



Wrexham County Borough Council

Social Care

Unpaid Carers Survey Report

2023



Introduction

The survey was aimed at people who provide unpaid care to a friend, relative or neighbour who could not manage without that support. It was an opportunity for unpaid carers to say what is working well and what could be better. The purpose of the survey is to understand the experiences and challenges unpaid carers in Wrexham face when accessing services.

The survey was designed to gather information from adult and young carers about their experiences in a wide range of service areas to help inform service improvements and developments.

The last survey was undertaken in 2021 where 126 unpaid carers completed the survey.

The biggest change to the unpaid carer service since 2021 is that Wrexham Council now employ an unpaid carer development officer in the commissioning and contracts team.

Methodology

Publicity

Links to the survey were sent to all unpaid carers registered with NEWCIS (just over 3000)

80 hard copies of the survey were given out at the NEWCIS wellbeing day in June and further hard copies were given to unpaid carers during the 15 roadshow dates.

The survey link was publicised on the consultation hub 'Your Voice' and the local authority's social media channels.

Links to the survey were publicised on the [Wrexham Council news blog](#)

It also featured in a [Wrexham.com article](#)

NEWCIS featured a blog post about the survey on their [website](#)

Sections

The survey was presented in 5 sections:

- About You
- NEWCIS (Help received/grant funding/groups)

- What Matters Conversations and respite / short breaks
- Other information
- Young Carers

Key Findings

This year 302 unpaid carers shared their experiences and views with us. This is a marked increase on the last survey in 2021 which had 126 respondents.

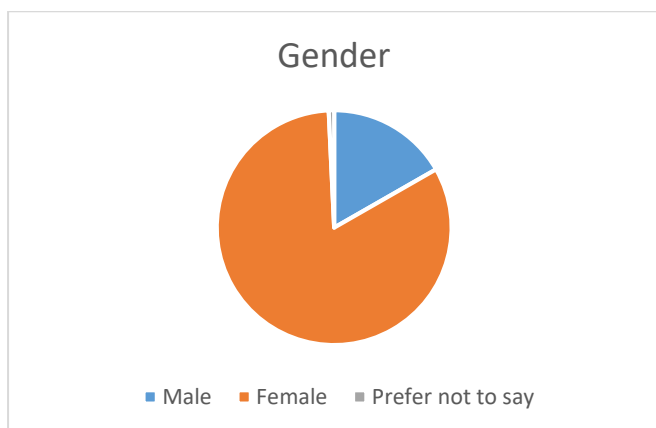
The following statistics have been compiled from the responses we received:

Age of unpaid carer

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Under 18	1	0.43%
19-24 years	1	0.43%
25-34 years	11	4.76%
35-44 years	24	10.39%
45-54 years	59	25.54%
55-64 years	65	28.14%
65-74 years	34	14.72%
75 and above	32	13.85%
Prefer not to say	4	1.73%

The table above indicates that the highest number of returns came from those in the 45-54 and 55-64 categories, which is slightly younger than the average in previous years.

Gender



The above table indicates that females provided the highest response rate to the survey. This aligns with previous years data received.

How long have you been in your caring role?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Under 12 months	16	6.64%
1-3 years	60	24.90%
4-5 years	52	21.58%
5-10 years	30	12.45%
Over 10 years	83	34.44%

The highest percentage of respondents have been in their caring role for **over 10 years**.

Describing the conditions of the cared for

Unlike previous years, this question was left open ended with a text box. This allowed the unpaid carer to describe multiple diagnosis and conditions as well as identify more rare conditions or conditions that had not yet been formally diagnosed.

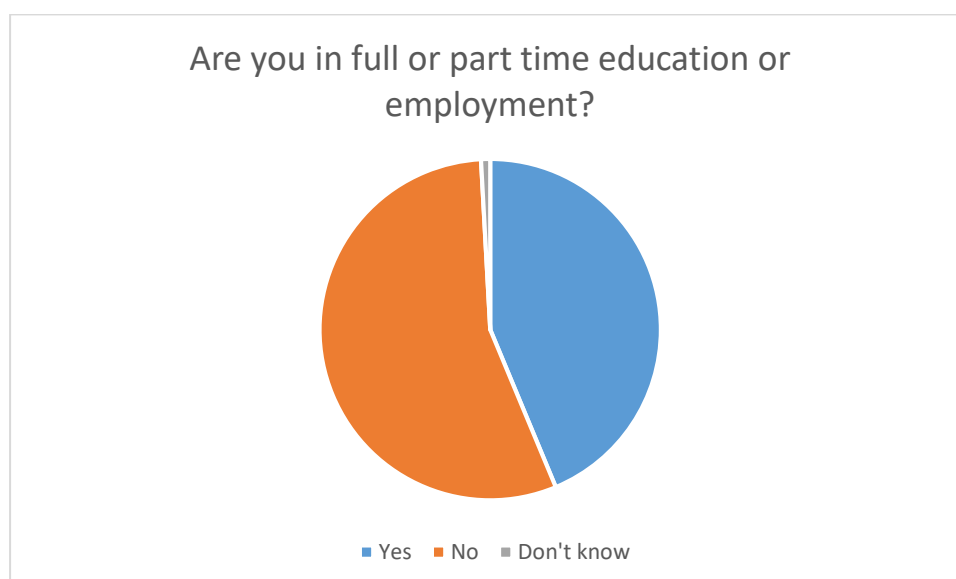
Please note, respondents could name more than one condition

The results showed:

Condition	Number of respondents	Percentage
Dementia	47	19%
Down Syndrome	4	2%
Cancer	13	5%
Stroke	11	4%
Brain Injury	3	1%
ADHD	11	4%
Autism	24	10%
Learning disability	11	4%
Ageing	16	7%
Mental health	21	9%
Physical disability	19	8%
Other (including: high blood pressure, arthritis, COPD, Angelman syndrome, Parkinson's, diabetes, heart failure)	66	27%

It is apparent from the data that support needs required are very specific to each individual and unpaid carers are often managing multiple support needs for the person they are caring for. All responses can be found in appendix 1.

Are you in full or part time education or employment?



(Yes 44%, no 55%, don't know 1%)

Nearly half of all respondents were in full or part time education or employment as well as undertaking their caring responsibilities. This shows that services and support need to be available outside of normal working hours.

Are there any other members of your household who identify as an unpaid carer?

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Yes	75	31.12%
No	163	67.63%
Don't know	3	1.24%

31% of respondents had other members of their household also identifying as an unpaid carer. The responses included: partners, husband, wife and children.

Have there been any particular experiences when accessing services for unpaid carers that you wish to mention?

“Excellent follow up from community mental health team after my wife had a very challenging behavioural incident”

“Contact with NEWCIS has been invaluable in my caring role, offering advice and emotional support from my wellbeing officer.”

“Difficulty in finding suitable paid carers. Difficulty in getting social worker to reply promptly when needed. Feeling extremely isolated and desperate on occasions. Pressures of caring for two elderly parents with dementia and other related health issues affecting my health condition – high blood pressure causing chronic kidney failure.”

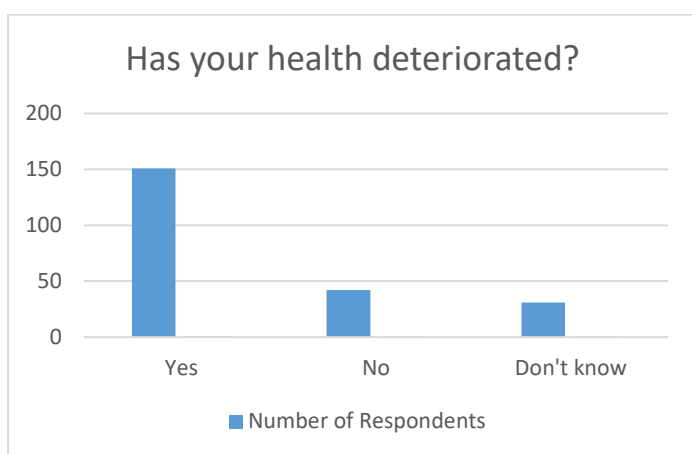
“Feels like a battle to get any help. We have a care plan in place, any changes needed is a battle”

“I care for both my children who have learning difficulties. I do not feel I have been listened to or supported by Social Services. My sons have a Social Worker but have had no formal respite since before Covid. Before the lockdown my sons were attending Dynamics once weekly but now they are getting older there seems to be a gap in support - they are outgrowing clubs like Your Space and Dynamics.”

“I have not accessed services for unpaid carers. I was not aware there were any. I feel completely alone and left supporting my daughter emotionally, financially and physically entirely by myself.”

“It’s not good when you work, you become a non person”

Has your health deteriorated as part of your caring role?

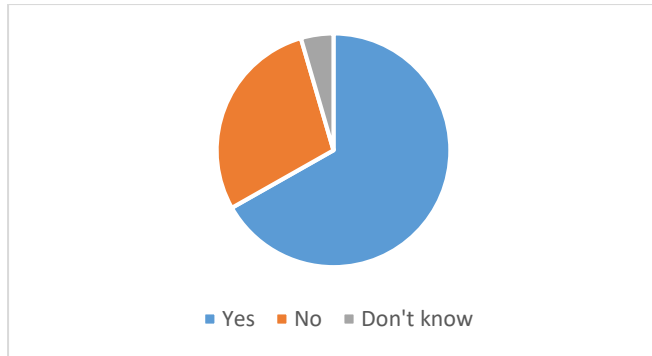


(Yes - 67%, No – 19%, don't know – 14%)

We need to develop ways to support unpaid carers physical and mental wellbeing and encourage them to think about their own self-care as well as their cared for.

Supporting unpaid carers – NEWCIS

Have you received help, support and advice or had any contact with NEWCIS?



67% of the unpaid carers who responded to the survey have received help, support and advice or had contact with NEWCIS. There is still work to do on ensuring that all unpaid carers received advice and support when needed.

Do you agree with the following statement?

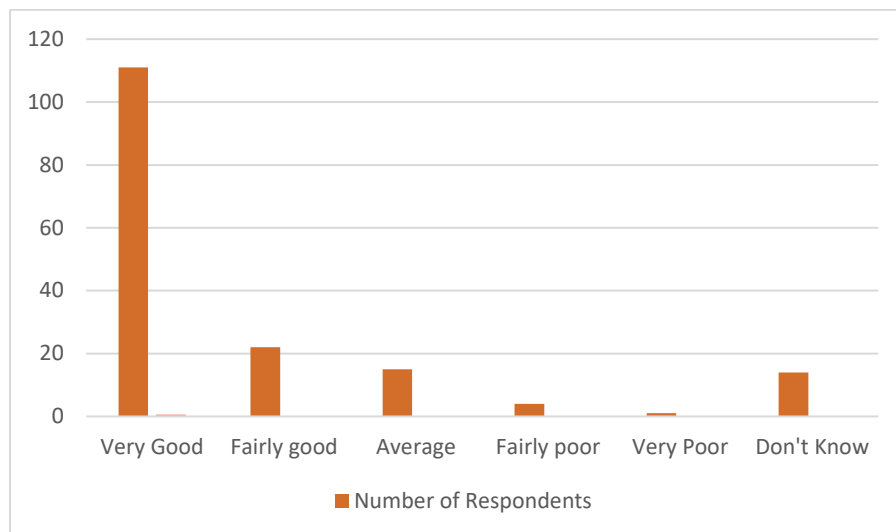
59% of respondents tend to agree or strongly agree with the following statement:

“My views have been listened to when considering my caring role”

79% of respondents tend to agree or strongly agree that the support they have received from NEWCIS has provided them with valuable information and a contact point for the future.

65% of respondents believe that the support they have received from NEWCIS has helped them to maintain their caring role.

Rate the support you have received from NEWCIS:



80% of respondents rate the support from NEWCIS as fairly good or very good.

In the next 12 months, think about the things you may need support the to continue your caring role

This question included an open text box for responses. Some of those responses are detailed below:

Additional care to keep mum safe at home and to support / provide dad with respite. Advice regarding next steps (social services) and financial advice.

Advice on benefits

Being able to talk to someone when I feel desperate. Being able to access some financial support as I gave up my full time job to look after my parents and now receive universal credit and carers allowance, a fraction of my salary.

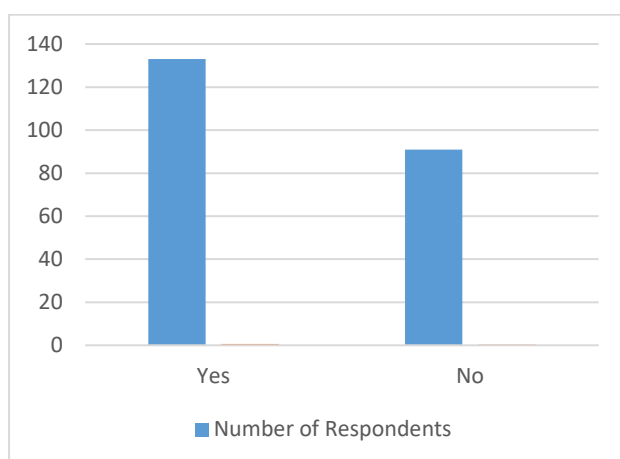
Managing behaviours, my rights in terms of my work/employment and my own mental health

Respite

Lots of respondents mentioned respite and 'more respite' on their responses to this question. Also, many responses were focused on financial concerns and wanting more information about benefits and grants that may be available to help them.

Carers Needs Assessments

Have you had a chat with an officer from NEWCIS about what matters to you? If not, have you been offered a matters conversation and turned it down, why?



Yes: 60% / No: 40%

Respondents noted the following reasons for not having a what matters conversation:

Not offered one

Never heard of NEWCIS

I'm going to speak to someone at the end of September

I find it difficult to attend such meetings because of lack of care for my parents

I have an appointment booked for a conversation

At the time I was coping, but now my wife is changing with time and is now more challenging

Carers service is not available after working hours

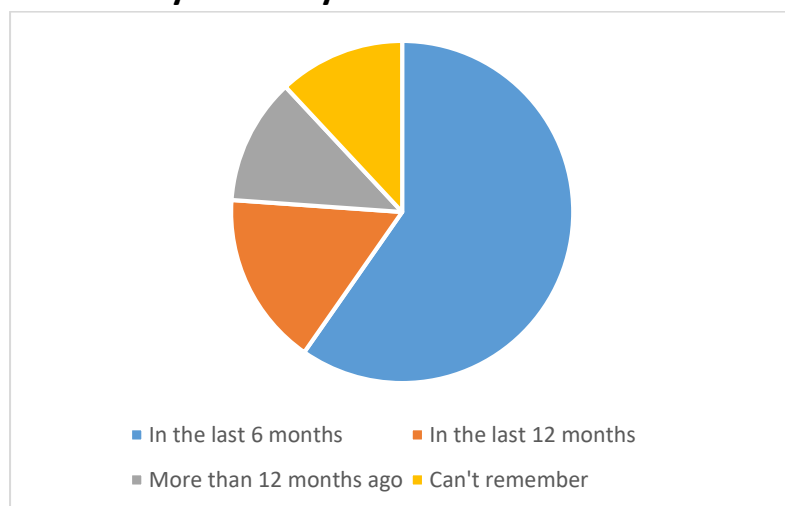
The reasons for not having a carers needs assessment included not needing one at that point in time, they had one booked in but hadn't received one yet, they had not been offered one or had not heard about NEWCIS and the support available.

Every single carer who comes into contact with NEWCIS should be offered a carers needs assessment.

It is clear from the responses that unpaid carers need to be aware that they can request a carers needs assessment outside of office hours, via a telephone conversation or a face to face meeting.

More effort needs to be made to communicate these services to the public as well as publicising and raising awareness about the right to have a carers needs assessment and the benefits that having one can bring.

When did you have your what matters conversation?



In the last 6 months: 60%, in the last 12 months: 16%, More than 12 months ago: 12%, Can't remember: 12%

Respite

What do you feel are the main barriers to you accessing a short break from your caring role?

Finances and no one to cover the care

A person with Alzheimer's does not feel comfortable in strange surroundings so a weeks holiday in a respite centre does not always work depending on how advanced they are. Nice for it to be available to those with different caring situations

Arranging care and finding someone who can do it

Availability of care. Quality of care

Both of our mobility

Feeling comfortable leaving my father, he is not keen on strangers

Financial and caring commitments

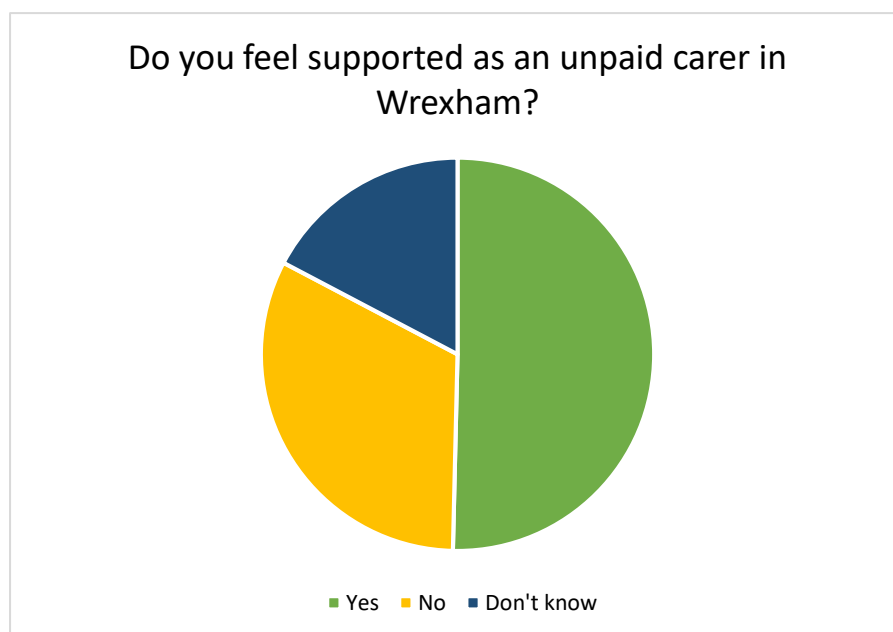
I don't feel I want a break, I wouldn't leave my husband and I couldn't take him with me as his health is up and down. I also have a dog. We have no family. It is just us.

I would not want to take a break without my husband and he is not fit enough to travel now

We need to acknowledge that some people do not want a break.

We need to acknowledge that some people do not wish to have a short break away/respice. For these people it is crucial we look at their wellbeing and alternative ways of offering support.

Overall view of support



Just over half of the respondents feel supported in Wrexham as an unpaid carer.

What do you feel we could be doing better to support you in your caring role?

Key themes:

- Personal contact / social worker or wellbeing officer to get in touch with
- More support from social services and social workers – need regular contact
- More face to face contact
- Waiting lists too long for health care
- Confusion over who to contact and organisations/departments not working together / where to go for information / make it easier to find out what help is available
- Someone to really listen / need professionals to listen
- Respite for disabled children to give their parents a break
- NEWCIS office not easily accessible by bus
- More respite places in care homes needed
- More understanding and support for working carers

- More access to opportunities from home – online etc .
- Excellent support from NEWCIS / Fantastic support and advice from NEWCIS / NEWCIS have done more than any other to support me / blown away by the support from NEWCIS / NEWCIS staff wonderful
- Everything seems to be in the town centre and not much local support
- Great support from direct payment staff

Feedback from other engagement activities

During the summer of 2023 we also held 16 drop in information events across Wrexham County Borough. We engaged with citizens at these events and gathered feedback. The feedback received echoed the feedback received through the survey. The main areas of feedback were:

- It is hard to find short term respite placements
- This was the first time some people had heard about NEWCIS – more work needed to promote the services that are available
- Services need to be more available for working unpaid carers

Also, during the summer, a few members of the commissioning team attended the Taith Ni (Unpaid carers of people living with dementia) group and gathered feedback directly from unpaid carers. The main points to come from the engagement were:

- Respite needs to be meaningful for the cared for
- Respite may need to only be for a couple of hours for the unpaid carer to get that much needed break and have a coffee.

Conclusions and recommendations

- The report will be shared with the Lead Member for Adult Social Care
- The report will be published on the council's website and the consultation hub, "Your Voice"
- Responses are shared with NEWCIS so that the action plan can be updated to further reflect the needs of unpaid carers and the challenges raised.
- The unpaid carers' communications strategy needs to be updated in light of the responses to the survey. New ways to communicate the advice and support available to unpaid carers in Wrexham need to be explored.

- Support for working unpaid carers and unpaid carers in education needs to be improved.
- Support for parent carers and respite for parent carers needs to be simplified and made more easily accessible.