducing their hours. Whilst some unpaid carers could continue to work, employers often lack an understanding of their individual circumstances and how to support them. Benefits and statutory support are insufficient to make up the shortfall in earnings and cover the substantial additional costs of providing care. While local authorities and local carer organisations working across London do crucial work to support unpaid carers, they are not always funded adequately to provide effective support to everyone who needs it. How much help an unpaid carer receives

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<sup>2</sup> Carers UK and Centre for Care, [Valuing Carers 2021/22: the value of unpaid care in the UK](#), November 2024 (p.3)

is often dependent on where in London they reside, and many unpaid carers never access any support at all. This is because they have not been identified as a carer and do not know they are entitled to assistance.

The current situation is unsustainable. Londoners who are providing unpaid care should be supported adequately. Given our rapidly ageing population, combined with a healthcare system which is already under immense pressure, unpaid carers are indispensable to a functioning society and will continue to be so in the future. More and more of us will likely either need care or provide it in the future. This report calls for significant improvement in key areas, including carer identification, financial assistance, employer flexibility and funding for support services.

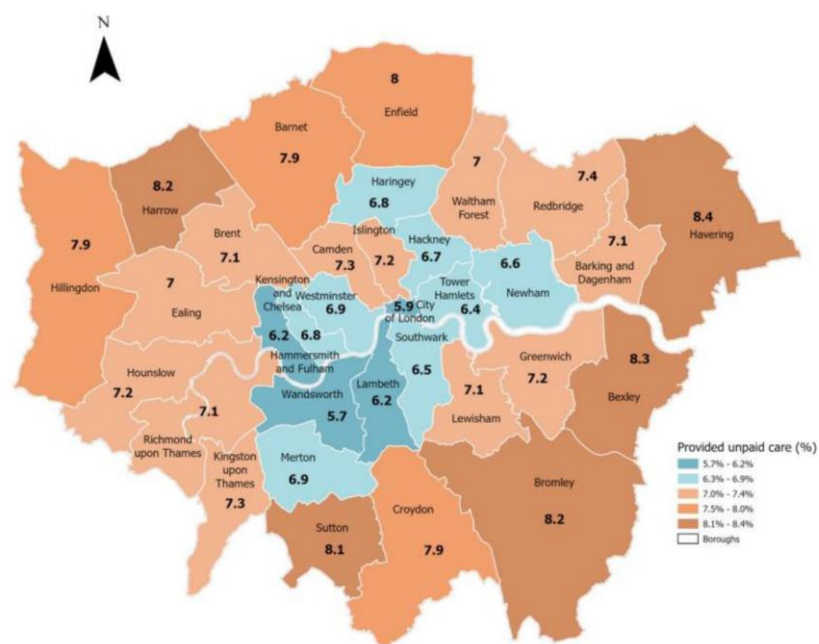
## Background: London’s unpaid carers

### Who are London’s unpaid carers?

There is no official register for carers and there is no clear estimate for how many unpaid carers there are in London. According to the 2021 Census, 7.8 per cent of Londoners, or approximately 600,000 people, provide unpaid care. This is defined in the Census as giving any help or support to anyone because they have long-term health conditions, or problems related to old age.<sup>3</sup> However, in its submission to our call for evidence, Carers Trust noted that this figure is likely to be an under-estimate, as people providing care often don’t recognise themselves as ‘carers’.<sup>4</sup>

Unpaid carers are slightly more likely to live in outer London boroughs. Census data shows that Havering, Bexley and Bromley have the highest proportion of unpaid carers, with 8.4, 8.3 and 8.2 per cent of residents providing unpaid care, respectively. The lowest rates are in Lambeth, the City of London and Wandsworth, where 6.2, 5.9 and 5.7 per cent of residents provide unpaid care.<sup>5</sup> Figure 1 below provides a breakdown of the distribution of London’s unpaid carers across the city.

**Figure 1: Distribution of unpaid carers across London’s local authorities**



Graphic submitted to the Committee’s call for evidence by Carers UK  
 Data: Office for National Statistics, [TS039 – Provision of unpaid care](#), 2021

<sup>3</sup> Census 2021, [Unpaid care by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), 13 February 2023

<sup>4</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers Trust. [Published alongside report.](#)

<sup>5</sup> Office for National Statistics, [TS039 – Provision of unpaid care](#), 2021 [accessed via nomis]

The ethnicity of London's unpaid carers roughly follows the distribution of ethnicities across the capital. However, people from an ethnic minority background are slightly more likely to provide unpaid care, compared to people from White backgrounds.<sup>6</sup> Women are also overrepresented: six in ten unpaid carers in London are women.<sup>7</sup>

London's unpaid carers tend to be older, which reflects the national trend. Half of all unpaid carers in London (50 per cent) are aged 50 or over. The largest proportion is made up of 50 to 64-year-olds: roughly one in three unpaid carers belongs to this age group, although they only make up 18 per cent of London's population.<sup>8</sup> However, compared to England's population as a whole, London's carers are more likely to be of working age: across England three in four carers (75.1 per cent) are aged between 16 and 64, this figure rises to 81.7 per cent in London.<sup>9</sup>

Data from Carers Trust's local carer services, which support carers in 30 boroughs, shows that age, ethnicity and disability are the three main characteristics by which London's caring population differs from the rest of the country. More than half (56 per cent) of carers supported are from a minority ethnic background, compared to 18.1 per cent nationally. Nearly one in five (19 per cent) of carers supported is under 18, compared to 2.5 per cent nationally, and nearly one in three (32.5 per cent) has a disability, compared to 27.9 per cent nationally.<sup>10</sup>

Based on the available data, unpaid carers in London are therefore slightly younger, more ethnically diverse and more likely to be in work than in England as a whole. This speaks directly to the importance of some of the key issues explored in the report, such as the flexibility of employers, carer identification and support provision.

## What are the main difficulties faced by London's unpaid carers?

Many of London's unpaid carers struggle to make ends meet. Steve Shaffelburg, Senior Commissioning Manager, Prevention and Wellbeing at Richmond and Wandsworth Better Service Partnership, told us that the main financial challenge for unpaid carers relates to cost of living pressures.<sup>11</sup> We heard strong criticism of Carer's Allowance, the main benefit carers may be entitled to. During our roundtable, carers told us that Carer's Allowance is insufficient to meet their needs, with one participant calling it a "pittance".<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> According to the 2021 census, 21.3 per cent of Asian or Asian British people provide unpaid care, whereas they only make up 20.6 per cent of London's population. Similarly, 13.9 per cent of Black, Black British, Caribbean or African provide unpaid care, while making up 13.5 per cent of London's population. Although white people make up 54.3 per cent of London's population, only 53.3 per cent are unpaid carers. Data from: Office for National Statistics, [RM030 – Ethnic group by provision of unpaid care by general health](#), 2021 [accessed via nomis]

<sup>7</sup> Office for National Statistics, [RM071 – Disability by provision of unpaid care by sex](#), 2021 [accessed via nomis]

<sup>8</sup> Office for National Statistics, [RM113 – Provision of unpaid care by age](#), 2021 [accessed via nomis]

<sup>9</sup> Office for National Statistics, [RM113 – Provision of unpaid care by age](#), 2021 [accessed via nomis]

<sup>10</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers Trust. [Published alongside report](#). (p.5)

<sup>11</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel Two](#), 10 December 2025 (p.2). The Richmond and Wandsworth Better Service Partnership is jointly owned and operated by Richmond and Wandsworth and provides services for people residing in either borough.

<sup>12</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (p.14)

We heard that being a carer is expensive. Allegra Lynch, Chief Executive at Camden Carers, told us that there are significant extra costs associated with providing care.<sup>13</sup> This is further exacerbated by the impact of caring on employment. In its submission to our call for evidence, Ealing Council stated that carers in the borough find it difficult to remain in full-time employment, which leads to loss of income and typically also has long-term impacts on pension contributions and career progression.<sup>14</sup>

Providing care and working do not necessarily exclude one another, but our evidence suggests that juggling the demands of both can be difficult in practice. Nadia Taylor, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Carers Network and a carer herself, told us that London employers often lack awareness of what it means to be an unpaid carer and typically have little understanding of how to accommodate the needs of carers in the workplace.<sup>15</sup> Shirley Islam, a guest at our roundtable session, told us that unpaid carers can work but often need a higher degree of flexibility in their working schedules, which employers are unable or unwilling to offer.<sup>16</sup>

Unpaid carers often struggle to access support to help them cope with these difficulties. Although carers are entitled to a Carer's Assessment by their local authority to assess their needs and provide them with support, we heard that the support provided following an assessment is not always adequate. Roundtable participants Shirley Islam and Matthew McKenzie called Carer's Assessments a "tick-box exercise".<sup>17</sup>

We recognise that funding is a fundamental challenge, making it difficult for local authorities and local carers organisations to effectively support unpaid carers. Steve Shaffelburg told us that most of the support provided by Richmond and Wandsworth is information and advice. He added that a small number of people may receive ongoing or one-off payments from their local authority, which are intended to help with the costs associated with caring. He also stated that demand for respite care far outstrips supply.<sup>18</sup>

We were also deeply worried to find that many unpaid carers never access any support. We heard that many unpaid carers are never identified as such and struggle on their own. David Walker, Chief Executive Officer at Bromley Well and Bromley Third Sector Enterprise told the Committee that in many instances people are not identified or do not realise they are a carer and are not aware they are entitled to some level of support.<sup>19</sup>

The evidence we received suggested that, in London, the financial hardship facing unpaid carers, their difficulties accessing support and a failure to identify unpaid carers are all major

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<sup>13</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.7)

<sup>14</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Ealing council. [Published alongside report.](#)

<sup>15</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.17)

<sup>16</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (pp.2, 14)

<sup>17</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (pp.9,11)

<sup>18</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee - [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 \(Panel Two\)](#) (p.2)

<sup>19</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.4)

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issues that need to be addressed. These are challenges faced by unpaid carers across all London boroughs and we believe the Mayor should explore how they can be addressed at a more strategic, city-wide level. This will be explored in more detail in the following chapters.

## Chapter one: Financial hardship

While every unpaid carer is different and faces their own set of difficulties, throughout our investigation we heard that one of the key challenges faced by nearly every unpaid carer is financial hardship. The high cost of living in London combined with the additional cost of providing care means that many unpaid carers struggle to make ends meet at the end of the month. This is further exacerbated by many unpaid carers having to give up work or reduce their hours to provide care. Whilst some carers are entitled to Carer's Allowance, the main benefit for unpaid carers, the evidence we received shows that the amount that carers receive is too low and does not accurately reflect the costs associated with providing care.

### The cost of living and the cost of caring

#### The extent of financial hardship among London's unpaid carers

It was sadly not surprising to learn that unpaid carers often struggle with the cost of living in London. Steve Shaffelburg told the Committee that carers across Richmond and Wandsworth typically report the cost of living to be their main financial challenge.<sup>20</sup> This was echoed in submissions by Ealing and Islington councils, which stressed that unpaid carers living in these boroughs experience financial hardship and that this continues to be one of the main issues affecting unpaid carers.<sup>21</sup>

The capital's elevated cost of living compared to other parts of the country affects all Londoners to some extent. However, we heard that being an unpaid carer makes it more difficult to manage one's finances effectively and cope with high living costs. Allegra Lynch told the Committee that unpaid carers typically incur extra costs, such as heating, specialist food, transport, parking, medication, or private medical appointments. She added that this was further exacerbated by unpaid carers finding themselves in situations where caring takes up so much of their time that they have no other options but to reduce their working hours or give up work altogether.<sup>22</sup>

This was also emphasised in many responses to our survey. Respondents frequently described the financial strain associated with caring, driven by a reduced ability to work, the high cost of living in London, and insufficient benefits. Some carers highlighted long-term financial consequences, including debt and homelessness, particularly following the death of the person they cared for.

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<sup>20</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel Two](#), 10 December 2025 (p.2)

<sup>21</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Islington and Ealing councils. [Published alongside report.](#)

<sup>22</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.7)

This is reflected in the available data. In its submission to our call for evidence, Carers UK shared data from its annual State of Caring Survey 2025, which shows that over half of London carers say they are worried about living costs and whether they can manage them in the future, with 48 per cent reporting having cut back on essentials.<sup>23</sup> It also cited research undertaken in partnership with WPI Economics in 2024, which found that 29 per cent of unpaid carers in London are living in poverty, compared to 21 per cent of non-carers.<sup>24</sup>

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*“London is very expensive to live in. Money for carers is not enough to live on. We are [a] disabled household [which makes it] very difficult to receive help to make living standard improve.”<sup>25</sup>*

### Response to our unpaid carers survey

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#### Financial hardship among minority ethnic and working age carers

Financial difficulties are more common among two particular groups of unpaid carers, both of whom are overrepresented in London's caring population compared to the rest of the country: minority ethnic carers and working age carers. Data submitted by Carers UK from its 2025 State of Caring survey shows that there is a significant disparity when it comes to financial difficulties: whilst 19 per cent of respondents in London from a White background are struggling to make ends meet, this rises to 30 per cent for respondents in London from an ethnic minority background.<sup>26</sup>

Working-age carers are also more likely to struggle. Research from 2024 carried out by Carers UK shows that across the UK working age carers generally have a higher rate of poverty than those of state pension age.<sup>27</sup> According to Carers UK data, the highest poverty rates are experienced by unpaid carers aged 25 to 44, with around 39 per cent of people in this age group in poverty.<sup>28</sup> This group also recorded the largest disparity between carers and non-carers, with the poverty rate amongst carers nearly double that for non-carers (39 per cent compared to 20 per cent).<sup>29</sup>

#### The impact of financial hardship on unpaid carers' everyday lives

We were extremely concerned to hear that some unpaid carers' financial situation makes it difficult for them to afford even basic things. Nadia Taylor stated that unpaid carers often

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<sup>23</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#). (p.26)

<sup>24</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#). (p.32)

<sup>25</sup> Written response submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee's survey. The above quote is from respondent's answer to the question, "What are the main challenges you face as an unpaid carer living in London?" The question allowed free text entry.

<sup>26</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#). (p.29)

<sup>27</sup> London Unemployed Strategies & Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [Unpaid care and poverty: unpaid carers' priorities for change through participatory co-design](#), June 2023

<sup>28</sup> Carers UK, [Poverty and financial hardship of unpaid carers in the UK](#), September 2024 (p.16)

<sup>29</sup> Carers UK, [Poverty and financial hardship of unpaid carers in the UK](#), September 2024 (p.16)

struggle to pay for essentials like prescriptions.<sup>30</sup> Transport in particular was singled out by multiple guests during our roundtable session as a major expense.<sup>31</sup> Carla Brain highlighted to us that paying for transport was particularly difficult for young carers as they frequently need to accompany those who they care for to specialised hospital appointments. These appointments, she added, can be far away from where they live in London and cost a lot of money to get to. She stated that there are instances where families have to choose between paying for an Oyster Zip Card for a young carer and paying for food.<sup>32</sup>

It is important to recognise that caring comes with substantial additional costs and a potential loss of income. With the cost of living in London already at a very high level, it is unsurprising that many unpaid carers find themselves in deep financial difficulties and are often unable to afford basic things, like transport or medical prescriptions. Public transport in particular plays an important role in the capital. Without the Underground and buses, many of London's unpaid carers would struggle to navigate around the city, attend appointments and provide care effectively. It is important that travelling around London is affordable for unpaid carers and does not exacerbate their financial difficulties. We believe Transport for London and the Mayor should step in here to ease the financial burden on London's unpaid carers.

## Recommendation 1

The Mayor should instruct TfL to carry out an assessment to identify options for reducing the cost of transport for unpaid carers in London and quantify the impact of these options on TfL's financial position. This should assess the practicability, benefits and difficulties of targeted concessions for London's unpaid carers. The assessment should start before the end of 2026 and conclude by June 2027.

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## Carer's Allowance

Ordinarily we would expect people in financial difficulties to have access to benefits to supplement their income, especially if they have had to give up work. However, the evidence we heard suggests that the main benefit unpaid carers may be entitled to, Carer's Allowance, is insufficient and does not alleviate their financial hardship in a meaningful way.

We heard strong criticism of Carer's Allowance during our investigation. John Perryman, Head of Policy and Public Affairs at Carers UK, told us that the benefit, having been set up in 1976 was "essentially not fit for purpose anymore".<sup>33</sup> He criticised the inflexible nature of the benefit,

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<sup>30</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.14)

<sup>31</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (pp.2-3)

<sup>32</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.19)

<sup>33</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.7)

stating that it excludes full-time students and does not increase if someone is looking after more than one person.<sup>34</sup>

### How does Carer's Allowance work?

Carer's Allowance is currently set at £83.30 per week. To be eligible to receive Carer's Allowance, a carer must be at least 16 years of age, spend at least 35 hours a week caring, not be in full-time education and earn up to £196 per week.<sup>35</sup> The person being cared for must also already be in receipt of certain health or disability-related benefits, such as the Personal Independence Payment.<sup>36</sup> Carers in low-income households may also be eligible for Universal Credit, which has an additional 'carer's element', worth £201.68 per month.<sup>37</sup> However, carers cannot receive the full amount of Universal Credit and the Carer's Allowance. Instead, their Universal Credit payment will be reduced by an amount equal to their Carer's Allowance payment.<sup>38</sup>

Our evidence also suggests that the amount of money unpaid carers receive if they qualify for Carer's Allowance is too low to make a difference. In its submission to our call for evidence, Ealing Council stated that the benefit is insufficient in the face of additional out-of-pocket costs associated with caring and lost income from work.<sup>39</sup> National data published in 2024 by Carers UK shows that more than six in ten unpaid carers in receipt of Carer's Allowance or other associated income-related benefits live in poverty.<sup>40</sup> Carers UK's research found that nine in ten recipients of Carer's Allowance agree the benefit is insufficient.<sup>41</sup> John Perryman stated that if someone is providing 35 hours of care per week, this works out to just under £2.50 per hour,<sup>42</sup> a sum we believe to be unacceptably low.

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*"All that remains is the little dignity that you have as a human being and that is removed because society tells [you that] you are only worth £83 a week"*

**Nadia Taylor, Chair of the Board of Trustees  
Carers Network**

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<sup>34</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.8)

<sup>35</sup> Carers UK, [New rise in Carer's Allowance earnings limit to increase earning potential for carers on a low income](#), 1 April 2025

<sup>36</sup> A full list can be accessed here: UK Government, [Carer's Allowance: Eligibility](#) [accessed 29 January 2026]

<sup>37</sup> UK Government, [Universal Credit: what you'll get](#) [accessed 29 January 2026]

<sup>38</sup> UK Government, [Carer's Allowance: Effect on other benefits](#) [accessed 29 January 2026]

<sup>39</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Ealing council. [Published alongside report](#).

<sup>40</sup> Carers UK, [Poverty and financial hardship of unpaid carers in the UK](#), September 2024 (p.5)

<sup>41</sup> Carers UK, [State of Caring 2024: The impact of caring on finances](#), October 2024 (p.7)

<sup>42</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.7)

We also received evidence suggesting that, due to its design, Carer's Allowance acts as a disincentive to work. In its submission to our call for evidence, Carers UK stated that the earnings limit inherent to Carer's Allowance creates a sharp "cliff edge", whereby unpaid carers who earn even slightly more than the earnings allowance lose the entire benefit.<sup>43</sup> The submission further states that:

*"For London, where the cost of living and housing costs are highest, a flat national CA rate and low earnings limit are particularly problematic: our London data from State of Caring 2024 and 2025 surveys shows carers both leaving work and still struggling to cover basic costs, suggesting CA and other benefits do not compensate for lost earnings."<sup>44</sup>*

In July 2025, the Government stated that Carer's Allowance is increased each April in line with the consumer price index to ensure the value of the benefit remains in line with the general level of prices. It further notes that it was increased by a "record amount" to its current level of £83.30 in April 2025 and forecasts that between 2025/26 and 2029/30, spending on Carer's Allowance will rise by over six per cent in real terms, benefitting "at least 60,000 unpaid carers."<sup>45</sup> In April 2025, the Government stated that it raised the earnings limit for Carer's Allowance from £151 to the current level of £196 per week and added that this represents "the largest cash increase ever".<sup>46</sup>

We welcome the Government's decision to raise the earnings limit for Carer's Allowance and agree with the Government that the payment should be reviewed annually to remain in line with inflation. However, we believe that unpaid carers are worth more than £2.50 per hour, which is equivalent to what someone would receive if providing 35 hours of care.

They are doing vital work looking after loved ones and saving London's health and social care system billions of pounds. The least our unpaid carers are entitled to is to be compensated in a way which reflects their higher cost of living in the capital. It is common practice to compensate people who do important work and live in London more highly in recognition of their higher cost of living. This is the case for civil servants, police officers, those working in the NHS, as well as many other occupations. We believe London's unpaid carers should also benefit from this.

## Recommendation 2

The Government should conduct a comprehensive review of Carer's Allowance with a view to increasing the amount carers are entitled to, introduce a London weighting and replace the earnings limit with a gradual taper. The Mayor should lobby on behalf of London's carers for

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<sup>43</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#). (p.9)

<sup>44</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#). (p.9)

<sup>45</sup> UK Parliament, [Question for Department for Work and Pensions, UIN 67267](#), 11 July 2025

<sup>46</sup> UK Parliament, [Question for Department for Work and Pensions, UIN 43366](#), 1 April 2025

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the Government to do this. We ask that the Department for Work and Pensions responds to this report setting out any plans it has to introduce a London weighting by the end of 2026.

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## Chapter two: Identification of unpaid carers

When someone begins to look after another person they are close to, they do not always view themselves as falling into the category of being an 'unpaid carer'. It can take months or years of continuously providing care for someone to realise they are part of this category. Although they might come into contact with their local authority or their health care provider over the course of providing care, not all of these organisations are equipped to make them aware of their status.

If someone does not know they are an unpaid carer, they are unlikely to be aware of their rights and what they are entitled to and they will not actively seek out support.

### Unpaid carers in London are not always properly identified

#### London's 'hidden' unpaid carers

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*"We massively under-identify carers in London"*<sup>47</sup>

**David Walker**

**Chief Executive officer, Bromley Well and Bromley Third Sector Enterprise**

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Whilst the 2021 Census provides some insight into the number of carers there are in London, this data is imperfect as many carers in London are not formally identified as such. In its submission to our call for evidence, NHS England London Region stated that the Census is likely an under-estimate and highlights that the 2025 GP Patient Survey estimates the figure to be closer to 16 per cent of Londoners, which is over a million people.<sup>48 49</sup>

In its submission to our call for evidence, Islington Council stated that many unpaid carers in the borough remain "hidden" and that reaching this group has proved difficult. It shared that in 2023/24 just 5.2 per cent of the estimated number of Islington carers were known to the

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<sup>47</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.20)

<sup>48</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by NHS England London Region. [Published alongside report](#). (p.88)

<sup>49</sup> It should be noted that due to the varying definition of who a carer is, the census typically reports lower rates, compared to other surveys, such as the Health Survey for England, the GP Patient Survey and the Understanding Society Survey. However, according to the Health Foundation, the most reliable data on carers currently still comes from the Census. For more information, see: The Health Foundation, [Understanding unpaid carers and their access to support](#), 12 April 2023

council and, of those, only 22.7 per cent were registered with the borough's support services.<sup>50</sup> Similarly, Ealing Council told us that, based on a recent survey it carried out with unpaid carers in the borough, only half (54 per cent) agreed they were aware of their rights to support.<sup>51</sup>

We heard that this can partially be attributed to unpaid carers being unaware of their own status. David Walker shared his own experience of working with unpaid carers in Bromley, telling the Committee that unpaid carers who come in contact with his organisation are aware they are looking after another person, but do not always automatically view themselves as an unpaid carer.<sup>52</sup> John Perryman told us that based on research carried out by Carers UK, there is typically a two-year gap between somebody becoming a carer and beginning to identify as one.<sup>53</sup>

### Under-identification of minority ethnic and young unpaid carers

Worryingly, there is evidence to suggest that this disproportionately affects two groups of carers that are more common in London: young carers and carers from a minority ethnic background. In its submission to our call for evidence, Carers UK stated that people from a minority ethnic background can sometimes face language and communication barriers, preventing them from engaging with services. It adds that some languages do not have a word that neatly translates to 'carer', further hindering identification.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, young carers are also often not identified. Carla Brain, Young Carers Project Manager at Enfield Carers Centre stressed that under-identification of young carers was a persistent issue, preventing this cohort of people from accessing support. She stated that:

*"There are thousands and thousands of children caring out there, and because they are not being identified and there are so many hidden young carers, it is difficult to get the support and funding they need because we do not have an accurate amount. There are different estimates. Some estimates have been that one in five children and young people in the UK is a young carer."<sup>55</sup>*

The available data suggests that this problem affects London in particular. In its submission to our call for evidence, Carers Trust stated that nationally, the average number of young carers recorded per local authority is 426. In contrast, London's boroughs report an average of only 145 young carers each. Carers Trust further states that London schools have identified 4,633

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<sup>50</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee Islington council. [Published alongside report](#). (p.71)

<sup>51</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee Ealing council. [Published alongside report](#). (p.69)

<sup>52</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.4)

<sup>53</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.4)

<sup>54</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#).

<sup>55</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.5)

young carers out of 1.3 million students, which is only around 0.32 per cent of the population, adding that this is very likely an under-estimate.<sup>56</sup>

### **Unpaid carers are not proactively being identified**

Our guests voiced concerns about the ability of public bodies in London to proactively identify carers when they come in contact with them. Roundtable participants Shirley Islam and Matthew McKenzie both expressed frustration that service providers, such as hospitals, GPs or local authorities, often fail to identify unpaid carers, with Matthew McKenzie raising that mental health carers in particular often go unidentified.<sup>57</sup>

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*“At no point did anyone with the GP or local authorities pick up on the fact that I needed help or support or identify me”<sup>58</sup>*

### **Shirley Islam**

#### **Unpaid carers roundtable participant**

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In its submission to our call for evidence, NHS England London Region cited data showing that although approximately seven in ten unpaid carers have frequent contact with the NHS, healthcare staff only identify around one in ten unpaid carers. It added that inconsistent recording systems and codes used across GP practices limit opportunities for identification and prevent carers from accessing carer-specific support.<sup>59</sup>

We also received evidence to suggest that unpaid carers are sometimes disregarded in a healthcare setting. In its submission, Islington Council stated that carers in the borough often report not being recognised and included in discussions about the person they care for. It adds that this is potentially a more serious problem in large cities like London where people are less likely to have close personal relationships with their healthcare providers, as may be the case with “family doctors” in more rural areas.<sup>60</sup>

There are already some initiatives in place in various parts of London seeking to address this issue. As the strategic authority in London, we believe the GLA and the Mayor are well-placed to support these initiatives and ensure there is coordination across the capital. Measures to help achieve this are discussed below.

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<sup>56</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers Trust. [Published alongside report](#). (pp.19-20)

<sup>57</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (pp.4,5,,9)

<sup>58</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (p.9)

<sup>59</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by NHS England London Region. [Published alongside report](#). (p.88)

<sup>60</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Islington council. [Published alongside report](#). (p.72)

## Current approaches to identifying carers

We heard that, across London, initiatives currently exist to identify unpaid carers, including in schools, hospitals and a community setting. However, our evidence suggests that there are still significant gaps. Carla Brain stressed the need for more joined-up working between local authorities and health care providers to raise awareness of what it means to be a carer and identify carers.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Mike Rich, Chief Executive Officer at Barnet Carers, highlighted the need for providing carers with an easy way to self-identify, telling the Committee that:

*“It should be possible for a carer to say, ‘I think I am a carer. This is who I care for. This is my post code’, and the local carers organisation be informed of that.”*<sup>62</sup>

We were encouraged to hear there are various interventions in place to identify carers in a healthcare setting. In its submission to our call for evidence, NHS England London Region stated that it had developed the Carers and Hospital Discharge Toolkit alongside Carers UK, Mobilise, Carers First, Carers Trust and the London Association of Directors of Adult Social Care. It states that since the launch of the toolkit in 2023, several trusts in London have adopted the toolkit, including its five-step carer pathway.<sup>63</sup> The first step of the pathway is specifically intended to help healthcare staff identify whether someone is a carer. It sets out questions to ask, things staff should be aware of when interacting with carers and additional resources, such as how a trust can access staff carer awareness training. The toolkit also provides guidance on how to support unpaid carers and how to involve them in further care.<sup>64</sup>

The Kingston and Richmond NHS Foundation Trust, an early adopter of the toolkit, has built on this by setting up the Carers' Clinical Liaison Service (CCLS) at Kingston Hospital. In its submission, the trust stated that the service supports unpaid carers while the cared-for person is in hospital. This involves drawing up a carer support plan, helping with emergency planning and benefits as well as accessing important services, such as a carer's assessment and counselling. The CCLS also has 'Carer Navigators' who identify and support carers in a healthcare setting. In its submission, the trust stated that 73 per cent of carers supported via the CCLS had not previously been identified and were unknown to local support services.<sup>65</sup>

It was also positive to hear that there is an intervention in place to identify young carers. In its submission, the Carers Trust stated that the Young Carers in Schools programme, which it jointly runs with the Children's Society, support schools to better identify and support pupils who have caring responsibilities. It provides tools, training, templates, and case studies, and

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<sup>61</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.19)

<sup>62</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.18)

<sup>63</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by NHS England London Region. [Published alongside report.](#)

<sup>64</sup> NHS England, [Carers and Hospital Discharge](#), January 2023

<sup>65</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Kingston and Richmond NHS Foundation Trust. [Published alongside report.](#) (p.81)

acknowledges effective practice. Schools have to meet five core standards to become certified.<sup>66</sup>

The programme has proven effective at identifying young carers. Carers Trust cites evaluation data which shows that schools that have become certified between 2023 and 2025 identified more than three times the proportion of young carers than schools that are not part of the programme.<sup>67</sup> Despite this, only a small number of schools in London are part of this programme: currently 29 schools in London are signed up to be part of Young Carers in Schools.<sup>68</sup> Given the issues surrounding the identification of young carers in London and the effectiveness of the programme, we believe it should be expanded to more schools across the capital.

The Mayor can play an important role in identifying unpaid carers in London. Although there are some promising initiatives in London to address this problem, there is a lack of leadership to enable these programmes to be rolled out more widely across the city, with most of them being confined to a limited number of healthcare providers and schools. This is particularly concerning given that London has a higher proportion of young carers and carers from an ethnic minority background, two groups which are disproportionately likely to be under-identified. We believe the Mayor can add value here as he is well-placed to provide leadership at a city level, bringing together key stakeholders and boosting the roll-out of existing initiatives.

The Mayor should build on the work that has already been done and introduce a unified protocol for carer identification in London, working in partnership with the NHS, boroughs and local carer organisations. He should also use his convening powers and work with London's schools to expand the Young Carers in Schools programme. We believe that an acknowledgement of this problem and strategic leadership by the Mayor can make a difference. The Mayor should convene local authorities, schools and multi-academy trusts in London, and encourage them to become part of the Young Carers in Schools programme.

### Recommendation 3

The Mayor should initiate a project with the GLA's Communities and Skills directorate to establish and implement a unified protocol for carer identification in London, building on the Carers and Hospital Discharge Toolkit and the Carers' Clinical Liaison Service. The protocol should be aimed at enabling healthcare staff who come into contact with unpaid carers to identify them, inform their local authority of their status and put in place a support plan if required. The project should involve close partnership working with London's Integrated Care Boards, London's local authorities and local carer organisations. All organisations involved should commit to adopting the new protocol once it has been agreed. The project should aim to be completed within 2026-27, with necessary funding provided from GLA reserves, underspends or contributions from partner organisations.

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<sup>66</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers Trust. [Published alongside report.](#)

<sup>67</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers Trust. [Published alongside report.](#) (p.21)

<sup>68</sup> Information provided by Carers Trust via e-mail on 26 February 2026

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### **Recommendation 4**

The Mayor should convene multi-academy trusts and schools in London and encourage them to join the Young Carers in Schools programme. He should work with the Carers Trust and the Children's Society to set a clear target of 100 schools by the end of 2026 and 300 schools over the coming five years, and then convene schools to achieve this target.

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## Chapter three: Supporting unpaid carers

Although identifying carers is clearly important, this is only the first step. We heard that identification, if successful, is not always followed by the carer receiving adequate support. The organisations tasked with supporting unpaid carers, local authorities and local carers organisations, are often not funded sufficiently to provide the type of support that could make a difference to an unpaid carer's life. This situation has worsened in recent years as funding has become increasingly constrained at the same time as the needs of carers are becoming ever more complex. Carers also face a fragmented landscape with limited coordination between organisations and large disparities in the support on offer in different parts of London.

### The challenges associated with supporting unpaid carers in London

We heard that London's local authorities and charities work closely together to create local support offers for unpaid carers. In many cases, local carers organisations are partly funded by local authorities (see box below). Mike Rich told us that his organisation, Barnet Carers, works in close partnership with Barnet Council and was involved in drawing up their Carers Strategy.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, David Walker noted that the organisation he leads, Bromley Well, works closely with the borough to produce their carers plan and an all-age carers charter.<sup>70</sup>

#### The role of London's boroughs and local carer organisations

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities are required to carry out a carer's assessment for every unpaid carer who requests it.<sup>71</sup> Carer's assessments serve to identify a carer's needs. If a carer has needs identified during the assessment, they have the right to support and must be provided with a support plan. This plan should consider what a carer might want to achieve on a day-to-day basis in their caring role. It may also include a personal budget.<sup>72</sup> Local authorities must also provide information and advice services for all carers to prevent, reduce or delay the development of longer-term care and support needs.<sup>73</sup> Local authorities are allowed to commission local carer organisations, which are typically charities, to carry out assessments and provide certain types of support. Local carers organisations also typically receive funding from external sources to provide additional support to local carers.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.1)

<sup>70</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.2)

<sup>71</sup> [Care Act 2014](#) (s.9)

<sup>72</sup> [Care Act 2014](#) (ss.18,20,24)

<sup>73</sup> [Care Act 2014](#) (s.24)

<sup>74</sup> Carers UK, [Your guide to the Care Act \(England\)](#) [accessed 3 November 2025]

The support provided by local carer organisations typically varies but usually includes peer-to-peer support groups, health and wellbeing support or resources for people caring for others with specific conditions. For example, Bromley Well offers regular social activities to meet other carers, as well as a quarterly carers forum to share information and provide feedback about Bromley Well's services.<sup>75</sup> Enfield Carers Centre offers access to themed support groups, such as a Bereaved Carers Support Group and a Learning Difficulties and Autism Spectrum Disorder Carers Support Group.<sup>76</sup> Barnet Carers offers a range of e-resources for unpaid carers looking after people with dementia. In addition to this, unpaid carers can arrange a call with carer support staff to talk about their support needs and submit requests for extra support.<sup>77</sup>

### Rising demand for support and limited funding

Demand for support services for unpaid carers is higher than ever before. Mike Rich and David Walker stressed to us that unpaid carers in Barnet and Bromley are increasingly older people with higher support needs. Both noted that unpaid carers in the borough are increasingly dealing with health issues themselves.<sup>78</sup> David Walker also stated that the complexity of people's needs further increased after the COVID-19 pandemic, with people often needing support for multiple issues.<sup>79</sup> This is not confined to outer London boroughs, which typically have older populations. Allegra Lynch told us that in Camden, demand for support and the complexity of people's needs have also risen, making it more difficult for Camden Carers and the local authority to provide support.<sup>80</sup>

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*"We are [...] reasonably well funded by the local authority. We are one of the better London boroughs in terms of funding, and we are struggling"*

**Allegra Lynch**  
**Chief Executive, Camden Carers**

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We were concerned to hear that local carers services are not funded appropriately to meet demand. In its submission to our call for evidence, the Carers Trust stated that services in London typically receive less funding from health services and local authorities and tend to rely more on grants from non-governmental and philanthropic organisations.<sup>81</sup> This was echoed by Carla Brain and David Walker who highlighted that support funding for groups like mutual

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<sup>75</sup> Bromley Well, [Unpaid Adult Carers](#) [accessed 15 December 2025]

<sup>76</sup> Enfield Carers Centre, [Support Groups](#) [accessed 15 December 2025]

<sup>77</sup> Barnet Carers, [Caring for an elderly person or someone with dementia](#) [accessed 15 December 2025]

<sup>78</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (pp.7-8)

<sup>79</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.4)

<sup>80</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.10)

<sup>81</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers Trust. [Published alongside report](#). (p.15)

carers (i.e. two people in need of care who look after each other) and young carers is dependent on special grants, rather than local authority funding.<sup>82</sup>

In its submission to our call for evidence, Carers Trust stated that the 26 local carer services operated by the organisation supported fewer carers in 2024/25 compared to the previous year, although the number of carers registered with the services had increased. It notes that this reflects increased demand but reduced capacity.<sup>83</sup> The submission also states that statutory funding per unpaid carer for local carer organisations has fallen to its lowest recorded level.<sup>84</sup>

### **The impact of limited funding on support provision**

This has a significant impact on London's unpaid carers. Survey data from Carers UK submitted as part of our call for evidence shows that only 28 per cent of respondents in London who had a carer's assessment felt supported afterwards.<sup>85</sup> Roundtable participants Shirley Islam and Matthew McKenzie described the carer's assessments as a "tick-box exercise" which does not typically lead to significantly more support being provided.<sup>86</sup>

We heard that financial support is rare and that, in the majority of cases, support is limited to signposting to information and advice. Steve Shaffelburg told the Committee that due to the limited funding available, most support provided after a carer's assessment in Richmond and Wandsworth is signposting to either council services or local carer organisations that offer support. He added that for some unpaid carers, the local authority is able to provide either one-off or ongoing direct payments, stressing that this was the case only for a minority of carers.<sup>87</sup>

Carla Brain told us that following up a carer's assessment with tangible support is particularly important for young carers and that simply signposting to support is unlikely to make a positive difference. She stated that:

*"If your local authority is completing young carer's assessments and then maybe just signposting them to generic children's services in the borough, then you are doing the young carers a disservice. There needs to be a support plan put in place for them that is tailored to them as a young carer."<sup>88</sup>*

We heard that one of the most requested types of support is respite care, whereby a paid carer takes over caring duties for a set period of time, giving the unpaid carer a 'short break'. However, our evidence suggests that support services are struggling to meet demand. In its

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<sup>82</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (pp.1,17)

<sup>83</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers Trust. [Published alongside report.](#)

<sup>84</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.14)

<sup>85</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers UK. [Published alongside report.](#) (p.27)

<sup>86</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (pp.9,11)

<sup>87</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel Two](#), 10 December 2025 (p.1)

<sup>88</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.15)

submission to our call for evidence, Ealing Council stated that “limited respite and short-break services are a recurring issue, especially for those caring for people with complex needs.”<sup>89</sup> Steve Shaffelburg told us that Richmond and Wandsworth offers up to 52 hours of respite care over a nine-month period but noted that the local authority was not funded to make this available to all carers. He told the Committee that:

*“If it gave [respite care] to everybody, it would be out of funding for it within the first couple of months. Therefore, it needs to be quite particular with the conversations that it is having to ensure that the people who really need that respite are receiving it”<sup>90</sup>*

Many local carer organisations and local authorities offer homecare services which carers have to pay for. However, Mike Rich and Steve Shaffelburg both emphasised that while these services are available, many carers are simply not able to afford them.<sup>91 92</sup> Steve Shaffelburg told us that this means unpaid carers often go for long periods of time without taking any breaks from caring.<sup>93</sup> Shirly Islam told us that “I cannot remember the last time I had a five-day holiday”.<sup>94</sup>

We also heard that funding shortages affect peer-to-peer support, such as support groups and joint activities. Mike Rich stressed the importance of peer-to-peer support for unpaid carers, stating that “nobody understands their situation like somebody else who is in a similar situation”. However, he added that groups require funding and that if funding is withdrawn, peer-to-peer support groups do not usually sustain themselves.<sup>95</sup> This was also echoed by the responses to our survey with one unpaid carer stating that there was a peer group in their borough during the COVID-19 pandemic, stating it was “very effective but unfunded”.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Ealing council. [Published alongside report](#). (p.64)

<sup>90</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel Two](#), 10 December 2025 (p.3)

<sup>91</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.12)

<sup>92</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel Two](#), 10 December 2025 (p.3)

<sup>93</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel Two](#), 10 December 2025 (p.3)

<sup>94</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (p.11)

<sup>95</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.9)

<sup>96</sup> Written response submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee's survey. The quote is from a respondent's answer to the question, “What types of support or services (if any) do you currently use to help you in your caring role and how effective are they?” The question allowed free text entry.

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*“Ealing has a good, regularly meeting carers café. These types of services need expanding”<sup>97</sup>*

## Response to our unpaid carers survey

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### The importance of the Better Care Fund

We heard that the Government's Better Care Fund (BCF) plays an important role in funding services for unpaid carers in London. NHS England London Region stressed the importance of the BCF in its submission, stating that the BCF continues to fund good practice across London, including respite services and dementia-specific support in discharge planning in Brent, embedding carers in neighbourhood health teams in Harrow and carers being included in hospital discharge planning in Lewisham.<sup>98</sup> In its submission to our call for evidence, the Carers Trust stated that many local carer organisations depend on the BCF for survival, with some receiving over 50 per cent of their income from the fund.<sup>99</sup>

#### What is the Better Care Fund?

The Better Care Fund (BCF) is intended to help join up health and care services at a regional level. It is a collaboration between the Department of Health and Social Care, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, NHS England and the Local Government Association. It enables NHS bodies and local authorities to pool their budgets and develop joint health and social care support.<sup>100</sup>

The total funding available from the BCF in 2025-26 in London is approximately £1.7 billion, of which approximately £32 million is spent on services where carers are the primary objective.<sup>101</sup>

Despite its importance, we were concerned to hear that local carer organisations struggle to secure sufficient funding from the BCF. Rohati Chapman and Nadia Taylor told us that funding

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<sup>97</sup> Written response submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee's survey. The above quote is from respondent's answer to the question, "What examples of good or innovative practice in supporting unpaid carers would you highlight to the Committee?" The question allowed free text entry.

<sup>98</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by NHS England London Region. [Published alongside report.](#)

<sup>99</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers Trust. [Published alongside report.](#) (p.18)

<sup>100</sup> Department for Health & Social Care, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, [Better Care Fund framework 2026 to 2027](#), 17 February 2026

<sup>101</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by NHS England London Region. [Published alongside report.](#) (p.91)

allocations vary every year and that local carer organisations usually do not know how much funding they will receive in a given year.<sup>102</sup> Rohati Chapman told us that:

*“Carer services require secure, ring-fenced, multi-year funding within a statutory funding framework, the BCF or its successor. Without this, London risks destabilising its support system for carers”<sup>103</sup>*

This was also highlighted in submissions from Carers Trust and Carers UK which stressed the importance of providing long-term, ring-fenced funding to provide certainty and ensure carers receive support, rather than signposting.<sup>104</sup>

Our evidence is clear: local authorities and local carer organisations are expected to meet rising demand but are not resourced to do so. The people who ultimately suffer from this funding gap are London's unpaid carers. It means they miss out on vital support after their carer's assessment, including the option of taking short breaks from caring. It also means that carers' support groups, which are an important source of advice and kinship, are underfunded and unable to sustain themselves. This is a cause for concern, particularly for London's unpaid carers: living in a big city like London can often be lonely and isolating with peer groups able to offer much needed relief. The Government needs to provide a long-term funding settlement that offers certainty not only to local authorities but also to local carers organisations which are resourced by them.

## Recommendation 5

The Government should put in a place ring-fenced and multi-year funding settlement for carer support services in London within the Better Care Fund or any successor fund by the end of this Parliament. We ask that the Department of Health and Social Care responds to this report setting out any plans it has in this area by the end of 2026.

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## Inconsistencies in support provision across London

Our evidence suggests that London's unpaid carers have access to varying levels of support depending on where they live. This points to the existence of significant differences in support provision across the capital. Shirley Islam described the current situation in the city as a “lottery” as unpaid carers in some parts of London receive more or a different type of support than others.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (pp.9,20)

<sup>103</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.15)

<sup>104</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers Trust and Carers UK. [Published alongside report.](#)

<sup>105</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (p.13)

This was also raised by the NHS England London Region, which stated in its submission that London lacked a regional plan, leading to varying support levels and making it difficult to coordinate activities and resources across boroughs.<sup>106</sup> In its submission, Carers Trust stated that 27 boroughs have some carer strategy in place but that implementation and funding for these is inconsistent.<sup>107</sup> This directly affects unpaid carers: Carers UK submitted findings from its 2024 research with WPI Economics which linked local social care spending to care poverty and found a strong link, suggesting that carers with less generous social care support were more likely to be in poverty.<sup>108</sup>

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*“You are penalised if you are in the wrong borough.”*

**Paolo Assirati**  
**Unpaid carers roundtable participant**

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The local carer organisations the Committee spoke to revealed that there are differences in the support they provide as a result of differing funding arrangements. For example, David Walker stated his organisation's contract with Bromley contains funding increases in line with inflation.<sup>109</sup> However, Mike Rich stated that this is not the case in Barnet.<sup>110</sup> Similarly, while Mike Rich told us that his organisation receives local authority funding for adult and young carers, Carla Brain told us that in Enfield only adult services are funded by the borough. She added that funding for young carers is currently provided by the National Lottery and will run out at the end of 2026.<sup>111</sup>

We heard that local carer organisations sometimes step in to ensure service levels remain consistent if they are commissioned by multiple boroughs. Nadia Taylor told us that local carers organisations often end up spending additional resources to ensure they can offer the same level of service across different boroughs with different funding arrangements. She told the Committee that:

*“If you are seeking and receiving support from one organisation, and you meet carers from other boroughs that are supported by the same organisation, you think, ‘I am entitled to this level of support; we have access to that level of support’. It is very difficult for the charity, and so we compensate. Effectively, very often [...] we find ourselves*

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<sup>106</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by NHS England London Region. [Published alongside report.](#)

<sup>107</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers Trust. [Published alongside report.](#) (p.13)

<sup>108</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers UK. [Published alongside report.](#)

<sup>109</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.4)

<sup>110</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (p.17)

<sup>111</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 4 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 2](#), 12 January 2026 (pp.1,5)

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*subsidising local authority contracts because we just want to ensure parity in the service provision that we offer our carers.*<sup>112</sup>

Unpaid carers at our roundtable praised certain London boroughs for initiatives, such as an emergency care allowance of 12 hours every year, back-to-work schemes and free home care. However, they expressed frustration that these initiatives are only available in select boroughs.<sup>113</sup>

The Committee notes that not all unpaid carers in London have access to the same type of support. Although we understand that every local authority makes their own decisions with regard to how they support their unpaid carers, we believe unpaid carers would benefit if there was a base level of support so that no one is penalised for where they live in London. We believe it would be worthwhile for boroughs to collaborate more closely on this issue.

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<sup>112</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.9)

<sup>113</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (pp.3, 12, 14)

## Chapter four: Balancing work and care

Many of London's unpaid carers struggle to balance work and care. Although caring can take up a large amount of time, many unpaid carers could work more than they currently do. However, limited flexibility and understanding on the part of employers make this difficult. This represents a missed opportunity, as many unpaid carers have unique skills which employers can benefit from, as long as they are provided with an accommodating and flexible working environment. Given the inadequacy of the financial support available to unpaid carers, making it easier for them to increase their hours or re-enter the workforce would likely also help improve their financial situation.

### How caring affects the careers of unpaid carers

Caring makes it difficult to remain in employment. In general terms, the more hours someone cares, the less likely they are to work. In its submission to our call for evidence, the Centre for Care cited evidence based on Census data, which shows that when care provision is under 19 hours, 67 per cent of individuals are employed, whereas among those providing more than 50 hours per week the share falls to 32 per cent.<sup>114</sup>

Our evidence suggests caring has a significant negative impact on the careers of unpaid carers. In its submission to our call for evidence, Carers UK cited its own research findings which found that 28 per cent of unpaid carers in employment in London had taken on a lower-paid or more junior role to fit around their caring responsibilities. More than one in three (35 per cent) of unpaid London carers surveyed left the labour market altogether.<sup>115</sup> Allegra Lynch told us that leaving the labour market to care affects younger unpaid carers in particular, as they often find themselves being years behind their peers when re-entering the labour market.<sup>116</sup>

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation from 2023 concludes that unpaid carers experience a pay penalty, driven by them leaving paid work or reducing their hours after they start providing care. According to the research, unpaid carers experience an average pay penalty of approximately £5,000 per year, reaching roughly £8,000 per year after six years of providing care.<sup>117</sup> The impact of this is not felt equally as the penalty disproportionately affects women, households in poverty and those with health conditions.<sup>118</sup>

We were concerned to hear that many unpaid carers who are still in employment feel unsupported at work. Shirly Islam and Nadia Taylor told us that unpaid carers like themselves

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<sup>114</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Centre for Care. [Published alongside report](#). (p.51)

<sup>115</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#). (p.28)

<sup>116</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.7)

<sup>117</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [The caring penalty](#), July 2023 (p.12)

<sup>118</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [The caring penalty](#), July 2023

frequently have to accompany the people they care for to appointments. However, we heard that employers often have little understanding that appointments may be unpredictable or take longer than planned, which makes it difficult for carers to plan in advance.<sup>119 120</sup>

In their submissions to our call for evidence, both Islington and Ealing Councils emphasised that unpaid carers find it difficult to reconcile caring and employment.<sup>121</sup> Islington's submission stated that only 14 per cent of unpaid carers in paid employment in the borough feel supported by their employer.<sup>122</sup>

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*"I go to work and there is no one at work who understands any of this."*

### **Vic Hamilton**

#### **Unpaid carers roundtable participant**

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We also heard that the lack of awareness and understanding on the part of employers can make it more difficult for unpaid carers to re-enter the labour market. Nadia Taylor told us that someone with a large gap in their employment history as a result of caring responsibilities will be at a disadvantage due to the low level of awareness and understanding of what caring entails amongst employers.<sup>123</sup> Paolo Assirati told us that when an employer offered him a job, he had to face the choice of taking the job or caring.<sup>124</sup>

### **The impact of recent legislation**

The Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 and the Carers Leave Act 2023 are two pieces of legislation which came into force in 2024. They sought to address this issue by mandating more flexibility to make it easier for unpaid carers to juggle work and care. Research published in 2023 before the legislation came into force suggests that carers found it difficult to find jobs that offer sufficient flexibility<sup>125</sup> It is disappointing that based on our evidence in this investigation, the situation does not appear to have significantly improved.

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<sup>119</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (p.2)

<sup>120</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.18)

<sup>121</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Islington and Ealing councils. [Published alongside report](#)

<sup>122</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee by Islington council. [Published alongside report](#). (p.71)

<sup>123</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.17)

<sup>124</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (p.3)

<sup>125</sup> London Unemployed Strategies & Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [Unpaid care and poverty: unpaid carers' priorities for change through participatory co-design](#), June 2023

### The Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 and the Carers Leave Act 2023

2023 saw the introduction of two pieces of legislation which have a direct impact on unpaid carers in the workplace.

The Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act allows employees to make a flexible working request on day one of employment. Before this, an employee would only qualify if they had 26 weeks of continuous service by the date the request was made. The act came into force in April 2024.<sup>126</sup>

The Carers Leave Act entitles employees to one week's unpaid leave per year if they are providing or arranging care for a cared-for person. This is available from the first day of employment. The act came into force in April 2024.<sup>127</sup>

Worryingly, some of the evidence we received suggested that many employers are yet to change their policies following the introduction of the Employment Relations (Flexible working) Act and the Carers Leave Act. In its submission to our call for evidence, Carers UK cited data from its 2025 State of Caring survey of carers across London, in which just over one in five (22 per cent) unpaid carers said their employer had updated their policies following the new law on leave and flexible working.<sup>128</sup> Nadia Taylor told us that employers are not embracing the new legislation, telling the Committee that "it might be the law, but everybody wants you in the office".<sup>129</sup>

We heard that provisions for unpaid leave are not sufficient to support unpaid carers in a meaningful way. John Perryman raised that many unpaid carers often cannot afford to take unpaid leave and instead rely on annual leave and sick leave.<sup>130</sup> Data from the State of Caring survey 2025 submitted by Carers UK shows that only 13 per cent of London's unpaid carers have taken carers leave since April 2024, while 87 per cent had not.<sup>131</sup> It also shows that only 14 per cent of London's unpaid carers said their employer had introduced paid carers leave.<sup>132</sup>

<sup>126</sup> [Employment Relations \(Flexible Working\) Act 2023](#), s.1 and [The Flexible Working \(Amendment\) Regulations 2023](#), SI2023/1328, reg.2

<sup>127</sup> [Carer's Leave Act 2023](#), sch.1, pt.1

<sup>128</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#). (p.39). It should be noted that the survey respondents were carers rather than employers, and it is possible that employers may have changed policies or be in the process of doing so, without the respondent being aware of this.

<sup>129</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.18)

<sup>130</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.17)

<sup>131</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#). (p.28)

<sup>132</sup> Written evidence submitted to the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee Carers UK. [Published alongside report](#). (p.28). It should be noted that the survey respondents were carers rather than employers, and it is possible

John Perryman emphasised that the legislation was a step in the right direction but also stated that it did not go far enough. He told us that Carers UK has set up the Employers for Carers (EfC) initiative to help employers better support employers and employees with caring responsibilities.<sup>133</sup> The EfC initiative supports employers by helping them identify carers, share and access best practice, develop staff networks, train line managers and review current policies and practice with regard to carers. The initiative also has a benchmarking scheme which sets standards employers should meet.<sup>134</sup>

### Unpaid carers' contribution in the workplace

Despite the difficulties unpaid carers face in juggling work and care, we heard that many unpaid carers would like to work more if they were supported by their employer. Paolo Assirati highlighted to the Committee that employers often fail to see the unique skills that carers have, telling us that: "You are not only caring. You are a personal assistant. You are a counsellor. You are a manual handler. The list goes on and on."<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, Shirley Islam stressed that unpaid carers make for resilient employees and, although they are not always able to work regular hours, they are often able to work late into the night. She stated that:

*"That resilience there is a unique thing for us... I know so many carers who are up at 2 o'clock in the morning. If you have documents to review or you have something to do during that time, we can do that. It can be ready and done by the time you come to the desk at 9 o'clock in the morning."*<sup>136</sup>

We believe that with the right support, unpaid carers can make an invaluable contribution in the workplace. However, given what we heard, unpaid carers are not receiving the benefit of the Government's legislative changes and so it is no surprise that many of them have serious difficulties balancing work and care.

### The work of the Mayor and the GLA

The Mayor has a role to play in supporting unpaid carers in the workplace through his Good Work Standard (GWS). This is an accreditation scheme for employers with the explicit aim to improve the working lives of Londoners and helping them go beyond what is required by law.<sup>137</sup> The GWS contains two provisions relevant for unpaid carers, namely: putting in place above-minimum paid leave entitlements and setting up staff networks to "promote the interests and voice of underrepresented groups or issues".<sup>138</sup>

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that employers may have changed policies or be in the process of doing so, without the respondent being aware of this.

<sup>133</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Transcript of Agenda Item 7 - London's Unpaid Carers - Part 1 - Panel One](#), 10 December 2025 (p.16)

<sup>134</sup> Employers for carers, [How we help](#) [accessed 5 February 2026]

<sup>135</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (p.6)

<sup>136</sup> London Assembly Economy, Culture and Skills Committee, [Informal Session](#), 12 January 2026 (p.14)

<sup>137</sup> Mayor of London, [The Good Work Standard \(GWS\)](#) [accessed 9 February 2026]

<sup>138</sup> Mayor of London, [The Mayor's Good Work Standard Employer Guidance](#) [accessed 9 February 2026] (p.232)

However, the current wording does not mention unpaid carers explicitly and the provisions are not considered to be 'foundational', meaning employers can become accredited without putting them in place, as long as they meet a sufficient number of other criteria.<sup>139</sup> We believe this represents a missed opportunity. The Mayor should consult with unpaid carers, employers and professional bodies with a view to elevating the importance of provision for unpaid carers within the GWS.

Additionally, we feel strongly that the GLA should lead by example and become a more carer-friendly employer. The GLA has a Carers and Parents Network and a Carers' and Dependency Leave Policy which allows carers up to ten days paid leave per year. We welcome these as clearly good practice. However, there are opportunities for the GLA to go further. For example, the GLA does not currently identify and record the number of unpaid carers it employs and does not provide carer-specific training for line managers. Based on what we heard about the under-identification of unpaid carers and the importance of a supportive work environment, we believe these are important issues the GLA should address. To ensure the GLA's approach is in line with current best practice, it should also join a benchmarking scheme specifically for carer-friendly employers.

## Recommendation 6

The GLA should become a member of Employers for Carers as soon as possible and commit to achieving Carer Confident accreditation. It should inform the Committee by the end of 2026-27 in writing what steps it is taking to achieve the accreditation and set out a timeline for completion.

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## Recommendation 7

The Mayor should consult London's unpaid carers, groups representing unpaid carers and current signatories to the Good Work Standard on strengthening the Good Work Standard to include a minimum of five days paid carers' leave per year, flexible working as default and staff carers networks within the next six months. We ask the Mayor to update the Committee by the end of this year on the results of the consultation.

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<sup>139</sup> For more information on the accreditation process, see: Mayor of London, [The Mayor's Good Work Standard Employer Guidance](#) [accessed 9 February 2026] (p.6)

## Committee Activity

The Committee held two formal meetings on the topic of London's unpaid carers. The Committee's first meeting took place on 10 December 2025 and explored the challenges faced by London's unpaid carers and the work of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector and local authorities in supporting this group of people. The meeting was attended by the following guests:

- **Rohati Chapman**, Executive Director for Programmes, Policy and Impact, Carers Trust
- **Allegra Lynch**, Chief Executive, Camden Carers
- **John Perryman**, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Carers UK
- **Steve Shaffelburg**, Senior Commissioning Manager, Prevention and Wellbeing – Universal Services, Richmond and Wandsworth Better Service Partnership
- **Nadia Taylor**, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Carers Network

The Committee's second meeting took place on 12 January 2026. The first part of this meeting involved an informal session with five Londoners with experience of providing unpaid care. This was followed by a formal session to explore the work of local carer organisations active in London. The meeting was attended by the following guests:

- **Carla Brain**, Young Carers project Manager, Enfield Carers Centre
- **Mike Rich**, Chief Executive Officer, Barnet Carers
- **David Walker**, Chief Executive Officer, Bromley Well and Bromley Third Sector Enterprise

### Survey

The Committee ran a survey which unpaid carers in London were free to respond to. The survey ran from 3 November to 21 January 2026 and received 27 responses.

### Call for evidence

The Committee also launched a call for evidence, which was open from 3 November 2025 to 2 January 2026. We received seven responses from the following organisations:

- Carers Trust
- Carers UK
- Centre for Care
- Ealing Council
- Islington Council
- Kingston and Richmond NHS Foundation Trust
- NHS England London Region

## Other formats and languages

If you, or someone you know needs this report in large print or braille, or a copy of the summary and main findings in another language, then please call us on: 020 7983 4100 or email [assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk)

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Nếu ông (bà) muốn nội dung văn bản này được dịch sang tiếng Việt, xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi bằng điện thoại, thư hoặc thư điện tử theo địa chỉ ở trên.

### Greek

*Εάν επιθυμείτε περίληψη αυτού του κειμένου στην γλώσσα σας, παρακαλώ καλέστε τον αριθμό ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην ανωτέρω ταχυδρομική ή την ηλεκτρονική διεύθυνση.*

### Turkish

Bu belgenin kendi dilinize çevrilmiş bir özetini okumak isterseniz, lütfen yukarıdaki telefon numarasını arayın, veya posta ya da e-posta adresi aracılığıyla bizimle temasa geçin.

### Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਸੰਖੇਪ ਅਪਣੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਉਪਰ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਡਾਕ ਜਾਂ ਈਮੇਲ ਪਤੇ 'ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

### Hindi

यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज का सारांश अपनी भाषा में चाहिए तो उपर दिये हुए नंबर पर फोन करें या उपर दिये गये डाक पते या ई मेल पते पर हम से संपर्क करें।

### Bengali

আপনি যদি এই দলিলের একটা সারাংশ নিজের ভাষায় পেতে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে ফো করবেন অথবা উল্লেখিত ডাক ঠিকানায় বা ই-মেইল ঠিকানায় আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করবেন।

### Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ اپنی زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ کرم نمبر پر فون کریں یا مذکورہ بالا ڈاک کے پتے یا ای میل پتے پر ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

### Arabic

إذا كنت أنت أو أحد معارفك بحاجة إلى هذا التقرير مطبوعاً بخط كبير أو بطريقة برايل، أو ترغب في الحصول على الملخص والنتائج الرئيسية بلغة أخرى، فيرجى التواصل معنا على: 020 7983 4100 أو عبر البريد الإلكتروني [assembly.translations@london.gov.uk](mailto:assembly.translations@london.gov.uk)

### Gujarati

જો તમારે આ દસ્તાવેજનો સાર તમારી ભાષામાં જોઈતો હોય તો ઉપર આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા ઉપર આપેલ ટપાલ અથવા ઇ-મેઇલ સરનામા પર અમારો સંપર્ક કરો.

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