

A caring community- A summary of the health and social care needs of informal carers in Buckinghamshire

“A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support” [1]. Carers under the age of 18 are defined as young Carer and they usually care for siblings or parents (Exhibit 2) [5].

Supporting carers should be a priority as they are important advocates for the cared-for. An analysis by Carers UK and University of Leeds estimated the economic value provided by Buckinghamshire’s 47,557 carers in 2011 as £716million [23]. Furthermore a significant proportion of the population is likely to take on a caring role in their lifetime. Nearly 66% of females and 50% of males by the age of 75 will experience being an informal carer (providing more than 20 hours /week).

Demography of carers in Buckinghamshire (2011 Census)

- **Numbers:** In 2011, 49514 people (9.8% of the population) in Buckinghamshire provided unpaid care which 1875 self-identified as young carers. This is 1.5% of the total population of young people aged 0-19.
- **Age:** The age bands with the highest proportion of carers are in the 50-64 range where nearly 20% of the population provide informal care. 47% of all young carers are aged between 16-19 years.
- **Ethnicity:** 13% (6324 carers) of all self-identified carers are from a BME background in 2011.
- **Trends over time:** In a decade the percentage increase in the number of carers is 13% from 43821 in 2001. Percentage change in unpaid care for young carers between 2001 and 2011 is 30%.
- **Hours providing care:** 17% of all carers provide less than 50 hours of unpaid care/week.

Impact on health

- The relative risk of adult carers (+16) providing ≥ 50 hours care per week reporting bad or very bad health is 3.7x higher compared to carers giving ≤ 19 hours care/week. (ONS Census 2011)
- There is a 2.1x higher relative risk of reporting bad/very bad health in young carers compared to young non-carers. (ONS Census 2011)
- Majority (66%) of adult registered carers have pre-existing conditions or disability. (HSCIC Adult Carers Survey 2012-13)
- GP records show that carers (compared to non-carers) have a significantly higher prevalence of certain risk factors and medical conditions: smoking, hypertension, obesity, stroke, type 2 diabetes and ischemic heart disease. (GP EMIS Data– AVCCG)
- Main mental health issues raised by adult carers are anxiety, stress, low mood and emotional exhaustion. (Buckinghamshire Adult Carers Workshops)
- GP records show anxiety I is higher in female carers compared to non-carers. Furthermore in male carers the prevalence of anxiety and depressive disorders is higher compared to non-carers. (GP EMIS Data– AVCCG)

Impact on economic prospects & education

- There is a 1.18x higher relative risk of economic inactivity in adult carers compared to non-carers. A 2.07x higher relative risk of economic inactivity in carers providing ≥ 50 hours of care/week compared to those providing ≤ 19 hours/ care per week. (ONS Census 2011)
- A 1.6x higher relative risk of economic inactivity in young adult carers providing ≥ 50 hours/ care per week compared to those providing < 50 hours of care/week. (ONS Census 2011)
- The main difficulties young carers report with education is difficulty concentrating (60% all the time or sometimes) and being late for school (53% all the time or sometimes). Only 17% of young carers report they “sometimes” plan for the future. (Young Carers Assessments)

Social impact of caring

- Carers feel lonely even if not alone with 1 in 10 carers feeling particularly socially isolated. (Buckinghamshire Adult Carers Workshops) & (HSCIC Adult Carers Survey 2012-13)
- Only a fifth of carers feel they have control over how they can spend their spare time. Furthermore, approximately a quarter of carers feel they have as much control over their life as they wish. (HSCIC Adult Carers Survey 2012-13)
- The most common social impact reported by young carers is difficulty participating in family or social activities (63% all the time or sometimes). 40% of young carers all the time or sometimes report difficulty making friends. (Young Carers Assessments)
- 65.7% of adult carers feel included or consulted in decisions. This is lower than the national, South East and similar local authorities. (HSCIC ASCOF data)

Recommendations

