

Alzheimer's Society Briefing –Adjournment debate on the potential merits of a cross-Government strategy on unpaid carers- Tuesday 3 September 2024

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1. Alzheimer's Society's calls

- **Alzheimer's Society is supportive of calls for a cross-Government strategy on unpaid carers.**
- Unpaid carers play a crucial role in supporting individuals living with dementia. However, they often lack the recognition they deserve and the support they need to stay healthy and enable them to continue caring. A cross-Government strategy on unpaid carers would help ensure much needed change.
- This strategy should specifically address the needs of unpaid carers of people living with dementia, by addressing the barriers they face accessing support.
 - We would like *all* carers to have access to proper assessments of their needs, in line with statutory duties. We would also like to see these undertaken annually.
 - We would like to see ringfenced investment to increase access to dementia-specific respite care, so that unpaid carers can take much needed breaks and manage their own wellbeing.
- Any cross-Government strategy on unpaid carers should form part of wider long-term social care reform. Through investment and prioritisation in the right areas, we can make significant progress in improving social care for people living with dementia and their carers across the UK.

2. Background information

- Dementia poses the biggest health and social care challenge of our time. There are almost 1 million people in the UK living with dementia¹, with one in three people born today expected to develop the condition in their lifetime².
- In England alone, there are approximately 1.8 million people providing some form of care and support to people living with dementia.³ In total, the economic value of the care unpaid carers provide, together with the opportunity cost of hours of work foregone, is £21.1 billion across the UK⁴, projected to increase to £40billion by 2040.⁵
- A 2023 Alzheimer's Society survey of over 1,000 unpaid carers showed that 4 out of 5 take on the bulk of caring responsibilities for people with dementia⁶.

¹ Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). The economic burden of dementia. Available at: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/policy-and-influencing/dementia-scale-impact-numbers>

² Lewis, F (2015) Estimation of future cases of dementia from those born in 2015. Available at: <https://www.ohe.org/publications/estimation-future-cases-dementia-those-born-2015>

³ Centre for Economic Business Research (2019). *The economic cost of dementia to English businesses*. Available at: [The economic cost of dementia to English businesses - edited.pdf \(alzheimers.org.uk\)](#)

⁴ Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024). [The economic impact of dementia](#). Carnall Farrar states that unpaid care costs were calculated by taking into account both the replacement cost of hiring a professional carer, and the opportunity cost of hours of work foregone

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Alzheimer's Society (2023) [Unpaid dementia carers responsibilities](#).

- In addition, a third of unpaid dementia carers in England spend more than 100 hours a week caring⁷, with 16% of carers for people with dementia having left employment due to caring responsibilities⁸.
- However, these carers often receive insufficient recognition and are not adequately supported with their role or with maintaining their own wellbeing.
- Alzheimer's Society's 2020 report, 'The Fog of Support', identified that too many unpaid carers were not receiving the statutory assessments to which they are entitled, nor the respite care to enable them to take breaks, significantly impacting their wellbeing⁹.

⁷ Alzheimer's Society and Carnall Farrar (2024), The economic burden of dementia. Available at: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/policy-and-influencing/dementia-scale-impact-numbers>

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Alzheimer's Society (2020) [The Fog of Support](#).