

Subject: London's Unpaid Carers – Part 2

Report to:	Economy, Culture and Skills Committee
Report of:	Executive Director of Assembly Secretariat
Date:	12 January 2026
Public Access:	This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

1.1 This report provides background for the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee's second meeting on London's unpaid carers. This is part of a two-meeting investigation.

2. Recommendations

2.1 **That the Committee notes the report as background to putting questions to invited guests and notes the subsequent discussion.**

2.2 **That the Committee delegates authority to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to agree any output arising from the discussion.**

3. Background

3.1 There is no official register for carers. According to the 2021 Census, 7.8 per cent of Londoners provide unpaid care, defined as giving any help or support to anyone because they have long-term health conditions, or problems related to old age.¹ This is the lowest proportion of any region in England and Wales.²

¹ Census 2021, [Unpaid care by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), 13 February 2023

² Census 2021, [Unpaid care by age, sex and deprivation, England and Wales: Census 2021](#), 13 February 2023

3.2 Carers are more likely to be in poverty than the general population. According to Carers UK, as of 2021/22, 29 per cent of London carers are in poverty, compared to 21 per cent of all Londoners.³ In 2024, 61 per cent of carers reported feeling worried about finances, and 28 per cent have cut back on essentials like food or heating.⁴

3.3 Long periods of care make it difficult for carers to stay in employment. Data from 2023 shows that 40 per cent of carers had given up work to care, and 22 per cent had reduced their working hours.⁵ Unpaid carers report negative attitudes in the workplace and some experience a lack of support, making it difficult to combine the demands of unpaid care with paid work.⁶ Caring is also associated with a 'pay penalty'. Unpaid social carers experience a pay penalty of £5,000 per year, reaching £8,000 per year after six years.⁷

3.4 The two main support mechanisms for carers are benefits such as Carer's Allowance (CA) and Respite Care through a carer's local authority. However, these benefits are often not sufficient, as 62 per cent of people in receipt of CA live in poverty.⁸ Respite care has become less generous and variable in recent years due to funding cuts to local authority budgets.^{9 10}

3.5 Set against what we know about carers in general, evidence is growing that the experiences of Black and minority ethnic carers are frequently different and may be more challenging than those of their White counterparts.¹¹ Black and minority ethnic carers are more likely to struggle financially and to provide for longer periods, which can increase their risk of health difficulties.¹² Ethnic background also intersects with gender. For example, female carers from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds have significantly higher levels of economic inactivity compared to other groups, linked to unpaid caring responsibilities in the home.¹³

4. Issues for Consideration

4.1 The overall purpose of the Committee's meeting is to:

- Understand the experiences of unpaid carers in London and the particular challenges inherent to being an unpaid carer in London;
- Understand how providing unpaid care affects people's wellbeing, as well as their personal finances, education and employment prospects;
- Understand which groups of people are most likely to provide unpaid care in London;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the current support available to unpaid carers in London;

³ Carers UK, [Poverty and financial hardship of unpaid carers in the UK](#), September 2024 (p.17)

⁴ Carers UK, [State of Caring 2024](#), October 2024 (p.6)

⁵ Carers UK, [Carers' employment rights today, tomorrow and in the future](#), November 2023 (p.8)

⁶ Carers UK, [Poverty and financial hardship of unpaid carers in the UK](#), September 2024

⁷ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [The caring penalty](#), July 2023 (p.1)

⁸ Carers UK, [Poverty and financial hardship of unpaid carers in the UK](#), September 2024 (p.5)

⁹ Nuffield Trust, [Falling short: How far have we come in improving support for unpaid carers in England](#), 10 October 2022

¹⁰ London Unemployed Strategies & Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [Unpaid care and poverty: unpaid carers' priorities for change through participatory co-design](#), June 2023

¹¹ Race Equality Foundation, [Supporting black and minority ethnic carers](#), August 2018

¹² Race Equality Foundation, [Supporting black and minority ethnic carers](#), August 2018

¹³ London Unemployed Strategies & Joseph Rowntree Foundation, [Unpaid care and poverty: unpaid carers' priorities for change through participatory co-design](#), June 2023

- Identify which interventions in London or outside of London have proven effective in supporting unpaid carers; and
- Understand what the Mayor can do to support unpaid carers in London.

4.2 Members will hold a public meeting with the following invited guests:

- Mike Rich, Chief Executive Officer, Barnet Carers;
- Fiona Jones, Operations Director and Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Enfield Carers Centre; and
- David Walker, Chief Executive Officer, Bromley Third Sector Enterprise.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in the report.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications for Greater London Authority arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report:

None.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers:

None.

Contact Information

Contact Officer:	Tim Gallagher, Senior Policy Adviser
E-mail:	tim.gallagher@london.gov.uk