

Caring for Others Survey 2023-24 – summary report

This report contains findings from the Survey of Adult Carers, 2023-24 (SACE) for West Berkshire Council. This national survey¹ takes place every other year and is conducted by Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities (CASSRs). The national report can be found [here](#).

The survey seeks the opinions of carers aged 18 or over, caring for a person aged 18 or over, on several topics that are considered to be indicative of a balanced life alongside their unpaid caring role.

In West Berkshire the survey went out to 700 eligible carers, 271 completed responses, response rate of 38.7%.

About the person they cared for:

- 65% of those cared for are individuals over 65
- The most frequent conditions that those cared for have are a **physical disability, long standing illness, problems connected with ageing, sight and hearing loss, and dementia**
- 42% indicate they spend more than 100 hrs caring per week

Key questions on the impact of Caring and Quality of Life

	<u>2023-24</u>		*WBC trend	<u>2021-22</u>	
	<u>WBC</u>	<u>England</u>		<u>WBC</u>	<u>England</u>
Satisfaction					
The proportion of respondents that are 'extremely' or 'very' satisfied with the service received (ASCOF 3B)	45%	36.8%	▼	46.1%	36.3%
<i>The proportion of respondents that are 'extremely' or 'very' or 'quite' satisfied with the service received</i>	73.7%	67.1%	▼	75.0%	66.4%
Impact of Caring and Quality of Life					
Proportion of Carers able to spend time 'as I want doing the things I value or enjoy'	17.7%	16.0%	▼	21.6%	16.2%
Proportion of Carers that feel they have 'as much control' over their daily life as they want	23.3%	21.5%	▼	28.2%	22.1%
Proportion of Carers that feel they have the time to 'look after themselves'	52.3%	46.7%	▼	57.2%	49.2%
<i>Proportion of Carers that feel they are neglecting themselves</i>	18.4%	20.2%			
	<i>**Lower is better</i>				
Proportion of Carers that feel they have 'no worries' about their personal safety	82.7%	81.0%	▼	86.0%	80.5%
Proportion of Carers who have 'as much social contact as I want with people I like' (ASCOF 1L)	28.4%	30.0%	▼	38.4%	28.0%

¹ [National Survey of adult carers 2023-24](#)
August 2024

West Berkshire Council 2023-24 Carers survey report

Proportion of Carers who feel they have 'encouragement and support' in their caring role	33.5%	32.4%	▼	40.3%	31.5%
Proportion of Carers reporting their caring role had <u>not</u> caused any financial difficulties over the last 12 months	54.4%	53.40%	▼	61.4%	57.2%
Proportion of Carers who feel lonely 'often or always' (New question)	10.5%	13.3%		N/A	N/A

*** Lower is better*

Information and Advice Quality

Proportion of Carers that find it 'very easy' or 'fairly easy' to find (ASCOF 3D2)	61.0%	59.0%	▲	56.8%	57.80%
Proportion of Carers that find information and advice received 'very' or 'quite' helpful	87.9%	85.2%	▲	85.4%	84.40%

Arrangement of Support and Services (ASCOF 3C)

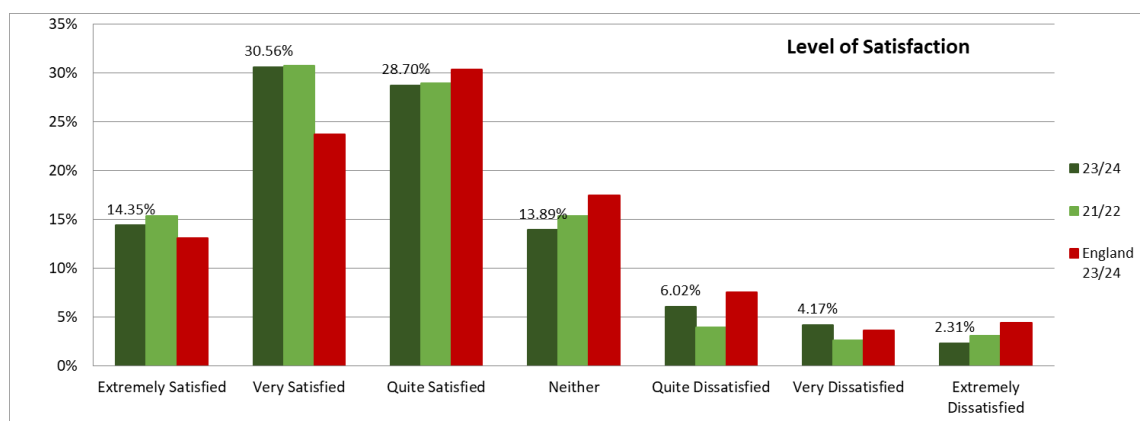
Proportion of Carers that are 'always' or 'usually' involved in discussions about the support for the person they care for	74.7%	66.4%	▲	72.5%	64.70%
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* WBC increase or decrease compared with 2021-22 results.

* ASCOF refers to the [Adult Social Care Outcome Framework](#).

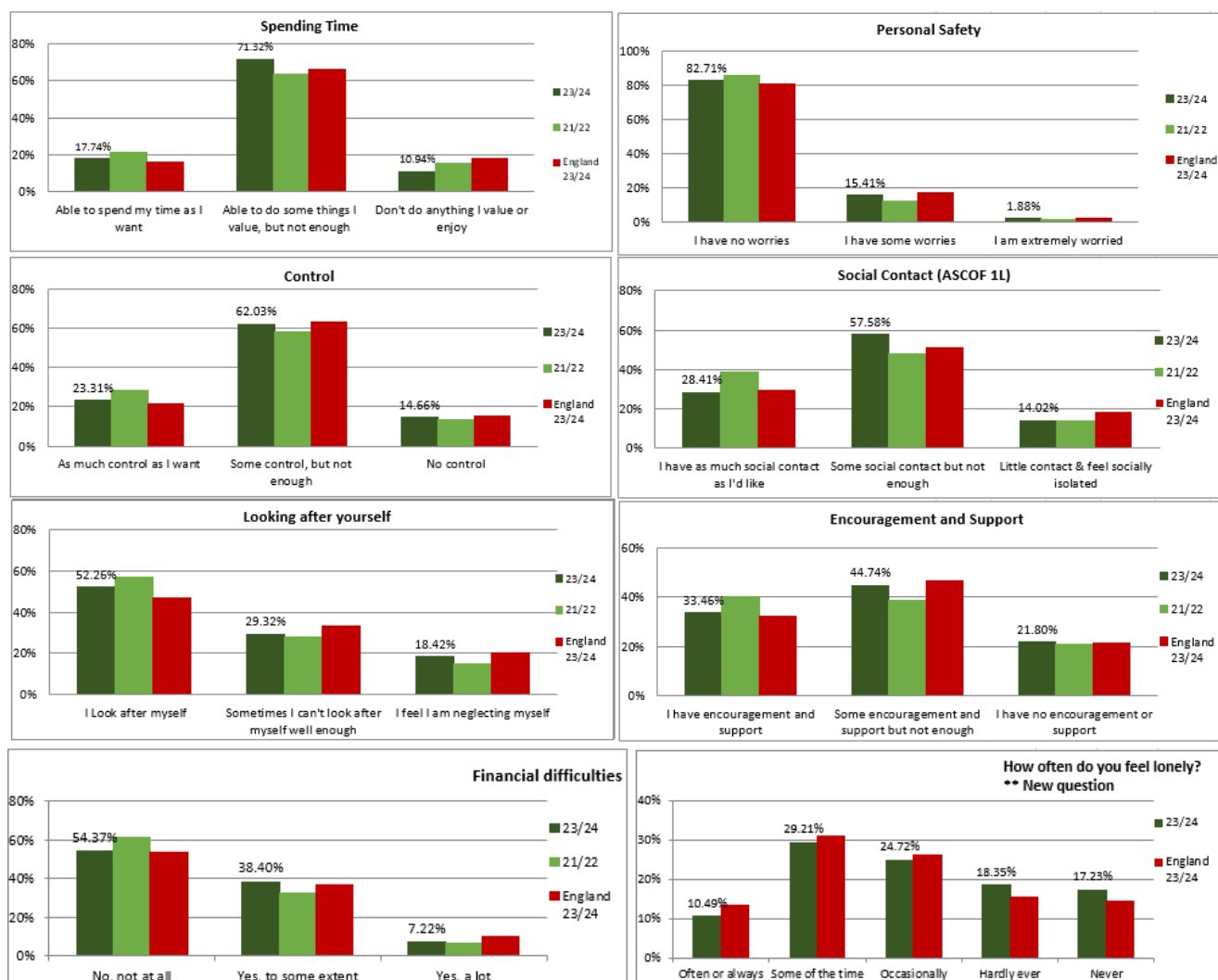
Level of Satisfaction

Level of satisfaction informs ASCOF 3B, the proportion of respondents that are 'extremely' or 'very' satisfied with the service received.



Locally our performance has decreased slightly from 46% of Carers that are 'extremely' or 'very' satisfied in 2021/22 to 45% in 2023/24, however we remain above the national average of 37%.

The impact of Caring and Quality of Life

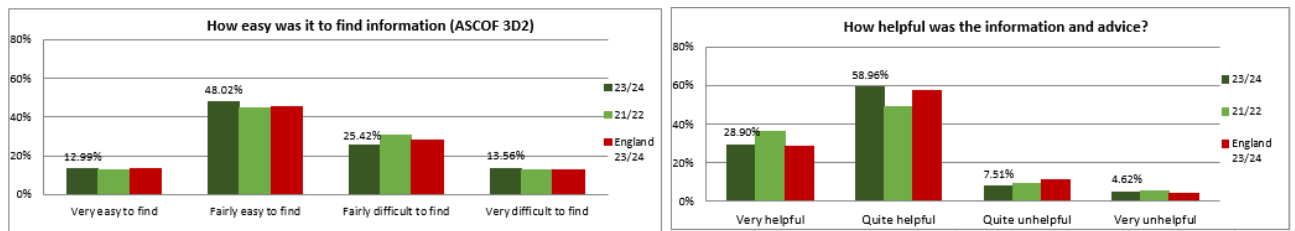


Key measures reflecting quality of life

- Only 18% of Carers are able to spend time as they would like
- 23% of Carers feel they have much control as they would like
- 83% of Carers report that have no worries about their personal safety
- 28% feel that they have as much social contact as they would like, this is lower than the England average of 30%
- 33% of Carers feel that they have encouragement and support in their Caring role
- Only 52% say they look after themselves, an indication of the impact of Caring
- 46% of Carers reported their caring role has caused financial difficulties, this is a 7% increase from 2021/22. This aligns with the current cost of living crisis felt nationally since the pandemic ended.
- 10.5% of Carers reported they often or always felt lonely

Performance in all measures have fallen since 2021/22 survey, however, we remain above the England average in all measures except Social Contact.

Information and Advice Quality (ASCOF 3D)



61% of carers found it ‘very’ or ‘fairly easy’ to find information – this is an improvement in performance compared to 2021/22.

Those that were able to find information, the majority found it ‘very’ or ‘quite’ helpful.

Respondents were asked to comment why they found it difficult to find. There were numerous comments in relation to this, with a number of emerging themes:

Carers reported being unclear about what is available, they also report that information once obtained can be overwhelming and difficult to sift through.

“Wouldn’t know where to start to find info or advice for myself.”

“It is difficult to know where to go to find help. Once you get involved with a social worker it does become easier as you get more options, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that these options help you in the way you want.”

“Feeling overwhelmed by everything that has occurred and lack of understanding and expectations makes finding time to read the vast expanse of information that one is pointed to. Knowing which organisation is most appropriate and which documentation is really relevant impossible.”

Lack of response from agencies / lack of personal contact

“Not enough communication between various agencies/social services/support services. Very time consuming sorting out some problem areas, especially so much on line which could be quite tangled.”

Lack of available care – Carers report difficulty being able to find care and support

“Received personal payments but no available staff to provide care. Council lists gave inappropriate covers - one was going to bring daughter to caring role!”

“Trying to find respite care - I have not had a break for 4.5 years until very recently and had to pay privately.”

Digital Barrier identified by a number of Carers.

“I do not use a computer or an email address, only a landline, and find printed information more difficult to come by.”

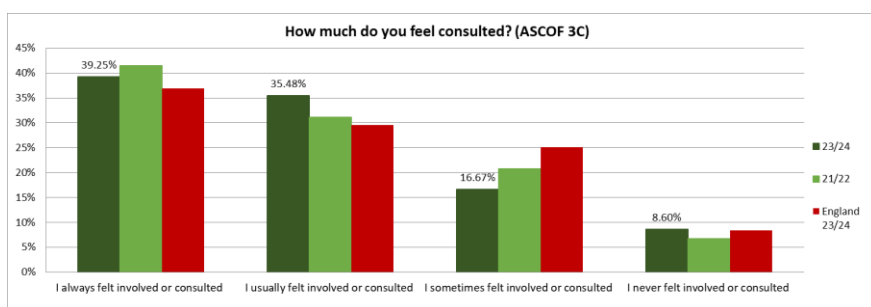
Not able to link to right departments / cross team working

“I call the council and often promised that someone will call me back but too often they do not or have incorrect information regarding my situation.”

Many gave specific examples of information needed, for example:

- Financial support / advice e.g. benefits frequently mentioned
- Future/Emergency planning
- Access to care / Respite care
- Health and Mental health support
- Transport

Arrangement of Support and Services (ASCOF 3C)

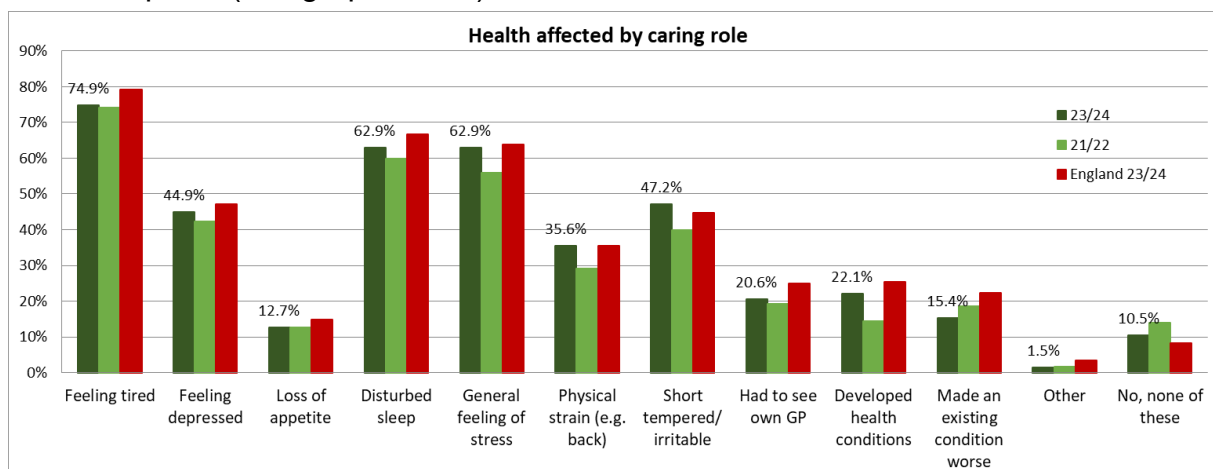


74.7% of carers reported that they felt they were ‘always’ or ‘usually’ involved in discussions about the support for the person they care for.

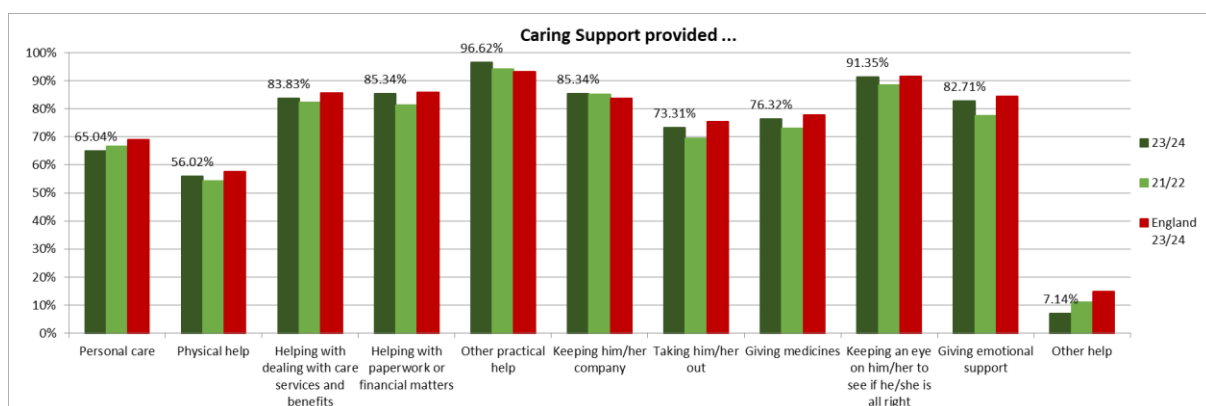
This is an increase of 2.2% since 2021/22.

About Carers responding

- 66% of Carers responding are over the age of 65.
- 60% of carers responding to this questionnaire reported that they are retired.
- 15% state they are not in paid employment due to their caring responsibilities, this is a decrease from 2021/22.
- 64% of carers responding have been caring for over 5 years, 27% for more than 20 years.
- 42% of carers report that they spend over 100 hours a week looking after or helping the person they care for
- Many Carers report that their Caring role is impacting on their health, with **feeling tired, disturbed sleep, and general feeling of stress** the most common impacts (see graph below).



The range of support Carers provide is shown below.



Finally, an opportunity was provided for respondents to describe any other experiences or to write any other comments, along with any additional support they would find helpful in their caring role that is not currently available.

Responses were numerous with many people describing their personal experiences and situations.

Key themes to comments included:

- **Positive experiences**

“The social workers who helped with my son's move from the family home into assisted living was without question the most sympathetic social worker I have had contact with over the past 25 years. She really understood his needs and put them first.”

“I always feel supported by shared lives. The team are always there for me or the young person I care for.”

- **Concerns about what to do/who to contact in emergency situations**

“I still have not managed to establish what would happen to my husband and his care if I was suddenly to take ill and could not manage to contact social services or the care agency. For example I fell down the stairs, I called 999 for the ambulance which came about 1.5 hours later, what would happen to my husband if they take me to hospital? Who would you contact? He is totally reliant on me being in the house and fit.”

- **Emotional and Mental Health Support** for carers was highlighted as a need by many Carers.

“Looking after a patient with dementia is lonely, particularly when they don't even know my name. You just need someone to ring up and say hi and how are you, as you lose your identity very quickly.”

“Feel like following diagnosis, assessment and care package commencing, then we're out on our own.”

“[No]one can prepare for you giving up work to look after someone full time has been a massive learning curve. You lose your sense of purpose in life, no goals to look forward to, you do eventually come round but only after having your whole life turned upside down. Once you've got your head around things it becomes the norm and [accept] things the way they are.”

- **Need for Future Planning**

“My main concern presently is how to be prepared for the future as his disability gets worse and he is unable to care for himself at all. All care, personal and otherwise will rely on full time and constant care.”

- **Access/Better Communication with Council and Single Point of Contact**

“The care system seems broken I asked for a carers assessment and was told by the call handler I had to go on a waiting list, I'm still waiting I have had one weekend off in four years.”

“Would be useful if I had a single contact to approach necessary and one that check-up on us on a regular basis.”

“No point of contact if I need something I have to ask social services and it is never the same person. Once something is dealt with that person is then gone and if you then need help/guidance a new person can be allocated who has no former knowledge of the family or situation. I have no support.”

- The areas of main concern were a decline in **availability of services** following the pandemic, **lack of training/resources for carers**, as well as people generally not knowing where to turn to get **information and advice in their caring role**.
“It currently seems that since lockdown the system that only just worked is now completely under staffed and the things that worked no longer do.”

Conclusion

The survey provides useful information to understand carer’s perceptions and experiences about services they receive and the information and support available to them. It is clear from responses to the survey the wide range of caring support provided by Carers and the impact this has on their own health, reflecting the pressures Carers are facing. The survey indicates that the general feeling of stress experienced by carers has increased.

Positively, performance in West Berkshire remains above the England average in most areas. We are reporting an increase in Information and Advice quality and good involvement of Carers in arrangement of support services when compared to 2021/22.

Performance has decreased in relation to Carers satisfaction and the impact of Caring on Carers quality of life. The survey results provide clear evidence that there is a need to strengthen our support to carers to mitigate these effects. Feedback highlighted anxieties Carers face in relation to future planning, decline in availability of services following the pandemic, and difficulties initially accessing support. Our recent CQC feedback also highlighted the need to do more work to identify carers and make them aware of the support that is available to them.

A lack of training/resources for carers, as well as people generally not knowing where to turn to get information and advice in their caring role was highlighted and are areas to continue to focus on.

The outcome of this survey will be discussed at the Carers strategy group for further consideration about any action to take.

Barbara Billett
Quality Assurance Manager