Carers are ordinary people who do something extraordinary each day. Carers are vital to society and our economy but caring impacts on all areas of a carer’s life from health and finances to relationships and well-being. Society could not afford to provide the current level of community care without this army of unpaid support.

Physical and psychological effects of caring:
The Government has highlighted carers as a group experiencing comparative poor health. Research consistently demonstrates caring has a pronounced adverse effect on health and well-being.

- Carers have increased mortality
- Up to 40 per cent of carers experience psychological distress or depression
- Providing high levels of care is associated with a 23 per cent higher risk of stroke
- Older carers who report they are under ‘strain’ have a 63 per cent higher likelihood of death in a year period than those not reporting strain.

For carers providing more than 50 hours per week of care:

- 33 per cent report depression
- 50 per cent report disturbed sleep
- 25 per cent report back and other strains.

Carers providing more than 20 hours per week of care:

- Have twice the risk of experiencing psychological distress than non-carers
- Are at risk of distress increasing with the amount of time devoted to caring.

Reasons why carers may neglect their own health:

- Focussed on the needs of the cared-for
- They are unable to leave the cared-for alone to be able to attend appointments
- They are unable to undergo treatments due to caring responsibilities.
Financial effects of caring:

Financial problems are directly related to the amount of care provided. The more care provided; the more likely a carer is to be in financial difficulty.

In one Carers UK survey:

- 52 per cent had cut back on buying food
- 65 per cent were in fuel poverty
- 74 per cent had difficulty paying essential utility bills
- 55 per cent were in debt as a result of their caring responsibilities
- 75 per cent were worse off financially as a result of caring.

However, carers are estimated to save the UK economy £119 billion a year in care costs. That’s the equivalent to £18,473 per carer. When this figure was calculated it exceeded the total spending on the NHS.

Caring can affect paid employment and job prospects:

- 20 per cent give up work to care
- On average, carers retire eight years earlier than those without caring commitments
- In 87 per cent of households where working age carers are looking after their partners, no one in the household is in paid employment
- 2.9 million carers combine paid employment with caring for somebody else.

The effects of caring can also be more subtle. Caring can hinder promotion prospects or affect the amount of hours carers can work or the time of day they can work. They may need to arrange alternative care to be available for work. They may also need to take time off at short notice if there is an emergency.

Despite the adverse financial effects of being a carer, many carers do not claim all the benefits that they are eligible for, such as Carers’ Allowance.

One survey found that 81 per cent of respondents had been caring for over a year before they received financial support and just under half of these had been caring for five years before getting support. Half reported that they had missed out on benefits.

Social effects of caring:

Carers also report that caring has had an adverse impact on their social lives, including restricting their activities, a deterioration of relationships with other family members and friends and social isolation.