

Husband, Partner, Dad, Son, Carer?

A survey of the experiences and
needs of male carers

Executive Summary



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Carers Trust and the Men's Health Forum carried out a survey of male carers at the start of 2014. 609 male carers from across the UK took part. The survey's findings were also supported by semi structured interviews with Carers Trust Network Partners (independent local services for carers of all ages, supporting people with any condition) which currently offer groups and activities specifically for male carers.

Key findings:

- **Over a quarter of male carers in employment said they do not describe or acknowledge themselves as a carer to others.**

Employers and health and social care professionals need to be aware that male carers in employment are less likely to identify or describe themselves as a carer to others. Their need for support may not therefore be immediately obvious and might result in them missing out on vital help.

Awareness raising is needed of the caring role many employed men undertake and the support available to them. Employers need to have, and make sure all staff are aware of, policies to support carers at work.

- **53% of male carers felt the needs of male carers are different to the needs of female carers.**

Challenges for male carers which emerged included a lack of recognition by society, professionals and services; and men being less likely to seek support for their caring role. Male carers also reported that providing intimate care to women that they care for presents a challenge and that taking on domestic tasks previously undertaken by the person they care for can be difficult. Balancing work and care was also a cause of difficulty.

Support needs to be developed in a practical, supportive and non-stigmatising way for men taking on caring roles, particularly later in life, who may find aspects of domestic work difficult if they have previously been done by the person they now care for and for men providing intimate or personal care for women.

- **Over 100 male carers aged 18–64 told us they were not working due to their caring role. However, many other men balance work with caring responsibilities with over a quarter of those caring for over 60 hours a week also working.**

Employers should introduce carers leave to enable their employees to balance work and care. Local authorities should provide support that enables carers to work if they wish to. Employers should address male carers' worries and concerns about the effect caring has on their work and employment opportunities. It is important that male carers are signposted to local carers organisations which can provide them with information on their employment

rights. Carers support services and other organisations should ensure male carers are aware of rights to request flexible working.

- **56% of male carers aged 18–64 said being a carer had a negative impact on their mental health.**

Health and social care professionals need to identify male carers and address their health needs. Caring has a considerable impact on the mental health of male carers, particularly those aged 18–64 and this group is in need of specific support from a range of NHS and other support services. Commissioners should look to develop services to support this group.

- **Eight out of ten male carers who are unemployed or not currently working due to their caring role feel they miss out on spending time socially with other friends and family members.**

Male carers are a socially isolated group and miss out on spending time with friends and family members. Men who give up work to care or are unemployed are particularly isolated and support for male carers should have particular focus on addressing social isolation in this group.

- **Four out of ten male carers never get a break from their caring role and nearly half have not had a carer's assessment. Male carers aged 18–64 are even less likely to have had a carer's assessment than those over 65.**

Large numbers of male carers are not being referred for assessment and support. However, we know from this research that these men are in regular contact with health professionals. GPs in particular need to identify male carers and ensure they are referred for assessment and support.

Local authorities should also ensure that male carers are proactively identified and encouraged to self-identify through awareness raising and making clear the benefits of a carer's assessment and how to access one.

- **Over half of male carers said they did not currently receive help and support from a local carers organisation. Over a quarter of these male carers said this was because they were not aware of the support that may be available to them in their local area.**

Commissioners should consider developing services to specifically meet the needs of male carers of all age groups. Health, care and carers organisations should ensure male carers are made aware of existing support available in their local area.

Male carers want to be able to access:

1. Breaks to take time away from caring. This is unsurprising given that four out of ten male carers state they do not ever get a break.
2. Financial and benefits advice, especially for those who give up work to care.
3. For some male carers, discreet and interpersonal support in managing personal or unfamiliar tasks, especially early in the caring role.

These three areas should be addressed by commissioners and services as part of local carers strategies and plans.

About Carers Trust

Carers Trust is a major new charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, **unpaid**, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.

We do this with Network Partners – a unique network of 116 independent carers centres, 59 Crossroads Care schemes and 105 young carers services.

Together we are united by a shared vision for carers – to make sure that information, advice and practical support are available to all carers across the UK.

About the Men's Health Forum

The Men's Health Forum is a charity that works to improve men's health services and the health of men in England and Wales. Too many men die too young, in the UK, one in five men die under the age of 65, and far too many men and boys suffer from health problems that could be prevented.

www.menshealthforum.org.uk



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