

General Election Manifesto 2024

A manifesto for unpaid carers in Scotland



The National Carer Organisations have a shared vision that all Scotland's unpaid carers will feel valued, included and supported as equal partners in the provision of care.

We are calling upon the next UK Government to:

- » increase funding across the UK for social care to help deliver sustainable and quality local carer services.
- » commit to increasing the Carer Premium and Carer Element in Universal Credit.
- » provide additional financial support to unpaid carers of State Pension age.
- » change the social security system to better support carers to remain in work.
- » build on the Carers Leave Act and implement paid carers leave.
- » amend the Equalities Act 2010 to include caring as the 10th protected characteristic.

Carers contribute

£13.1bn

of unpaid care in
Scotland each year

There are around

800,000

people in Scotland
providing unpaid
care each year

1 [Scotland's Carers update release](#), Scottish Government 2022

2 [National Care Service Financial Memorandum](#), Scottish Parliament 2022

Increase funding for social care

The need for increased funding for social care across the UK is more urgent than ever. Scotland's carers are struggling with increasing responsibilities as support services are reduced due to public funding cuts.

Investing in carer support not only helps carers, but also reduces pressure on health and social care budgets. It helps sustain local carer support, provides essential breaks and leads to healthier, more resilient communities.

- » **The next UK government must commit to investing more funding in social care and support for unpaid carers.**

Financial support for unpaid carers

The financial, physical and emotional toll on unpaid carers from the cost-of-living crisis and the lingering effects of the pandemic cannot be underestimated. We are calling on the next UK government to:

Double carer premiums and additions

Carer's Allowance Supplement in Scotland increases Carer Support Payment to the same level as other income replacement benefits. Carers on Universal Credit and Pension Credit have not received the same increase.

- » **The next UK Government must commit to increasing the Carer Premium/Carer Addition and Carer Element in Universal Credit by an equivalent £11.10 per week to provide extra income.**

Support older unpaid carers

Unpaid carers who are of State Pension age cannot receive Carer's Allowance / Carer Support Payment. They may have an underlying entitlement to it which qualifies them for an extra amount under other income benefits, such as Pension Credit, but they do not receive the full payment. For many carers of State Pension age no further financial support is provided.

- » **The next UK Government must provide additional financial support to unpaid carers of State Pension age, such as a non-means-tested payment. There should also be a review of pension rules for unpaid carers so that they are not disadvantaged in retirement.**

Universal Credit Work Allowance

The current Universal Credit system does not encourage unpaid carers to increase their income or remain in employment. The earnings threshold is low and once they reach it their Universal Credit is reduced by 55p for every £1 they earn.

- » **The next UK Government must review and implement changes to the social security system to better support carers to remain in work, removing any barriers that act as a disincentive to work.**

More than a quarter

27%

of unpaid carers have bad or very bad mental health

rising to 31% of those caring for more than 50 hours a week.³

Only

3-4%

of carers report having breaks

For full-time carers, providing 35 or more hours of care a week, only 9-10% have access to breaks from caring.⁴

29%

of unpaid carers in Scotland are living in poverty

1 in 5

households in receipt of Carer's Allowance live with food insecurity⁵

3 [State of Caring](#), Carers UK, 2023

4 [Annual Scottish Health Survey](#)

5 [State of Caring in Scotland: The financial impact of caring in 2023](#), Carers Scotland, 2023



Support in employment

One in seven of the working age population are juggling paid work and caring responsibilities and this can be both challenging and stressful, with impacts on finances, physical and mental health. This balancing act often leaves unpaid carers unable to sustain full-time employment, forcing them to reduce their hours or give up work entirely to care.

- » **The next UK Government must recognise the importance of supporting unpaid carers to remain in employment by building on the Carer's Leave Act 2023 and extending it to give a right to at least five days of paid Carer's Leave a year.**

Equality for unpaid carers

The Equality Act 2010 does not include unpaid care as a protected characteristic. There is no requirement for simple reasonable adjustments for carers in the workplace. Unpaid carers say that this would make a huge difference to them.

- » **The next UK Government must amend the Equalities Act 2010 to include caring as the 10th protected characteristic.**

Unpaid carers with one or more existing protected characteristics face additional barriers. For example, older carers from minority ethnic communities may find it harder to access mainstream services.

- » **The next UK Government must make progress on equalities outcomes for carers with protected characteristics, including promoting accessible communication and taking steps to improve equal access to services such as social security benefits.**

Around

270,000

people in Scotland are juggling paid employment with unpaid care

17%

of unpaid carers have turned down promotion or taken a less qualified job because of their caring role.

Only

19%

of unpaid carers from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities said they felt listened to by the UK Government

Compared to 39% of white unpaid carers.

6,7 [Projected Population of Scotland \(Interim\) 2020-based](#), National Records of Scotland (2022)

8 [Juggling paid employment and unpaid care: A State of Caring in Scotland report](#), Carers Scotland, January 2024

9 [Unpaid carers are not unsung heroes](#), Carers Trust, 2023

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A manifesto for unpaid carers in Scotland by Scotland's National Carer Organisations: Carers Scotland, Carers Trust Scotland, the Coalition of Carers in Scotland, MECOPP, Shared Care Scotland and the Scottish Young Carers Services Alliance.