**Embargoed until 00:01hrs Monday 7th June 2021**

**Worn out unpaid carers uncertain the services they relied on will continue post-pandemic**

* More than a third (35%) of people caring unpaid for family members or friends feel unable to manage their caring role
* 72% of carers have not had any breaks from their caring role during the pandemic
* Carers Week charities call on Government to give back to carers and fund breaks

Fewer than one in five (14%) exhausted unpaid carers are confident that the support they receive with caring will continue following the COVID-19 pandemic.

After an extraordinarily challenging year providing many more hours of care for loved ones during the pandemic[[1]](#footnote-1) - coping with reduced support from health and care services as well as limited help from family and friends - unpaid carers are seriously worried about the support they will have to help them care in the future.

Research released for Carers Week (7th – 13th June 2021) has found that carers lost, on average, 25 hours of support a month they previously had from services or family and friends before the pandemic.

72% of carers have not had any breaks from their caring role at all. Of those who got a break, a third (33%) used the time to complete practical tasks or housework, and a quarter (26%) to attend their own medical appointments.

Three quarters (74%) reported being exhausted as a result of caring during the pandemic.

More than a third (35%) said they feel unable to manage their unpaid caring role.

The six charities supporting Carers Week - Carers UK, Age UK, Carers Trust, Motor Neurone Disease Association, Oxfam GB and Rethink Mental Illness - are calling on the UK Government to provide £1.2 billion funding for unpaid carers’ breaks, so that those providing upwards of 50 hours of care are able to take time off for their own health and wellbeing.

**On behalf of Carers Week charities Helen Walker, Chief Executive of Carers UK, said:**

“Carers have sacrificed their physical and mental health caring for loved ones over the course of this pandemic. They are exhausted having cared around the clock, and do not know how they can continue without a break.

“Many are looking to support services to be able to take that time for themselves but are desperately worried that they will not continue in the future.

“Without the right support, the stress and challenges of the last year could lead to far more carers breaking down. It is essential that the Government ensures that carers can take breaks and that those providing upwards of 50 hours of care each week get a funded break.

“Unpaid carers need hope and support in the future and they must be at the heart of the Government’s plans for social care reform.”

69% of carers responding to the Carers Week survey reported poor mental health, while 64% said their physical health had deteriorated.

Almost two thirds of carers (63%) say they are worried about continuing to care without a break.

- ENDS -

**Media contact**

For media enquiries, please contact Carers UK who are handling media queries for Carers Week:

020 7378 4937 (daytime)

07580 130090/ 07941 273 108 (out of hours)

media@carersuk.org

**Notes to Editors**

**What is a break?**

For carers a break is time off from caring and a chance to do things they would like to do, but can’t do while they are caring – everyday things such as catching up with friends, going for a walk, or simply catching up with some sleep. It could be for 30 minutes, an afternoon, or a week. A break could be provided by accessing care services such as replacement care, sitting services, a day service, or through support from family and friends providing either respite or essential care.

**About the research**

Carers UK carried out an online survey between 8 April and 25 April 2021. A total of 2,850 carers and former carers responded to the survey. This included 2,754 current carers and 96 former carers. 71% live in England, 8% live in Scotland, 14% live in Wales and 6% live in Northern Ireland.

Compared to the carer population as a whole, respondents to this survey were more likely to be female and caring for a high number of hours every week. As not all respondents completed every question in the survey, a number of the figures given are based upon responses from fewer than 2,754 carers.

**About Carers Week 2020**

Carers Week takes place from 7-13 June 2021 across the UK. The theme is Making Caring Visible and Valued.

Carers Week, established by Carers UK 27 years ago, is an annual awareness campaign which takes place recognise the vital contribution made by the UK’s 6.5 million carers. It is also a time of intensive local activity with hundreds of virtual events planned for carers across the UK.

Website: [www.carersweek.org](http://www.carersweek.org)

Twitter: @CarersWeek #carersweek

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/CarersWeek](http://www.facebook.com/CarersWeek)

**What is a carer?**

A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, illness, mental health condition or who needs extra help as they grow older.

**The Centrica and Carers UK partnership**

British Gas is the headline supporter of Carers Week 2021.

Carers UK and Centrica, the parent company of British Gas, are in a strategic partnership, building on a 15-year relationship which has helped Centrica develop leading policies to support employees who are carers. This includes providing paid care leave and a thriving UK carers’ employee network. Together we want to create a world where every carer feels recognized, valued and supported. That means sharing useful information, raising awareness and ﬁnding new ways to care for our loved ones in their homes. We hope to make a lasting difference.

To mark Carers Week 2021 at Centrica, we will be running a virtual event for all colleagues bringing together leaders, colleagues and carers to discuss the realities for paid and unpaid carers and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK. We will also be sharing the stories of our colleagues who have caring responsibilities and encouraging everyone to add their voice to the campaign.

**About Nutricia**

Nutricia also supports Carers Week 2021.

Nutricia is the UK’s largest provider of specialist medical nutrition products and services and believes in the power of nutrition to make a positive difference to health.

Nutricia provide a wide range of science-based products and services that meet the needs of patients and healthcare professionals alike. For example, through the Nutricia Homeward service nearly 29,000 home enterally tube fed patients across the UK are supported with nursing care and regular deliveries of medical nutritional products and equipment.

To ensure that patients have access to the right nutritional care when they need it the most, Nutricia work closely and collaboratively with a variety of organisations and healthcare professionals.

Carers UK is working in partnership with Nutricia to help improve understanding about nutrition and care amongst carers. They provide support through information resources, training, social media and website information.

To mark Carers Week 2021, Nutricia employees will be invited to a series of events to promote awareness about caring. As a long-standing member of Employers for Carers, Nutricia knows how important it is to provide colleagues with the support and the work flexibility they need to juggle paid work and any unpaid caring responsibilities.

For more information on Nutricia visit [www.nutricia.co.uk](http://www.nutricia.co.uk)

1. Carers UK, Caring Behind Closed Doors, 2020: 81% of unpaid carers providing more care during the pandemic. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)