



Do they care? Supporting us to care for each other throughout life

The challenge

As we live longer lives, more of us will spend time both caring and being cared for, not just as children but as adults, with disabilities or through periods of ill-health and towards the end of our lives. Our care systems are ill-equipped to deal with an ageing society: long-term underfunding means families and friends are left picking up the pieces, while disabled people and people with long-term conditions are held back from the lives they want to lead

What we know

As we live longer lives, the likelihood is that more of us will spend a period of our lives in need of care and support from others, and many more people will take time out of the workforce to provide care for an adult, as well as to parent. We are already a nation of carers – across our adult lives we spend more time caring for others as for ourselves, when both childcare and care for other adults are taken into account. But while structures to support child care are well established, adult social care remains underfunded and inadequate.

While often discussed in terms of care homes and paid care workers, most care and support for adults is provided by friends and family members, with little or no support from the state. While local authorities provide care for around a million adults, in the latest census some 5 million of us reported regularly providing unpaid care to another adult, with 1.5 million providing more than 90 hours a week. Current systems offer threadbare financial and practical support for carers, meanwhile, those who access paid-for services, find themselves reliant on a creaking system, beset by decades of underfunding.

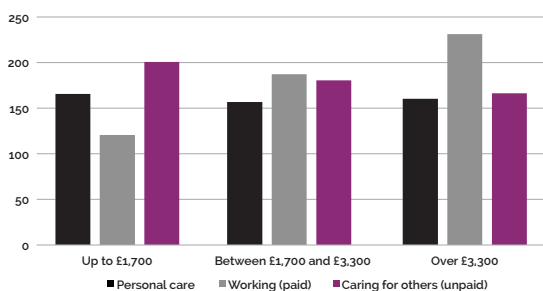
According to Skills for Care adult social care in England is worth £55.7 billion to the nation's economy and ILC research showed the average unpaid contributions of older people (much of which is made up of care provision) across Europe are worth as much as 1.4% of GDP. But care is not valued. There are huge gaps in the paid care workforce. The National Audit Office reported 152,000 vacant positions as of 2022/23 with over 434,000 people waiting for care assessments or reviews. And ILC research forecasts the social care workforce gap will be more than 750,000 by 2037.

The latest Care Quality Commission State of Care Report (2022/23) has highlighted the parlous state of the care system, with more people waiting for care and significant unmet need. People who do not have access to family care, including those ageing without children, are significantly disadvantaged in the current care and support system. The long-term failure to reform social care funding arrangements leaves those who can afford to pay for care facing catastrophic costs, while those who can't rely on a state system that is now cut to the bone.

New evidence

Those on lower incomes spend more time caring for others than for themselves

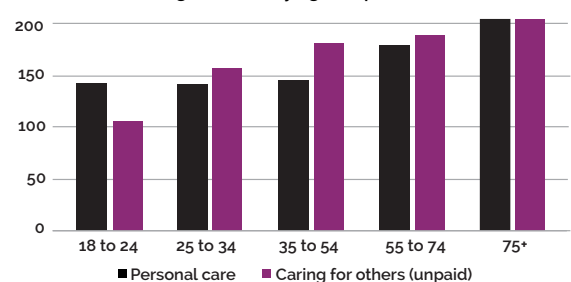
Average daily minutes spent working, caring for others and on self-care by net monthly income (September 2023)



Office for National Statistics (ONS), Time use in the UK September 2023. Release date: 9 Nov 2023

Throughout our lives we care for others more than ourselves

Average daily time (minutes) spent on self-care and caring for other by age (September 2023)



We know we can do better than this. Do you have a sustainable solution for longer lives?

Please email your solution to info@ilcuk.org.uk