

Leicester Health & Wellbeing Survey

Depth interviews with carers

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Ipsos MORI
Social Research Institute

Background and profile of participants

Ipsos MORI conducted Leicester City Council's Health & Wellbeing survey in 2015. This report summarises findings from a small-scale qualitative exercise with residents who told us they had caring responsibilities.

- Ipsos MORI conducted **seven in-depth telephone interviews** with residents in Leicester who took part in the survey and told us they have *caring responsibilities for someone who lives with them*. Interviews typically lasted between 20 and 30 minutes.
- The sample was limited to those carers who took part in the survey and agreed to be recontacted. However, Ipsos MORI ensured that **young carers** and **carers from a BME background** were included in the research. The sample included three carers from BME backgrounds and two young carers.
- The purpose of these depths was to understand the **needs** of carers in Leicester, and explore **ways in which the Council might support them in the future**.
- Ipsos MORI spoke to carers with a range of roles and responsibilities. This included parents caring for children with a disability or limiting condition, a young carer caring for a parent and one caring for an elderly relative, and two carers (both young and old) who cared for a partner.
- The carers we spoke to all had different levels of support and different experiences of the support system, as well as different needs and requirements from the council.

The impact of caring responsibilities on parents

- While parents with caring responsibilities did not tend to see, or want to see, their role primarily in terms of being a carer, there was also a recognition that some of their responsibilities extended beyond their parental duty. For many, these responsibilities were a significant challenge, and could affect the nature of their relationship with their child.
- For most, the greatest impact on their lives was the **lack of time**. For single parents, this meant feeling they were not able to work, even part-time.
- Parents with other children were conscious of the impact their caring responsibilities had on time they were able to spend with them – it could also affect things like their other child's sleeping patterns.
- One mother said she was expected to be an 'expert' in her child's illness, which also added stress.

 I don't get to be her friend; instead I am her carer".

Female, Single Mother

 I just don't have the time to work. When she is at school I am rushing around doing all the chores I can't do when she is home".

Female, Single Mother

The impact of caring responsibilities on other carers

- Like the parents we spoke to, **young carers** didn't tend to perceive their role in terms of being a carer. However, many received support from other family members and from the Council which was crucial in helping to reduce the impact on their day-to-day lives.
- Nonetheless, for one carer, his responsibilities had a limiting impact on his social life, as well as his ability to work.
- We spoke to one **elderly carer** who cared for his spouse.
- He didn't feel that his caring responsibilities impacted on him greatly, but received a significant level of support from carers and nurses.

 I don't *have* to restrict how far I travel, but I like to just in case my Mum needs me”.

Male, Young Carer

 I still would see friends and family like normal. The carers would come in the morning, always on time so it wasn't a problem”

Male, BME, Elderly Carer

Positive views on support currently received...

- Council-provided services were viewed with near-universal positivity, and vital in **easing the physical and mental burden of caring responsibilities**. This was particularly true for young carers and the elderly carer we spoke to.
- Participants spoke in particular about the **rapport and relationship** that carers built with their loved one.
- Others spoke about practical support such as school transport and after-school clubs which they found useful.
- **Culturally relevant services were valued** – carers being able to speak the same language could make a difference.

 [The support] is invaluable. If they didn't do it, I don't know what I'd do. She'd struggle to wash... they [also] take her to a sewing class".

Male, Young Carer

 The school bus will pick her up outside the house and drop her back at the end of school. I'm much happier knowing she is safe and it means my son is no longer late for school".

Female, BME, Single Mother

 My grandmother can speak English, but sometimes she doesn't want to. Having cares who could speak to her in Punjabi helped a lot".

Male, Young Carer

...though some worried about the impact support might have

- Some participants we spoke to **did not receive any formal support** from the Council.
- One parent did not feel their child would be eligible for support. Other parents who thought that they might be eligible for some support were **anxious about the potential impact this would have on their routine**.

“She won’t let anyone else look after her so I don’t think someone coming in would be much help”.

Female, Single Mother

“I’ve never really considered getting anyone in to help me. **We have a routine going and it’s working at the moment**”.

Female, Single Mother

Lack of awareness of alternative services available, and uncertainty about their relevance

- Participants had **very little awareness** of support services offered by the Council beyond those which they already had access to.
- When prompted on alternative services which the Council might offer (such as peer group activities, advice or counselling), **many struggled to see their value or relevance**. The idea of counselling in particular did not appeal to the carers we spoke to, mostly because they felt they were able to deal with their current situation.
- One participant said that he would find out about alternative services by looking online if he ever felt he needed to.

 You can access most information online already. I don't think there is anything I would need to know that I couldn't find out myself".

Male, Young Carer

 No, I don't think that [counselling] would be helpful for me. It's just not something I think would help with the situation".

Female, BME, Single Mother

...but some clues as to things which might be useful

- Some participants were only able to suggest expensive (and therefore impractical) solutions for future support, such as dedicated workers to liaise between different support services.
- However, other participants came up with one or two practical, and potentially more affordable, suggestions. It was interesting that these services are already in place in Leicester:
 - One young carer looking for work found it costly to attend interviews. He believed having assistance with travel costs would help him to find work, seemingly unaware of the [concessionary fares](#) available to all residents registered as unemployed in Leicester.
 - A single mother spoke about time-specific (e.g. after-school or holiday) clubs – again unaware that the Council provides this option to some carers in Leicester.



If he could go somewhere, like a club, who could keep his mind active that would be great.

Female, Single Mother

Conclusions

- Each of the seven participants we spoke to had **different caring responsibilities** which affected their lives in different ways. For some, intensive support from the Council is vital, while others receive little or no support.
- There were **no perceived cultural barriers** to accessing services among the carers we spoke to from a black and minority ethnic background. However, one participant we spoke to valued culturally-relevant (linguistic) support.
- Participants **really struggled to think about gaps in provision**, or to **articulate ways in which the Council might help** in the future. Part of this seemed to be based on the sense that they were managing to cope at present, but many also simply weren't aware of what the Council does or could do.
- However, participants did give **some indications about things which could help in the future**:
 - Short-term support to help carers find work, such as financial assistance in attending job interviews
 - Time-specific support such as after-school clubs
- These two options already seem to be available to residents in Leicester. Could Leicester City Council benefit from thinking specifically about carers and their wellbeing in these broader terms?

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