

Comprehensive Report on Carer Well-being and Support Needs



Winter 2023

About us

Carer Support Wiltshire is a registered charity that supports all unpaid carers, including young carers and young adult carers, across Wiltshire and Dorset. We help them to access services, information, education and training, respite, and breaks from their caring role.

We ensure unpaid carers have a voice that is heard and work with health and social care professionals and employers to raise carer awareness and develop best practice.

A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a family member or friend who could not always manage without their support. They might look after someone with a physical disability, learning disability, autistic spectrum disorder, long-term health condition, mental health issue, or a problem with substance misuse.

Find out more at www.carersupportwiltshire.co.uk and www.carersupportdorset.co.uk

Foreword

In Dorset one of our goals is to ensure that the views and experiences of unpaid carers are heard in the development of strategy and service developments that impact them. Over 160 carers have recently taken part in an online and postal engagement activity looking at their caring role and how they are managing it. Our report highlights the things that matter most to carers in terms of the support they receive to live their lives well. A big thank-you to all the carers who took part in these activities.

Leanne Hubbard - Chief Executive, Carer Support Wiltshire and Dorset and carer

Summary

Carer Support Dorset (CSD) plays a crucial role in providing assistance and support to carers across the region. This report aims to shed light on the challenges faced by carers in Dorset and the impact of CSD's services on their lives. The findings are based on a comprehensive survey conducted among carers in the region.

We carried out the following engagement activity:

- An online survey completed by 80 carers
- A postal survey completed by 84 carers

The aim was to investigate:

- Their caring role
- Their financial health
- Their mental health

- How they manage their own wellbeing
- How they feel about the future
- What they think about our services
- Their thoughts on services for the future

The findings were quite clear:

1. **Caring demands:**

- Over 65% of carers in Dorset dedicate more than 50 hours per week to their caring responsibilities.
- Nearly 95% of carers commit over 20 hours every week, and a staggering 69% provide care during the night.
- One in four carers has been in their caregiving role for over 10 years.

2. **Financial strain:**

- Nearly 25% of carers are struggling to meet basic living needs.
- Nearly half of carers expressed concern about their long-term financial situation.

3. **Emotional and mental well-being:**

- 98% of carers feel stressed about their caring role, with nearly one in five permanently experiencing stress.
- 88% feel mentally exhausted, and two in five report frequently feeling this way.
- 67% express the need for more emotional support.

4. **Loss of control and social impact:**

- Over 45% of carers feel they have lost control of their lives.
- Over 60% report a significant impact on their social lives.
- 65% feel their caring role limits their choices about the future.

5. **Challenges in caring:**

- Over a third of carers have experienced physical or emotional harm from the person they care for.
- 20% feel they sometimes can't manage situations with the person they care for.

6. **Respite and support services:**

- 71% of carers feel that community services are not meeting their needs for respite.
- Over 50% of carers don't even get a regular short break from their caring role.
- Nearly 60% express dissatisfaction with professional support provided by paid carers and respite services.

7. **Concerns about the future:**

- 82% worry about what would happen if they could no longer care.

- Despite challenges, 97% feel they have a positive impact on the person they care for.

We will use the feedback provided to inform our future planning for services for unpaid carers and on continuing to develop our plans for a carer-friendly Dorset.

Method

We invited unpaid carers from across Dorset from our carer register to complete either an online or postal survey between August and September 2023. We received a total of 164 responses.

The survey focused on several key areas:

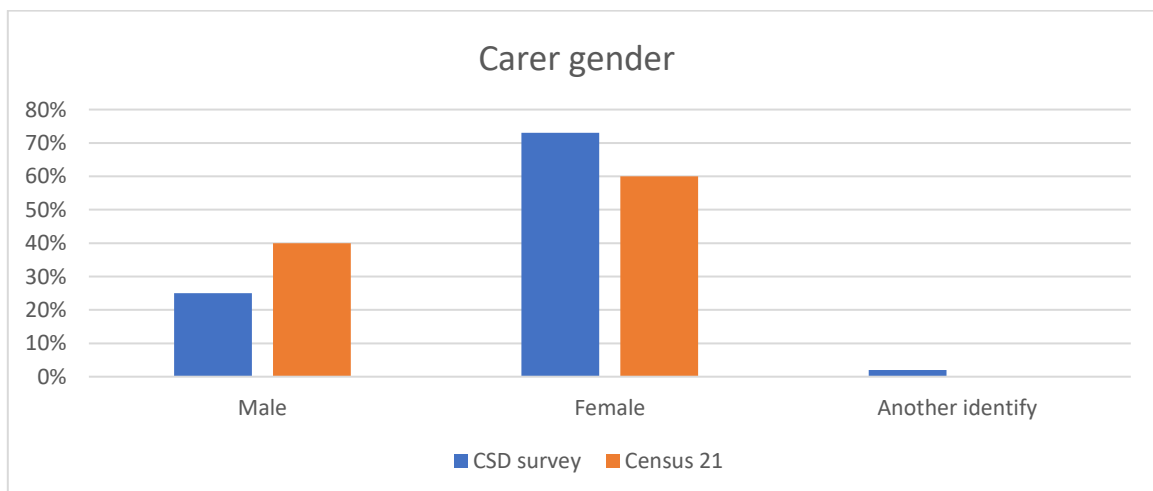
- Their caring role
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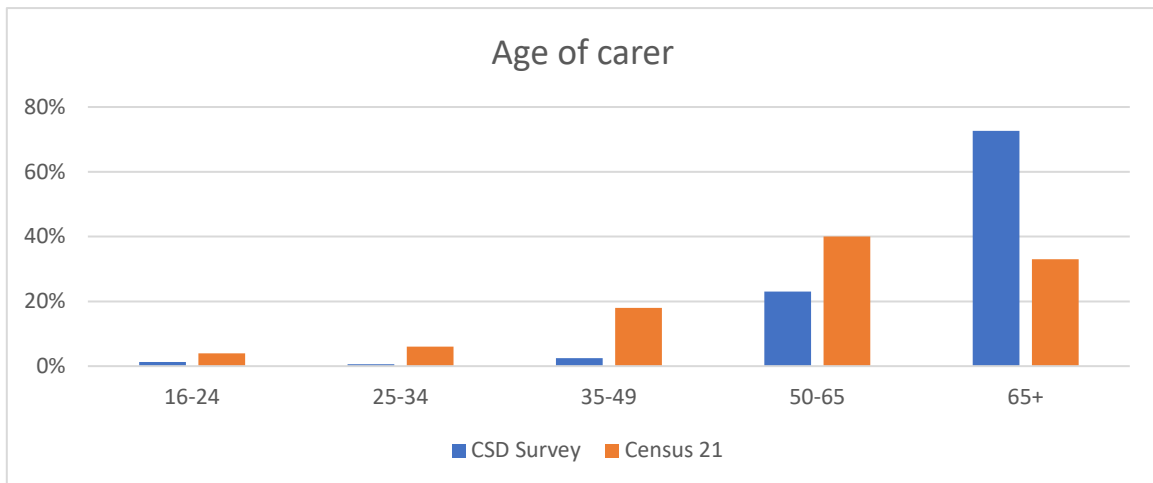
Findings

These findings are a summary of the online and postal survey responses and comments that were received between August and September 2023.

Demographics

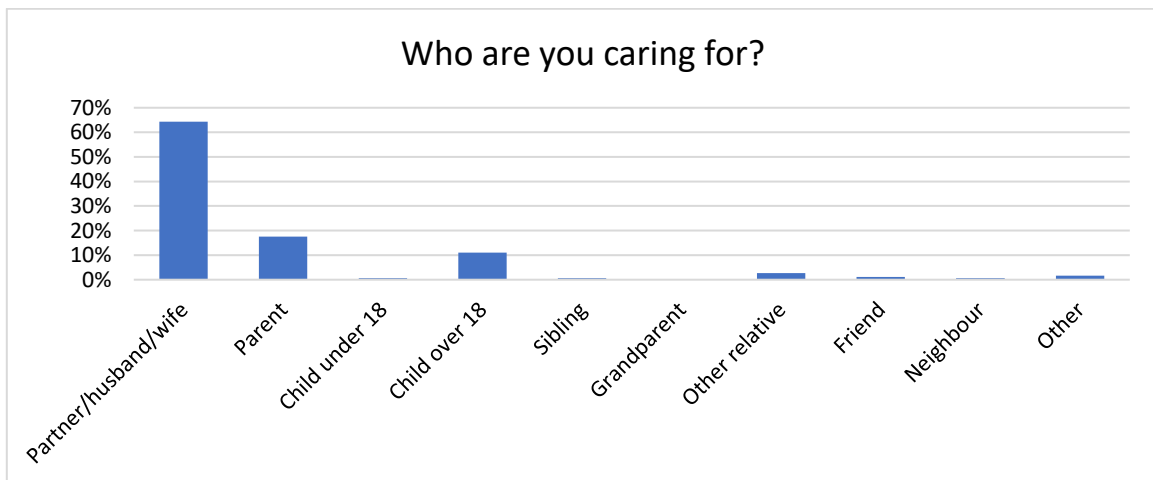
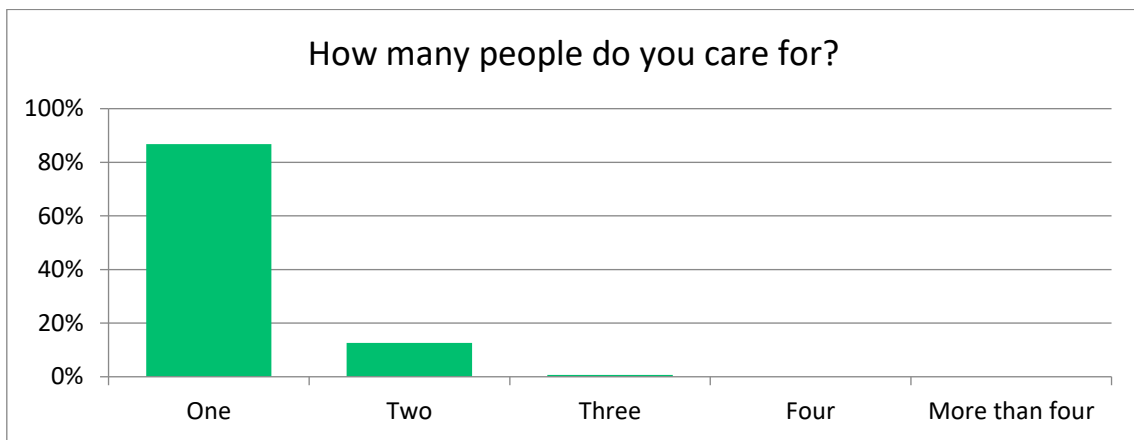
The majority of respondents to our survey were female and over 65 years old. 98% of respondents were White/White British.

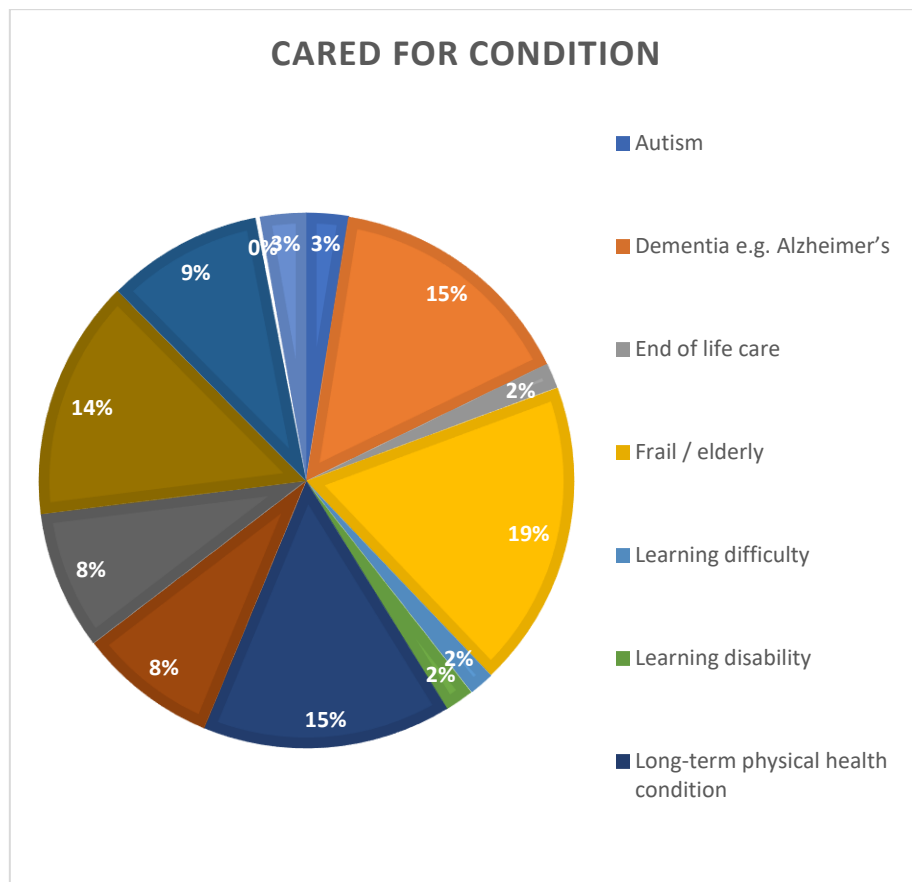




The caring role

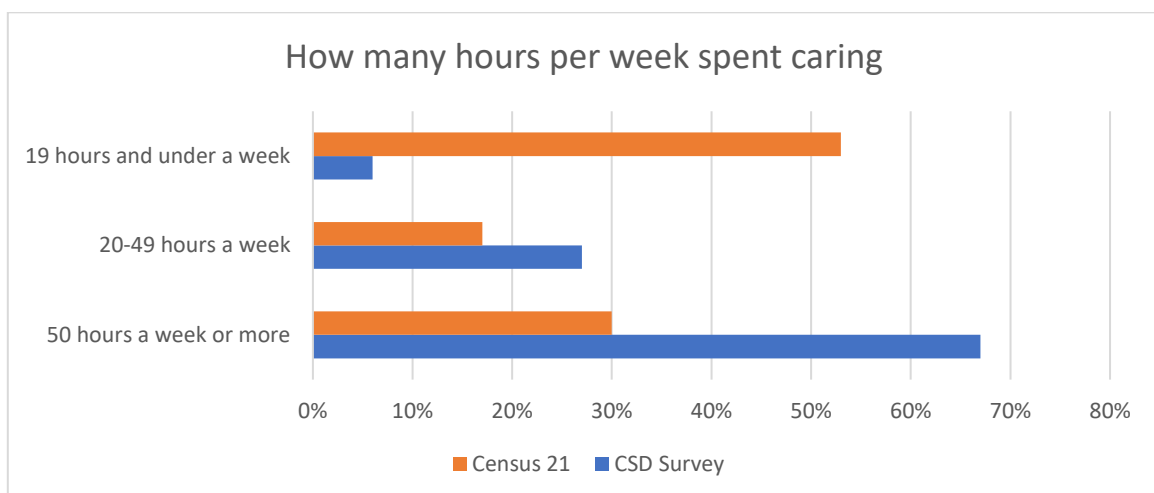
The majority of carers who responded to our survey are caring for one person (87%) and that person is more often than not their partner (64%). The most common reasons for caring for someone are being frail/elderly, dementia, having a long-term physical condition or physical disability.





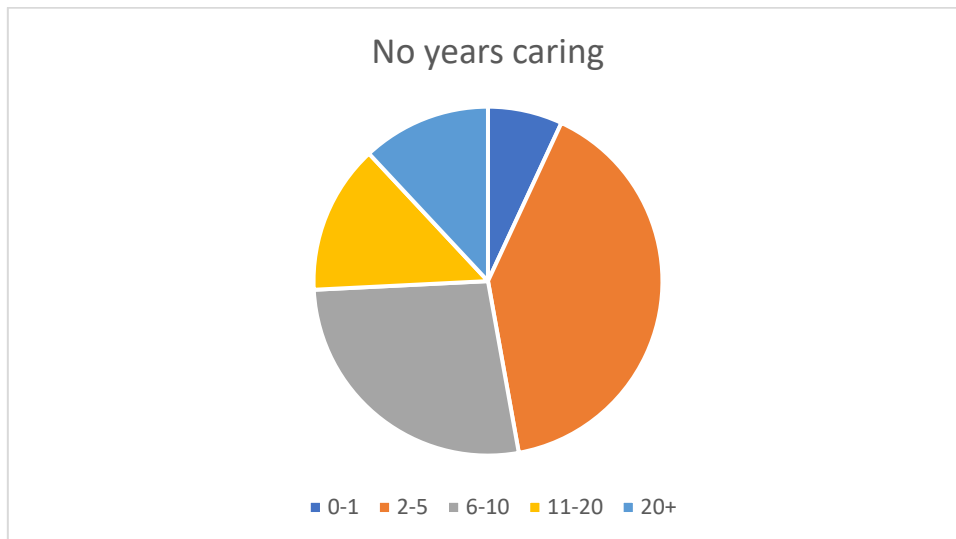
The majority of respondents are caring for more than 50 hours a week (67%). The over 65s are more likely to be caring for over 50 hours a week compared to other age groups (72%).

We also found that we had a higher number of carers who care for more than 50 hours a week than recent census data. This is perhaps because we are supporting carers who have reached crisis point because they have found themselves caring for longer and longer hours a week.



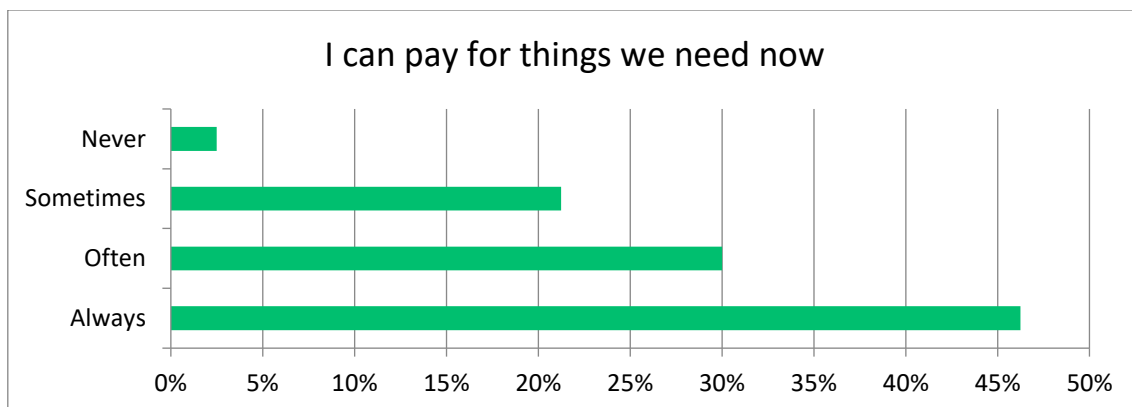
69% of carers are providing care at night. Male carers are slightly more likely to be providing care through the night (76%) than female carers (66%).

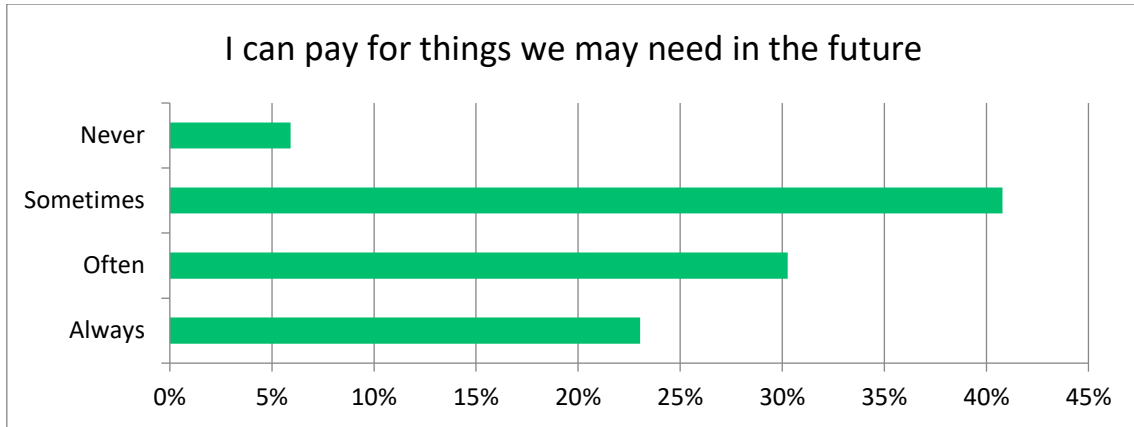
Two in five of carers have been caring for between two and five years. About a third of over 50's have been caring for more than 10 years. There was little difference between the genders in the number of years respondents had been caring.



Financial health

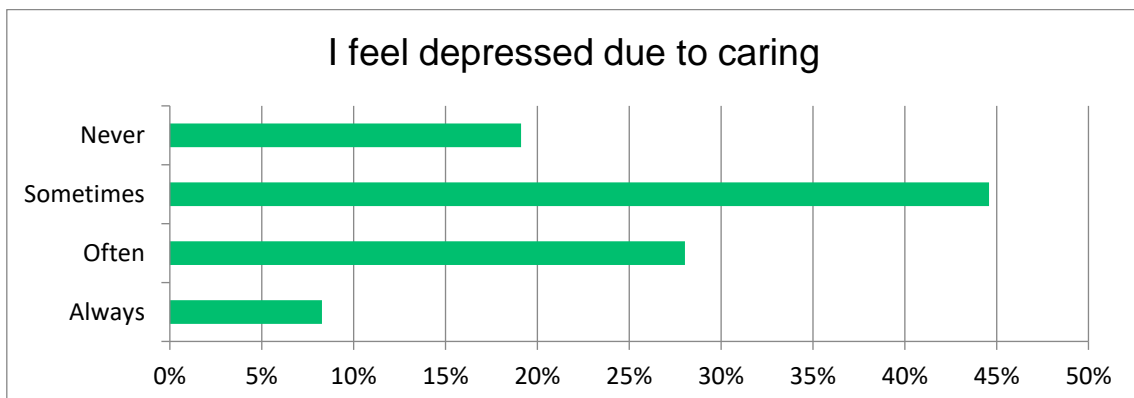
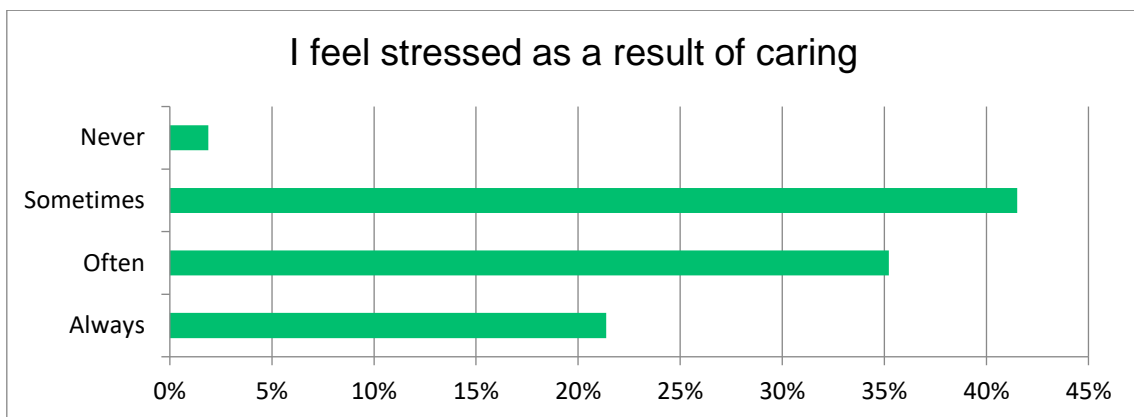
- Nearly 25% of carers are struggling to meet basic living needs.
- Nearly half of carers expressed concern about their long-term financial situation

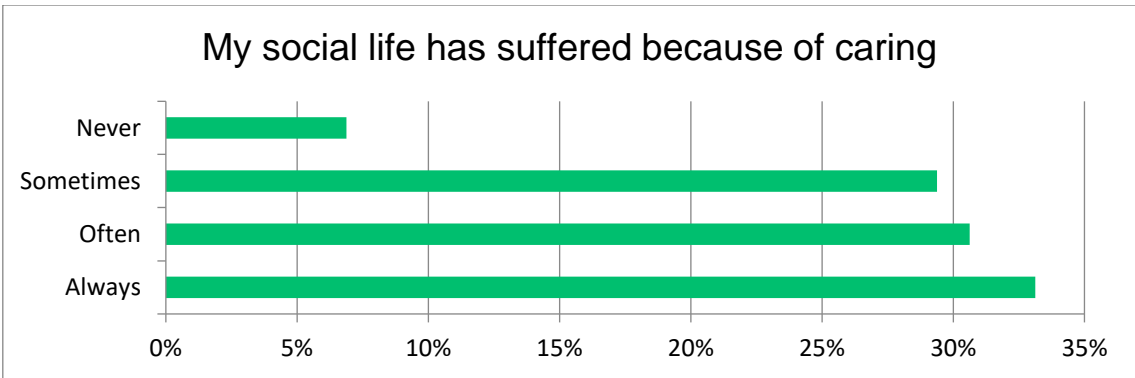
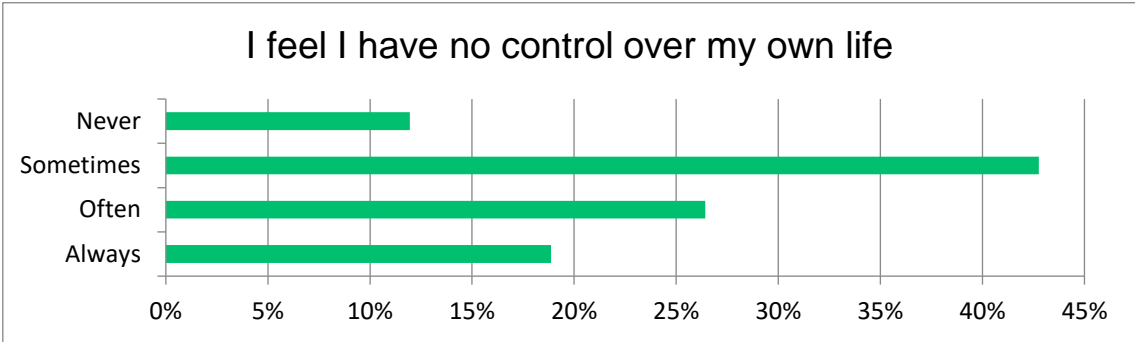
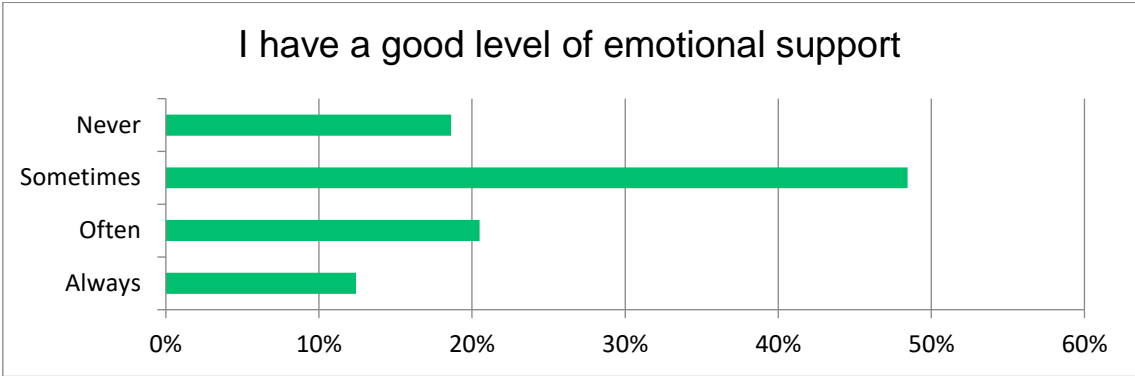
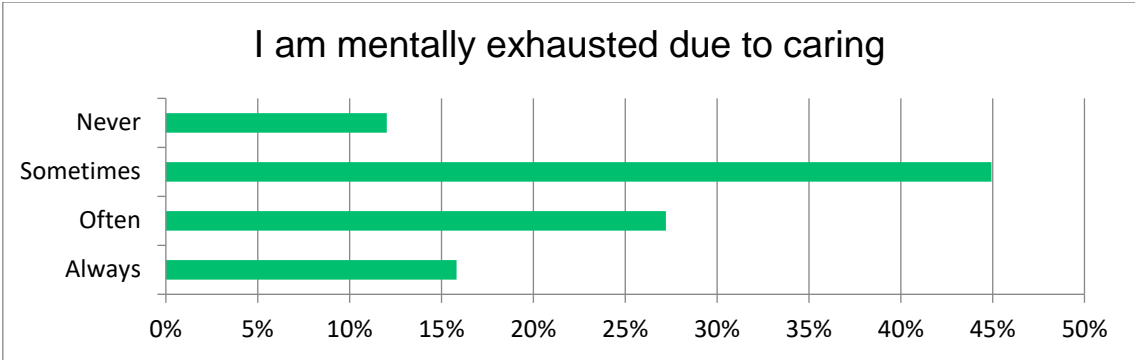




Mental health

- One in five carers permanently feel stressed
- Three in five female carers frequently feel stressed as a result of their caring role
- 40% of female carers often or always feel depressed as a result of their caring role
- One in five female carers always feel they have no control over their life
- Both male and female carers (56% and 66% respectively) said that their social life, always or often, suffers as a result of their caring role.

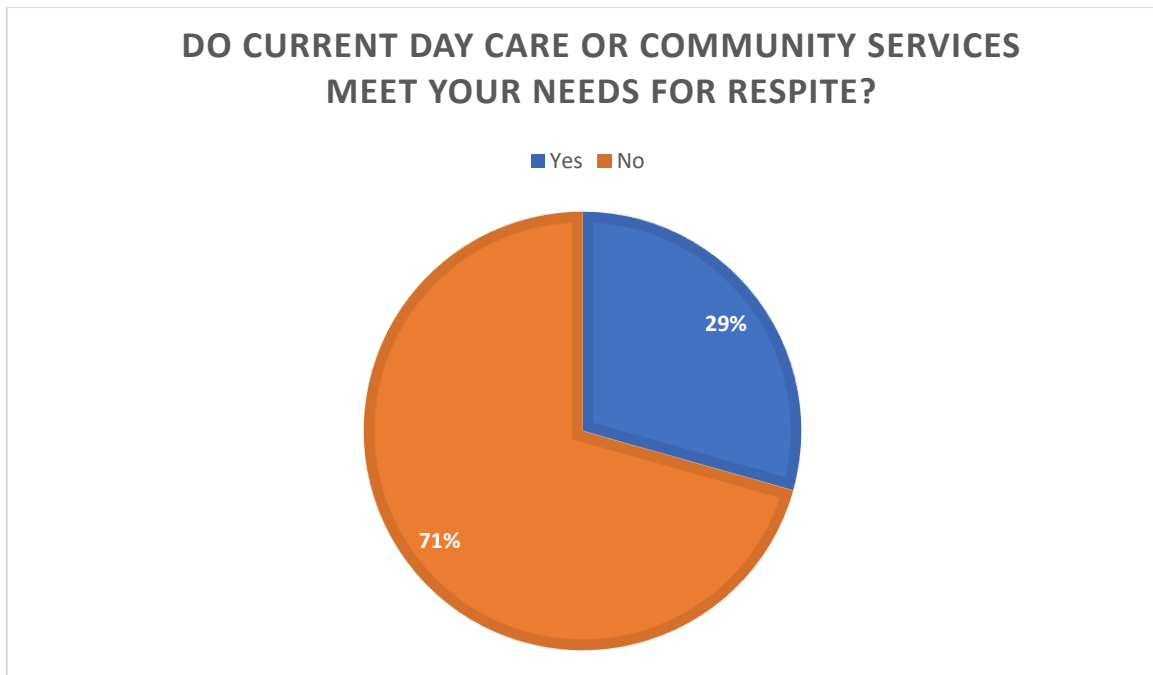




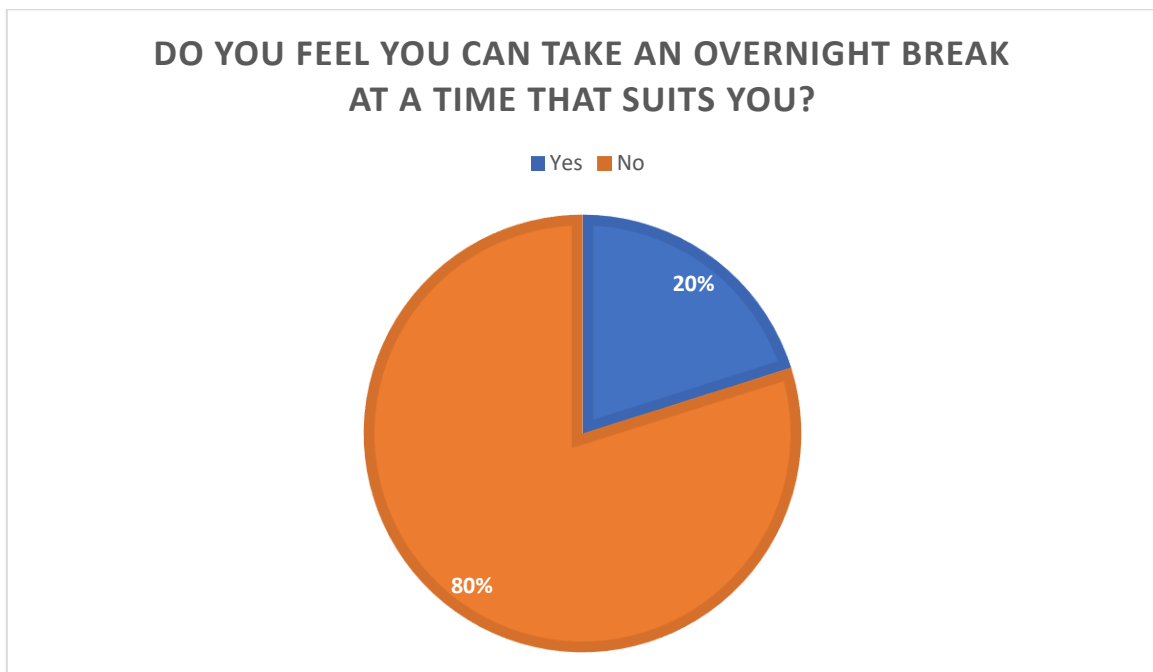
Time for yourself

75% of female carers said that current daycare or community services don't meet their need for respite. That's compared to 58% of male carers.

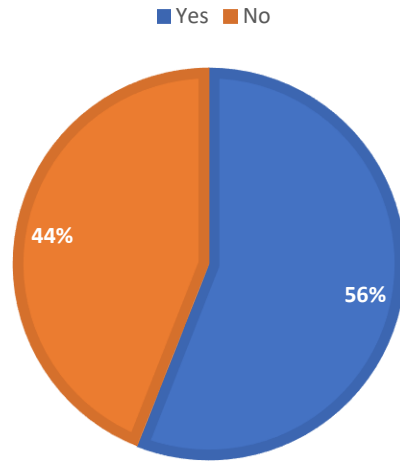
The majority of carers over the age of 35 felt that current daycare or community services didn't meet their need for respite.



Both men and women equally feel that they can take an overnight break at a time that suits them.



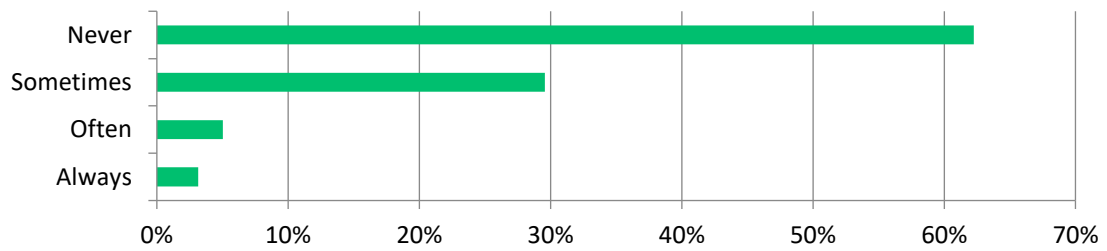
DO YOU FEEL YOU CAN GET A REGULAR TIME (2-4HOURS) AWAY FROM YOUR CARING ROLE, TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF?

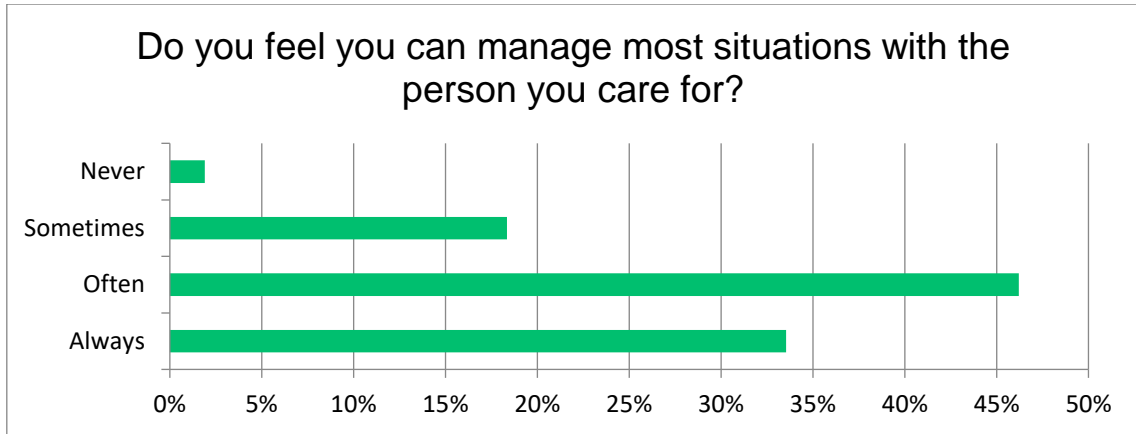


Managing your caring

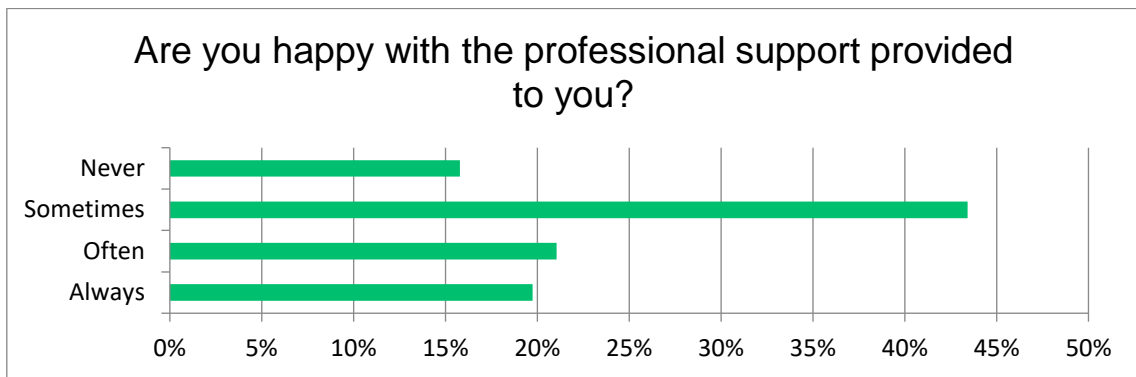
- Over a third of carers have experienced physical or emotional harm from the person they care for.
- 20% feel they sometimes can't manage situations with the person they care for.

Do you ever find yourself in a situation where you experience either physical or emotional harm from someone you care for?





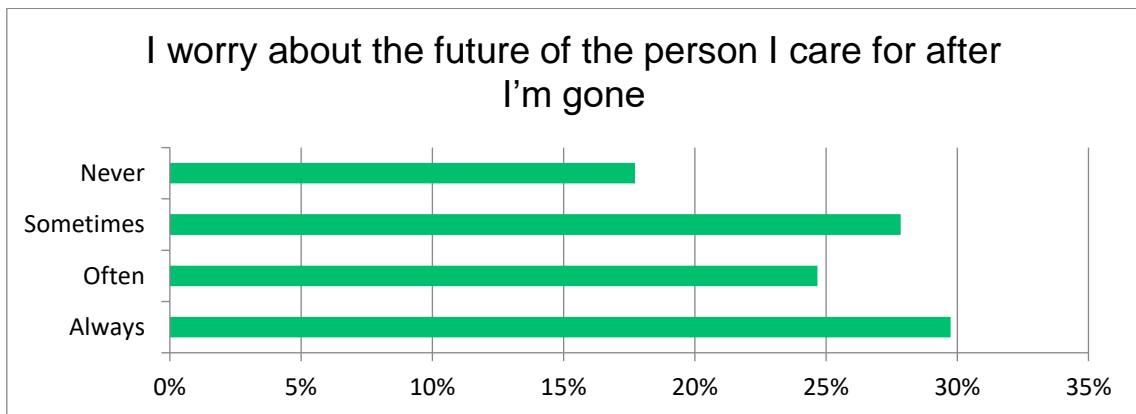
About 60% of carers are never or only sometimes happy with the professional support provided to them.

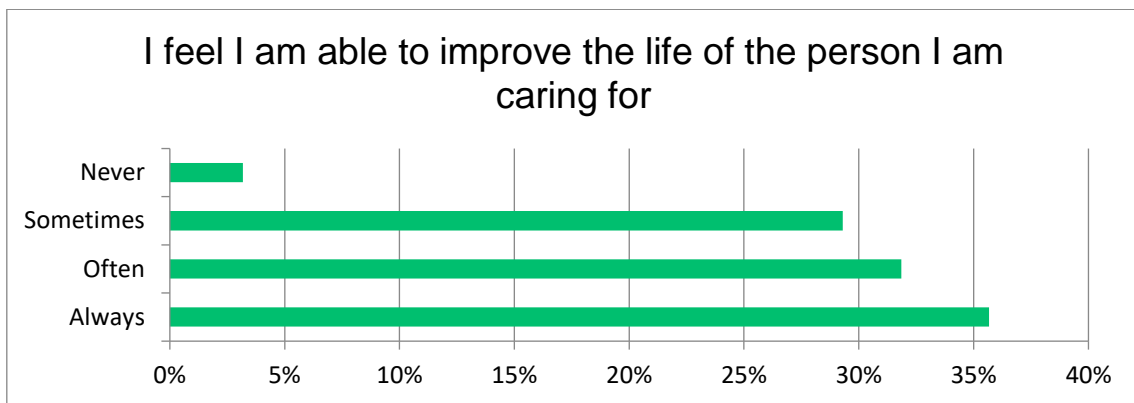
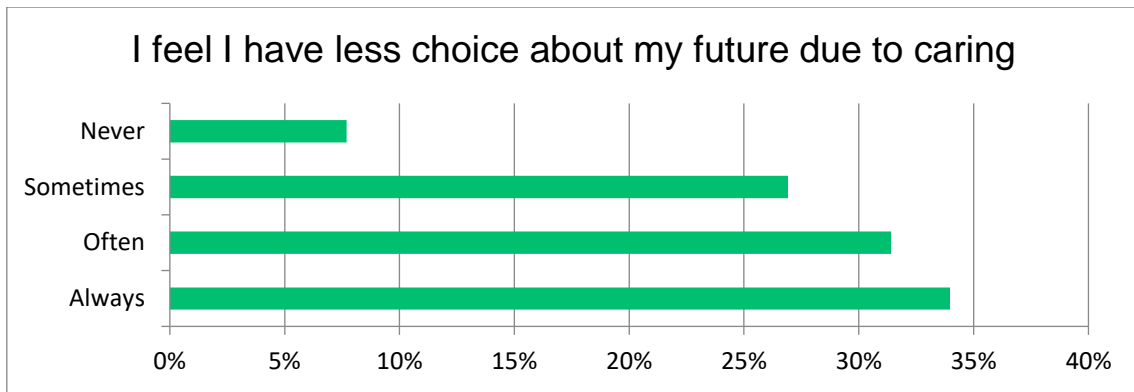


The future

Nearly a third of female carers worry about the future of the person they care for. This is compared to about a quarter of male carers.

Over 50s are more likely (75%) to feel that they have less choice about their future due to their caring role. Women are slightly more likely to feel this than men (37% vs 27% respectively).

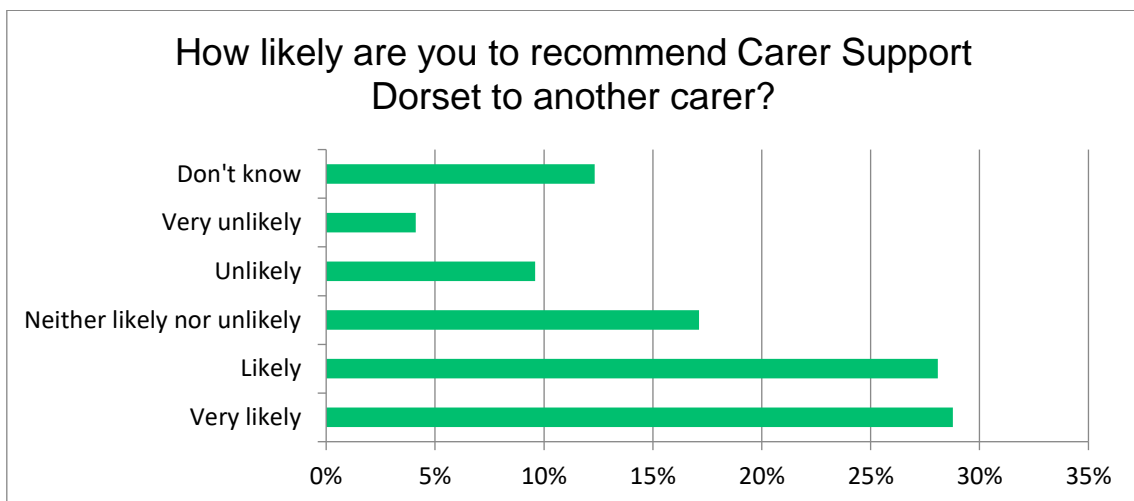


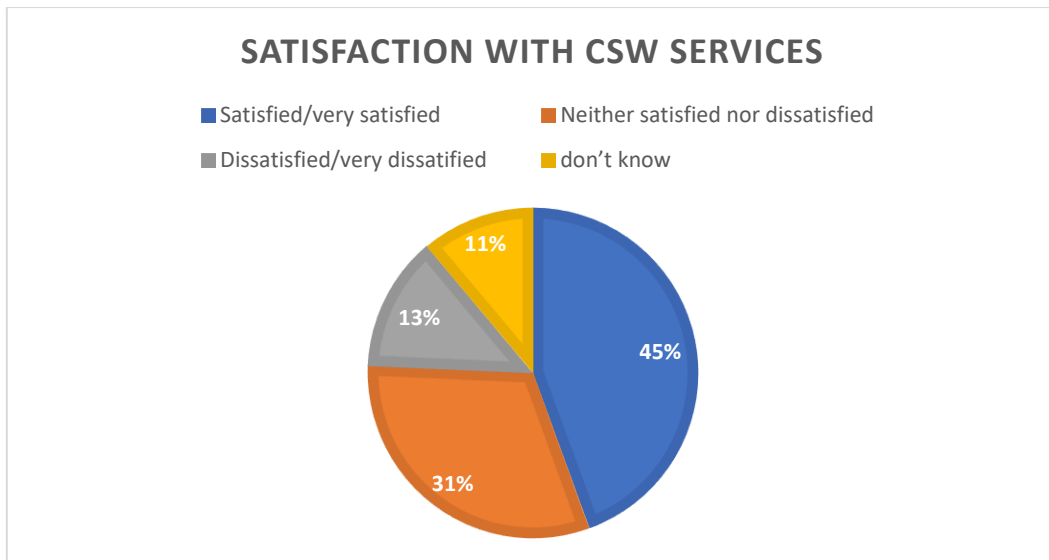


Carer Support Dorset service impact

Positive impact of CSD:

- Nearly 60% of carers would recommend CSD to other carers.
- Nearly 50% of participants report a positive impact on their quality of life as carers.



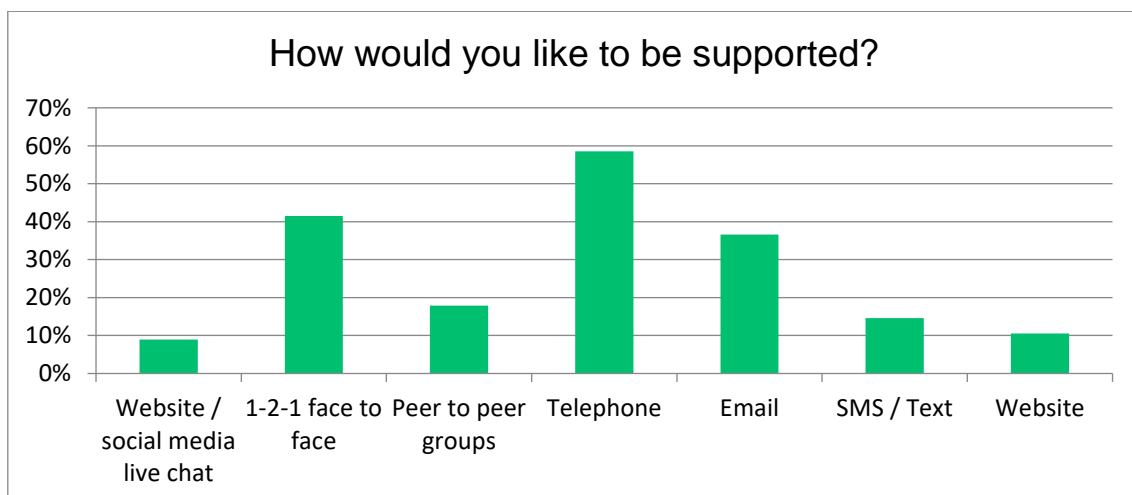


Comments from carers responding to our survey included:

- Always on telephone call when needed
- It's comforting to have an organisation you can bounce problems/anxieties off. Also they can signpost to other organisations such as mobility cars etc
- To know you have someone to turn to when things get tough is very helpful
- They are very helpful, and can get lots of support, when you are caring for someone.

Service utilization preferences:

- Two in five carers have accessed our website.
- 76% prefer a support conversation face-to-face or over the phone.
- Only 20% of carers would like to be supported through our website or website/social media live chat.
- We noticed when analysing the responses to our survey a significant number of older carers who said that they either didn't have internet access, access to a computer or didn't know how to access the internet.



Our most popular service is our carer advisors. Our drop-ins are also popular. This supports the preference for carers to be supported over the phone or face-to-face.



Training preferences:

- 50% of carers express a desire for mental health and well-being training.
- 37% seek financial planning training.
- 27% are interested in condition-specific training.
- 75% of carers would prefer face-to-face sessions.

If carers were in charge

When asked how we could improve our services and what they would do if they were in charge the most common responses from carers were:

- The overwhelming message from carers in our survey was that they wanted better and easier to access respite. That applied to one-off, regular and urgent breaks.
- Supporting that message was improved financial help for respite.
- There were also several mentions of a carers guide and system flow chart at the start of their caring journey.

Conclusion

This report highlights the critical challenges faced by carers in Dorset and underscores the need for continued support and intervention. CSD has proven to be a valuable resource, with high levels of satisfaction among carers. The recommendations provided by carers offer a roadmap for enhancing and expanding support services to meet the evolving needs of the caregiving community in Dorset.

Acknowledgement

Thank you to all who completed the online and postal surveys.