What's it like being a carer in Lincolnshire?

Social care project findings (part one)

October 2025

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healthwatch Lincolnshire

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Please note that all quotes included in this report are presented verbatim unless otherwise indicated. Only filler words such as 'um' and 'you know' have been omitted for clarity and brevity.

Executive Summary

As part of our 2025 social care project, 153 adult carers shared their experiences of accessing services, the challenges they face and what is working well.

78% (117) of carers had struggled over the past 12 months.

Challenges faced by carers

Loneliness and social isolation

Impact of caring on physical and mental health

Difficulties navigating the care system

The following related to themselves as carers and the person they care for:

Unaware of support available

Eligibility issues
(especially for financial help)

Difficult getting help

72% (99) did not feel supported as a carer.

Poor public recognition of carers, their role, its challenges and impact

Carers often felt people did not understand what it was like being a carer:

- The impact it has on mental and physical health
- How hard it is to find support
- Financial struggles and the impact of the rising costs
- Guilt
- Loneliness.

Executive Summary

46% (47) of the individuals respondents care for were receiving social care (either short or long term support). However, an additional 54% (56) had either tried unsuccessfully to access support or were unaware of what was available for the person they care for.

69% (44) had experienced difficulties accessing or arranging social care for the person they care for.

Challenges faced by carers when trying to access social care for the person they care for

Assessment processes - confusing and long

Unaware of support available *(including carers assessment and allowance)*

Poor communication

Eligibility issues *(especially for financial help)*

Not feeling involved

52% (30) said services **sometimes** work well together.

The picture in Lincolnshire

NHS England's definition of an unpaid carer:

"A carer is anyone, including children and adults, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid."[1]

The 2021 census estimates that there are more than 70,000 unpaid carers in Lincolnshire which represents approximately 10% of the county's population.[2] This number is only expected to increase due to Lincolnshire's ageing population.

On average a carer in Lincolnshire provides 19 hours of care or less per week. However, some carers provide more than 50 hours of care a week. Most commonly this was in East Lindsey which also has the highest proportion of carers in the county.[3]

Being a carer can have a significant impact on health and wellbeing. This includes a negative impact on physical and mental health to struggling to access support, loneliness and financial strain.[4]

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) has a legal obligation under the Care Act 2014 to promote the wellbeing of unpaid carers and ensure pathways and services are in place to help them to keep caring. The Lincolnshire Carers Service is delivered collaboratively between the Care and Wellbeing Hub and Carers First.[5]

[1] NHS England (n.d.) Who is considered a carer? https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/comm-carers/carers/] (Accessed: October 2025).

[2] Office for National Statistics (2025) Census 2021: General Report for England and Wales [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6850323f29fb1002010c4ece/Census_2021_General_report_for_England_and_Wales.pdf] (Accessed: October 2025).

[3] Lincolnshire Health Intelligence Hub (n.d.) Carers [https://lhih.org.uk/beta/age-well/carers/] (Accessed: October 2025).

[4] Carers Week (2025) Caring about Equality: Carers Week Report 1015 [https://www.carersweek.org/media/qxnkcnn0/carers-week-report-2025-web_small.pdf] (Accessed: October 2025)

[5] Lincolnshire County Council (2024) Introduction to the Lincolnshire Carers Service [https://lincolnshire.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s61159/Introduction%20to%20the%20lincolnshire%20Carers%20Service.pdf] (Accessed: October 2025).

Background

Between April and June 2025, our research project focused on social care. As part of this project we wanted to better understand what it is like being a carer in Lincolnshire. The project explored:

- The challenges carers face
- What is working well in terms of support
- How could carers feel better supported

We also wanted to hear carers' experiences of accessing and receiving social care for the person they care for.

To do this we launched a survey. We would like to thank Carers First for reviewing the survey before it went live. The survey could be completed online but was also distributed through organisations and groups that support carers and on the ground via our engagement and outreach events. We also collected feedback from a carers group.

We would like to thank everyone who supported sharing the survey and all those who took the time to share their experiences.

We recognise and acknowledge that the experiences shared in this report may not represent all carers in Lincolnshire, whether this be seeking support for themselves as a carer or social care for the person they care for. Although the sample size is relatively small, every experience shared is valuable and can provide meaningful insight.

What is it like being a carer in Lincolnshire?

153 **carers shared their views**

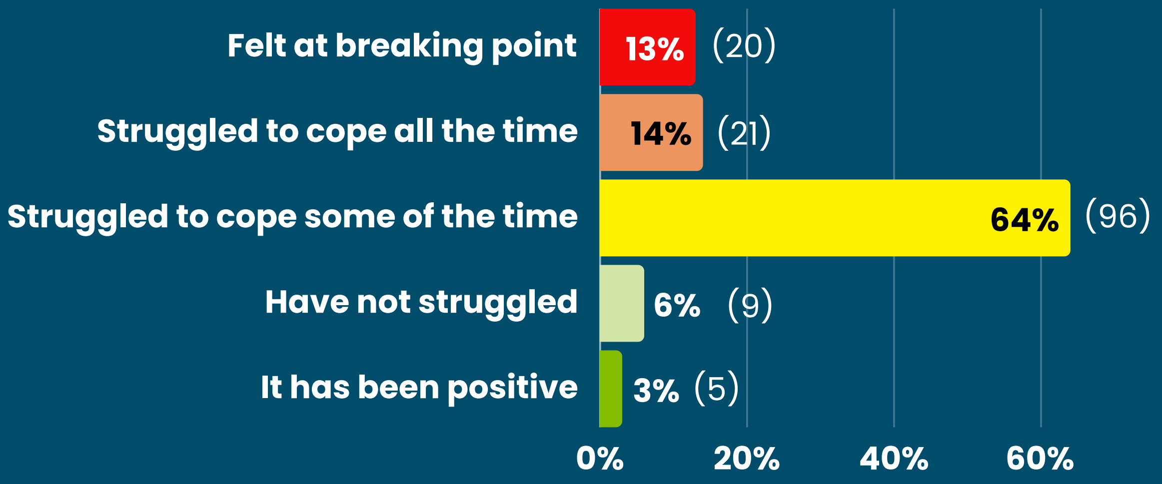
All the carers who shared their views were adults (adult carers). Most commonly carers were caring for their spouse/partner or a parent. 66% (94) cared for someone over the age of 65. Respondents were providing care for a range of, and often multiple complex needs, including Dementia or memory loss, mobility impairment, frailty and long term health conditions. For a full breakdown see Appendix - Who are people caring for? The Appendix 'Who shared their views' provides a breakdown of who shared their views. We heard from a range of carers throughout the county.

The first part of this report focuses on carers themselves. The second part looks at social care, mainly exploring carers experiences of accessing social care for the people they care for.

⚠ **We recognise and acknowledge that this report reflects on the experiences of a small number of carers and therefore may not be representative of the experiences of all carers in Lincolnshire.**

How are carers feeling?

78% (117) of carers had struggled over the past 12 months.



What challenges have you faced as a carer?

Carers were asked what challenges they have faced and it was clear that carers faced a range and often multiple different challenges. **The biggest challenges carers faced appeared to be social isolation and loneliness.** The challenges could be grouped into themes; next to each statement is the percentage and number of respondents who selected that challenge. **A full breakdown can be seen in the Appendix 1 Graph 1 .**

Challenges faced by carers

Loneliness and social isolation

- Social isolation or loneliness (44% (66))
- Giving up hobbies or social activities (44% (66))

Health impacts on the carer

- Experienced a new or worsening physical or mental health condition. 37% (56) saw their physical health decline and 34% (51) developed a new mental health issue e.g. stress or burnout

Barriers to care

- Difficulties navigating the care system (38% (58))
- Lack of respite or breaks (32% (49))
- Financial strain (30% (46))
- Lack of information either for the carer or the person being cared for (28-33% (43-50) respectively)

Wider impact

- Giving up or reducing work hours (30% (46))
- Missing school/college/university (1% (1))

The majority of respondents recognised themselves as a carer. Only four respondents did not think they were carers:

"Because I'm caring for my husband"

"The caring I do is for my mum"

Difficulties navigating the care system - a closer look

The responses of carers who said they had faced difficulties navigating the care system for the person they care for could be grouped into themes. Next to the heading for the theme includes a percentage and number of respondents. A quote from a respondent illustrates the theme.

Difficulties navigating the care system

Difficult finding help - (38% (31))

"When asking for help I just get told no. Don't know what help is out there, haven't been given any information. How can you ask for help if you don't know what's available?"

Lack of communication - (22% (18))

"People pass. Different contact numbers. No one ever follows through. Feel left alone to cope."

"Communication is the main factor, even if you have left a message but no one gets back. Having to pester just to get issues sorted."

Lack of services - (16% (13))

"Lincolnshire does not have commissioning to diagnose or treat child condition."

Long waiting times - (11% (9))

"It always seems to take a long time. Also finding the correct department and the feeling of being pushed from pillar to post."

Poor coordination - (5% (4))

"The person I care for has multiple care providers in both Lincolnshire and London, so it is hard. There is no personalised care support plan in place and poor sharing of information. Having one go-to person in the GP practice would be a massive boost, someone who knows what's going on."

Awareness, knowledge and support

45% (62) did not receive information or advice on the support available for carers.	**72% (99) did not feel supported as a carer.**	***The main source of support for carers appeared to be from Carers First, family, friends and adjustments in the workplace.***

Carers were asked what barrier they had faced when trying to access support for themselves. Only six individuals said they had not faced any difficulties getting support for themselves. **The biggest challenges appeared to be not knowing what support was available.** Again the challenges could be grouped into themes; next to each statement is the percentage and number of respondents who selected that challenge. **A full breakdown can be seen in Appendix 1 Graph 2.**

Barriers to accessing support for carers

Awareness and recognition

- Unaware of what is available (43% (59))
- Didn't have time to look for support (23% (32))
- Didn't recognise themselves as a carer (15% (21))

Access and eligibility

- Services were hard to navigate (28% (39))
- Not eligible (18% (25))
- Long waiting times for support (16% (22))
- Couldn't get to support (transport or location issues) (12% (17))

Emotional or psychological barriers

- Felt guilty or uncomfortable asking for help (24% (33))
- Negative experiences in the past (20% (27))

Awareness, knowledge and support

“Being able to speak to someone 24/7. Caring doesn’t stop and being able to get support during the night would have been beneficial.”

“Knowing what was available and faster reaction when asking for help.”

“The whole system is wrong. When we need help it feels like a fight, when you're at your lowest point you're having to battle the system for an appointment or even just a phone call.”

“The importance of workplace support and understanding. At times the flexibility and support of my employer has been the only thing that has made my situation as sustainable.”

Guilt

“I think the guilt around whether you are doing a good job caring whilst trying to earn money to pay the bills is the biggest thing. I struggle to find a balance. I need to work but I also enjoy working as it's something for me but then I feel guilty that other people will be caring for my daughter.”

“Feel alone. Have to make all decisions financial social. I feel trapped and at 80 nearly 81 I feel I have no life left. I’m just a companion, cook, housekeeper, chauffeur, accountant, secretary, nurse, liaison officer. I would like to leave and just be responsible for myself.”

“It’s hard, but when its the person you love most in the world, what else can you do? I feel old before my time, I'm really tired and ignore my own care needs most of the time. Having someone identify you as a carer and then walk away for a year isn't very helpful. I have not been on holiday for seven years. I don't see my friends, I don't go out shopping or anywhere on my own anymore.”

Awareness, knowledge and support

When asked what makes them feel supported and how they could better be supported, responses could again be grouped into themes. The table below includes the most frequently mentioned themes and the number of respondents in brackets who mentioned that theme.

What makes carers feel supported?*	How could carers be better supported?
• Support from Lincolnshire Carers Service (13)	• Greater awareness of support (18) including support for carers and the person they care for. In some cases it was unclear whether support was unavailable or if the individuals were unaware of what is available.
• Family, friends and peer support (9)	• More financial support that is also easier to access (9)
• Workplace adjustments e.g. flexibility to attend hospital appointments (6)	• Better communication (7) between services and carers and a single point of contact
• *10 individuals said nothing is helping them feel supported	• Other improvements included more peer support, respite care availability and support with transport

Positive impact: Lincolnshire Carers Service

Lincolnshire Carers Service is often the main source of support for respondents and the person they care for. Further analysis of the findings highlighted the positive impact Lincolnshire Carers Service has.

Around 32 of the 153 respondents mentioned the service in their response - they either knew about the service or had used it.

Positive impact of the Lincolnshire Carers Service

Those who mentioned the Lincolnshire Carers Service appeared to be:

- ✓ **Nearly twice as likely to have received information about the support available for carers**
- ✓ **More than twice as likely to say they felt supported as a carer**
- ↘ **Half as likely to say they did not know what support was available to them as carers**

Recognition of carers, loneliness and social isolation

Two interlinked themes were prevalent throughout the survey responses. The first being recognition of carers and the second loneliness and social isolation. When asked if there was anything else they would like to tell us about their experience of being a carer those two issues appeared repeatedly. Whilst loneliness and social isolation can be covered under greater recognition of carers, we kept it separate as it was specifically repeatedly discussed.

Recognition of carers

- The general public and health and care professionals not understanding how difficult being a carer is
- The impact caring has on carers' mental and physical health
- Struggles balancing work and caring
- Financial struggles
- Difficulties accessing support or knowing what is available
- Guilt - are they doing it right? Are they doing enough? Guilt when struggling

Loneliness and social isolation

> "Being a carer can feel overwhelming when you are managing your own family and household responsibilities and that of your parents household and responsibilities. You need to know how to navigate health, social services, special education law, wills, trusts and Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) and Best Interest decisions, and least restrictive options. You need to be able to prioritise competing needs, hold your nerve, assert yourself in the face of professionals and gatekeeping telephonists, learn another language full of professional/legal terms, challenge staff who cant see things holistically and who only see the immediate problem to solve (which often just kicks the can down the road). You need to be prepared to sit in A&E for hours and explain to staff why you, as a carer can give useful info to hospital staff about what the person needs, and you need to be prepared to sometimes be taken to the end if your tether trying to be heard. You need an understanding family and friends who have your back. I could go on."

Feedback from carers groups

Feedback from carers groups we attended highlighted many the same issues that were raised through the survey, including:

Lonely carers who don't want to burden extended family.

Lack of communication with the carer regarding care and treatment at hospitals.

Overwhelmed by the system as it is so complicated. Many carers are having to fight for their rights to financial support. Many are going through PIP assessments that are very stressful for conditions that will not get better with time (MS, Parkinson's were mentioned in particular).

Transport - being let down by EMAS at last minute or not being able to accompany a vulnerable person to an appointment and having to make their own way.

Lack of consistency in quality of care and information from clinicians. Older patients made to feel like a burden to the health system.

Mental health support in older adults - there is a feeling that older people should just "get on with it", it's part of aging and take a tablet. Not offered alternatives.

Respite care - lack of information and difficult to book in advance, e.g. for more than six months to 12 months if wanting to book a holiday.

Feedback from carers groups

Getting face-to-face appointments at GP surgery is an issue. There's an expectation that people can access online services or have someone that will do it for them.

Treatment options are not explained clearly. But upon asking question they were dismissed and made to feel that they were being awkward but loved ones wishes were not being listened to.

Veteran received excellent support via OP Courage and the clinician was able to access additional support for them to care for their elderly parent. This gave them some relief and respite and reduced the burden on their wellbeing and recovery was better supported.

Carers and social care

The second part of the survey explored carers' experiences of accessing social care for the person or people they care for.

46% (47) of carers were receiving short- or long-term social care support for the person they care for.

For the remaining respondents:

21% (22)
Tried unsuccessfully to access support from social care.

33% (34)
Unsure what support is available or if eligible.

Important note: Whilst the questions focused on social care, many of the respondents discussed community health services as well or instead. In some cases it was difficult to distinguish which they were referring to. This suggests respondents may be unaware of the distinction between the two or reflect how these services are experienced in reality.

What social care service were being accessed or were people trying to access?

Carers had accessed or were trying to access a variety of services, most commonly home care and support from a social worker.

41% (28) Home care	40% (27) Support from a social worker	35% (24) Equipment or home adaptations
28% (19) Direct payments/ personal budgets	21% (14) Respite or short breaks	16% (11) Day centre or community activities

Fewer than 10 individuals were looking for nursing or residential care.

Barriers to accessing social care

69% (44) had experienced difficulties accessing or arranging social care.

Carers experienced a range of barriers when trying to access social care for the person or people they care for. **The biggest barriers related to the assessment process – both it being difficult or confusing and long wait times for assessments.** The barriers could be grouped into themes; next to each statement is the percentage and number of respondents who selected that option. **A full breakdown can be seen in Appendix 1 Graph 3.**

Barriers to accessing social care for the person they care for

Assessment and eligibility

- Process confusing or difficult (47% (22))
- Long waits (47% (22))
- Not eligible for support (38% (22))

Awareness

- Not knowing what services were available (40% (19))
- Unsure of where to get help (40% (19))

Communication and coordination

- Poor or unclear communication from services (36% (17))
- Poor coordination (34% (16))
- Did not feel involved as a carer (32% (15))

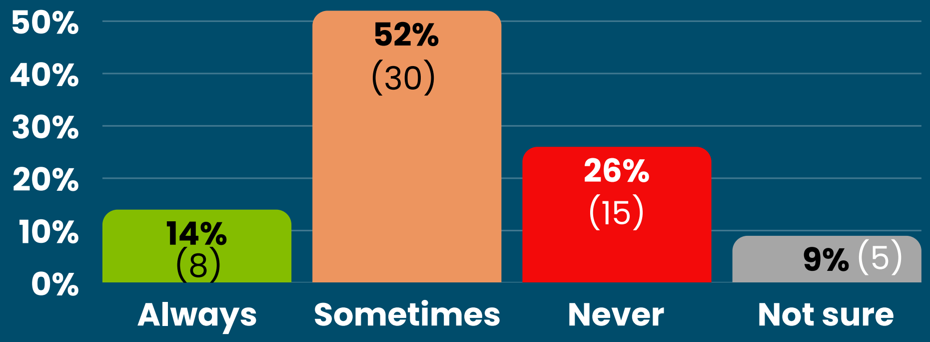
Other

- Services not available (30% (14))
- Person didn’t want to accept care (26% (12))
- Cost of care (17% (8))

Care coordination - a closer look

52% (30) said the support services sometimes work well together.

Do/did the services involved in supporting you and the person you care for work well together?



Carer's allowance

Carer's allowance is a benefit paid by the UK Government linked to the number of hours spent caring and where the person cared for also receives certain benefits. Click here to find out more.

- **34% (21) were receiving carer's allowance**
- **35% (22) either said they didn't think they could apply or weren't aware of it**
- **19% (12) had requested but were denied/ineligible**

23 individuals went on to explain their experience more and 14 of the comments related to issues with eligibility. The majority were not eligible for the allowance due to wages, pension or other benefits. Others felt the allowance was too little, barely covering food.

Carer's assessment

47% (29) either said they didn't know what a carers assessment was or think they need one

30% (18) either had an assessment or review in the past 12 months

The remaining individuals had either requested a review (7), could not remember (6) or preferred not to say (1).

Three individuals who had an assessment or review in the past 12 months shared that as a result they had been awarded a personal budget which had been used to fund support activities, a cleaner or gardener. However, eight individuals did not feel they got any meaningful support from the assessment.

Respondents were asked what could improve the process of a carer's assessment or review and 14 individuals shared their views. There was no overarching themes but improvements included more personalised and face-to-face support being needed and again a greater awareness of what support is available. Other one-off comments included a single point of contact for support, more financial support and support out of normal working hours.

> "It was set up quite quickly after my assessment, I am very grateful for the support to have a cleaner, it makes a difference for a day that I look forward to."

> "By ensuring that families know this is an option from the start as that is not always the case."

> "Explain the budget and what it is that can be accessed. It all feels like a secret."

> "Provide carer support activities locally on weekends or evenings. Listen to the needs of the carer. Don't make assumptions. Be flexible about when and how assessments are done. Don't assume everyone is new to caring and hasn't already done endless problem solving."

Overall reflections

Carers were asked to reflect on what works well and what could be improved about their experience with social care services. The responses could be grouped into themes; next to the heading for the theme includes a percentage and number of respondents whose response contained the theme.

What works well?*	What could be improved?
• Getting support for the person they care for including financial support, equipment/adaptations, support from social workers and carers (16).	• Timelier access to support (9) • Better communication (4) • Greater continuity of care (3)
• 14 individuals said nothing has worked well. Others mentioned again issues with eligibility and waiting times.	• Improved quality of care (3) • The following were mentioned by less than two people: services be more proactive and greater transparency around services and eligibility.

Overall reflections - what works well?

“The supply of equipment has been good, and it has been collected promptly when not required. Providing help with personal care has been prompt on release from hospital and again when required near end of life.”

“Having a personal budget for my daughter so we have been able to choose and pay our own support workers and pay for services that my daughter benefits from accessing.”

“We do one or two activities a year with Carers First and enjoy them. It helps us that one child goes out with a carer once a week. It helps us that one adult child is in supported living so we don't have to meet so many of her needs now. There seems to be a good availability of supported living places, which surprised me.”

What could be improved?

“The assessment process needs to be more transparent, why were we turned down for any support? Why won't anyone help us?”

“Better communication, respect and paying both unpaid and paid carers a living wage minimum wage or carers allowance is not enough to live on.”

“A central hub where with one call you could get directed to the correct department.”

Cost of living

58% (37) said the rising cost of living had impacted on their ability to be a carer.

Those who shared they were just getting by - “I have JUST ENOUGH money for basic necessities and little else” were the most likely to say the rising cost of living had impacted their ability to be a carer. This suggests that some of the most vulnerable are being most affected.

Access to dental care for those in care homes or housebound

Carers also shared their struggle to access dental care for the person they care for, particularly those who might not be able to physically visit a dentist.

“Uses the special community dental service as she didn't like the regular dentist and they referred my young person. It has taken a while to be able to sit in the purple chair and open the mouth. Ipad helps too and the stickers.”

“Getting a referral for domiciliary support from NHS Dental was lengthy for the person I care for. “

“My mum needed new dentures but could not access the dentist. After many months, and cancelled appointments, she saw a dentist at home and eventually had her new teeth made and a tooth taken out.
The service was great once they got to us, but the waiting list was extremely long.”

Final Thoughts

Between April and June 2025, our research project focused on social care. As part of this we wanted to explore the experiences of carers, carers and social care. We would again like to thank everyone who supported this work and took the time to share their views. The project was successful in identifying areas of good practices and areas for improvement.

The findings of our carers survey echo those found by both the Carers Week 2025 report "Caring About Equality" and Carers UK report "State of Caring 2025: The cost of caring – the impact of caring across carers' lives" showing the issues identified nationally also reflect what it is like being a carer in Lincolnshire.

With all three finding that:

- Carers see their mental and physical health deteriorate or develop new health conditions since being a carer. Carers often struggle to look after their own health.
- Carers give up social activities and hobbies.
- Carers often face financial struggles. The Carers UK report focuses on this in more detail and like our findings highlights carers concerns around eligibility of financial support.
- Carers struggle to balance work and caring. Some reduce their hours, give up their job or drop out of education.
- Carers often feel they are not recognised or understood.

The findings from our work highlighted that more than 70% of carers who responded to the survey had struggled over the past six months and did not feel supported. It was clear that carers often had a limited awareness of the services available; both the support available to themselves and the person they care for and social care. However, services such as the Lincolnshire Carers Service often play the sole or a crucial role in supporting carers.

In relation to social care, the biggest challenges carers faced appeared to be again low awareness of what is available, eligibility issues (especially for financial help) and confusing or long assessment processes.

Based on the findings we were able to formulate a series of evidence based recommendations to help carers feel better supported.

Recommendations

The 2025 Carers Week report 'Caring about Equality' details national recommendations. We accept these recommendations at a local level, particularly those in relation to health and social care bodies, health and local authorities.

However, we also recognise that some of these recommendations have already been implemented in Lincolnshire, for example:

- Lincolnshire Carers Service provides support to individuals whose caring role has come to an end.
- Our local authority, instead of having a separate carers strategy, has embedded carers across core strategies to ensure carers are considered across services and decision making as a whole, rather than in isolation.
- Our Integrated Care Board (ICB) has plans and strategies in place to support carers and the people they care for, working in partnership with health organisations and wider partners.

Based on the findings of this report, we have identified the following recommendation (key improvements that can be implemented across all services for the benefit of residents).

Drawing on engagement with partners, understanding how they support carers, and the findings from this report, we developed recommendations using this intelligence.

Recommendations

1. Develop and implement a consistent approach to making carers aware of the support available for themselves as a carer and those they care for.

- **Evidence from the report:**
    - **Poor awareness of the support available;**
    - **For carers:** 45% of respondents did not receive information and advice on the support available. Lack of awareness was also cited as one of the biggest barriers to accessing support (p.8, & 10).
    - **From social care:** Not knowing what support was available and being unsure of where to get help were two key barriers to accessing support from social care (p.16). Awareness of carers allowance and assessment were also low (p.17 & 18).

- **Potential solutions:**
    - Launch a united awareness campaign among professionals and the public about the support available to carers and the people they care for. Work together with all stakeholders to promote what is available by using clear, accessible messaging in multiple formats. The campaign should also consider how to reach those with different needs e.g. sensory loss, those for whom English is not a first language, rural areas and those who are unable to use digital platforms.

2. Develop and implement a system-wide approach to supporting carers.

- **Evidence from the report:**
    - **Multiple organisations and sectors are often involved in an individual's care (p13, & 15);** Due to this a system-wide approach is needed to support carers, instead of a reliance on a single organisation or sector.

- **Potential solutions:**
    - Develop an approach that ensures all organisations across health, care, community, voluntary, charity and faith sectors take a shared responsibility for proactively identifying, supporting and signposting carers.
    - Provide training for professionals which explores what is like being a carer. To support greater understanding, involve carers in this training to share living/lived experience.
    - Introduce and implement a single standardised carer passport that is recognised and used by all sectors to support carer recognition and avoid carers having to repeat themselves. Actively raise awareness of this document among staff and carers.
    - Continue to regularly collect carers' experiences so the effectiveness of the solutions implemented is monitored and to drive the continuous improvement of carers experiences.

Considerations

These are to inform future planning, development and improvement of services for long-term benefits.

1. Continue to codesign systems and pathways with those with lived or living experience.

- 38% found systems difficult to navigate, which was identified as a barrier to accessing support (p7, 8, 12 & 16). By continuing to involve those that use services in their design, it ensure systems are accessible, inclusive and responsive, leading to improved experiences.

2. Explore and expand measures to identify and address loneliness and social isolation amongst carers.

- Social isolation, loneliness and giving up hobbies and activities were two of the most common challenges faced by respondents (p.6, 11 & 12). Therefore, it would be beneficial to review the existing support and initiatives identifying any gaps and ensuring opportunities and activities are well-promoted. Those with lived or living experience could be involved in co-designing new initiatives that consider issues such as rurality and availability outside of working hours.

Lincolnshire County Council

We would like to thank Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) for reviewing our report and providing their reflections on the findings and subsequent actions.

“LCC would like to thank Healthwatch Lincolnshire (HWL) for the significant work undertaken to collect and present the experiences of carers across the county. We value the role HWL plays in amplifying the voice of residents and unpaid carers, and we appreciate the opportunity to respond formally to your findings.

1. Summary of LCC’s Overall Position

LCC welcomes the insight provided by these reports. We recognise that the themes highlighted—particularly around carer awareness and access to services—mirror areas already identified through our own quality assurance activity and provider engagement.

We acknowledge the strengths in the reports, including the clear articulation of lived experience, the examples of positive practice, and the evidence-based recommendations. We also recognise the resource and effort HWL invested across these engagement activities.

2. Key Themes Noted and LCC Reflections

Carers’ Experiences

HWL’s findings show that carers continue to experience significant pressure, with **78% reporting they had struggled in the last 12 months and 72% not feeling supported**.

A central theme relates to **low awareness of available support**, including carers assessments, financial entitlements, and navigation of social care pathways.

LCC agrees that greater awareness, simplified communication, and consistent signposting are necessary. We also recognise the finding that carers who engage with the Lincolnshire Carers Service (LCS) experience notably better outcomes—being **twice as likely to feel supported** and to have received information. We believe this highlights the importance of increasing reach and visibility of LCS.

Lincolnshire County Council

3. Actions LCC Is Taking in Response

LCC has identified several immediate areas of focus informed by the HWL findings.

Improving Carer Awareness and Signposting

The partnership carers steering group, of which Healthwatch Lincolnshire is now a valued member, has committed to work to

- Develop a clearer, more accessible communication offer for carers, including co-produced information resources at GP surgeries.
- Strengthen the visibility of the Lincolnshire Carers Service.
- Improve frontline staff prompts to identify and support carers early.
- Promote the carers service involvement in supporting hospital discharge , through establishment of a carers service presence at Boston Pilgrim and Lincoln County hospitals

This aligns with the report recommendations for a consistent approach to signposting and a system-wide approach to carer recognition.

Enhancing Data Collaboration with Healthwatch

LCC welcomes HWL's offer of collaboration and will seek, through the healthwatch liaison meeting to put in place :

- An LCC–HWL data and insight exchange
- A light-touch factual review process for major upcoming reports

These mutual arrangements were discussed at Quality Risk Review Board (QRRB).

4. LCC's Commitment to Ongoing Partnership

LCC values the role Healthwatch plays in representing the voice of Lincolnshire residents. We are committed to:

- Working collaboratively on solutions where findings indicate a shared system challenge
- Using these insights to inform service improvement and commissioning activity
- Ensuring the lived experience of carers and providers influences strategic priorities, including our CQC Assurance preparation

We would welcome the opportunity to:

- Discuss next steps as part of the Healthwatch liaison meeting
- Co-develop communication materials for carers through the Carers steering group
- Participate in future joint engagement and promotion activities" - **LCC**

Lincolnshire Carers Service

We would like to thank Carers First for reviewing our report and providing a response to the issues raised, as well as highlighting the services and support they can offer.

Carers First: "To help carers feel less lonely or isolated, Carers First offers a range of support shaped by what carers tell us matters most. Across Lincolnshire, we run flexible events and activities that make it easier to join in, and we encourage carers to connect with local community groups.

These opportunities play a vital role in building social connections and helping carers feel less alone."

One carer said:

"It's time out in a safe space. When I see you I can relax, say what I want, cry or whatever I need. No one has any expectations of me."

Our Carer Support Advisors are based across the county and offer both emotional and practical support — from navigating services to simply being someone who listens. This helps carers feel heard, valued, and supported.

Some events we offer include:

- Our Men Care 2 events, specifically for male carers who can be a hidden and hard to reach group. We offer regular activities such as bowling, Bomber Command trips and quizzes.
- Wellbeing groups at a range of localities across the county. These give carers the chance to meet others who live locally and understand the challenges of being a carer.
- Groups for carers with specific roles, such as dementia carers and those whose caring roles have recently ended.
- Regular craft events, both as standalone activities and to complement our regular wellbeing groups.
- Short trips for carers, such as visiting Belton House, the seaside, and a shopping trip to Nottingham.

Lincolnshire Carers Service

Carers First: “We know how important it is for carers to be aware of the support available. Our local teams are well-connected and work hard to share information in the places carers are most likely to see it. A key part of our work is promoting our services and building strong links with local organisations that may be in touch with carers or developing a carer support offer with those partners.

Examples include:

- Working with local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) schools to explore setting up a carers group for parents/carers
- Joining the Young Carers Festival at Bishop Grosseteste University to help young carers find out about the support they can access when they are 16
- Attendance at various events across the county to share details of the support on offer to carers such as carers coffee mornings run by local GP surgeries, and mental health support groups such as Stepping Stones in Gainsborough.”

Click here to visit Carers First website.

Click here to visit the Lincolnshire Carers Service website.

The next four pages of this report are a leaflet on the Lincolnshire Carers Service.

Lincolnshire Carers Service

Do you look after someone you know, who couldn’t manage without your support?

The Lincolnshire Carers Service isdeliveredin partnership byLincolnshire County Council’s Care and Wellbeing Hub and Carers First. The Hub is the first point of contact for all new referrals and general enquiries regarding support for unpaid carers.

The Lincolnshire Carers Service is commissioned by Lincolnshire County Council. The service is delivered collaboratively between the Care and Wellbeing Hub and Carers First.

Whatever your circumstance, we offer services to support you at every stage of your caring journey to help you find the balance in your life you wish to achieve.

If you would like to speak to someone about your caring role and discuss what support may be available to you , please call the Care and Wellbeing Hub on **01522 782224** or access support online at: **lincolnshire.gov.uk/support-carers/request-support**

Carers First Website

Find the information you need at a time that suits you. From carer breaks to carer assessments, our website helps you understand what support is available in your local area. Finding information is quick and easy and our support resources are tailored to your circumstances and needs. You will find local and national news, events and can read personal stories shared by carers we have worked with.

Lincolnshire Carers Service

Our helpline means you have friendly and knowledgeable staff to offer advice, guidance and information. Support can differ depending on who you look after and where you live.

Tell us about your situation and we will provide you with tailored support.

carersfirst.org.uk

01522 782 224

Carers First in your local community

One to one support and programmes

Our dedicated team is here to understand your specific needs and support you throughout your caring journey. Whoever you are looking after, we will equip you with the skills to help you thrive.

We will talk through your situation, then tailor a programme of support, according to what you need in one or more of the following areas:

- Health
- Caring role
- Managing at home
- Wellbeing
- Finances
- Work

We have specialist advisors and programmes of support around employment, benefits and money matters. Our Health Team can support you with wider health matters, including support when someone goes into and leaves the hospital.

We continuously work with our carers and volunteers to develop new services. Visit our website to find out more about the services and activities available in your area.

Carer Wellbeing Groups and Activities

A great way we can help is by connecting you with other carers. Our peer support and activity groups provide the chance to connect with people who understand.

There is something for everyone and our groups reflect the carers we support and the people they look after. From dance classes, book clubs and wellbeing groups to workshops for people in different caring circumstances.

Local teams also arrange regular trips, workshops, events and activities near you, catering for all ages and interests.

Keeping you informed

Whether you prefer to receive information by email, online or by mail, we provide regular updates, so you are up to speed with the latest news and events happening in your area and nationally.

Getting online

We want you to be able to access the full range of information and support available, including our online groups and website. If you are not already online, someone in our team or an IT buddy can talk you through the process step by step.

Stay in touch

We want to hear from you and your stories.

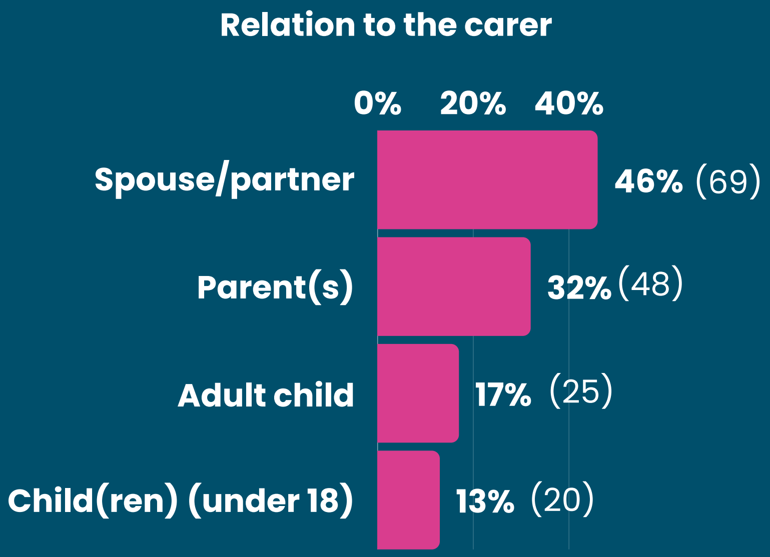
Postal address:

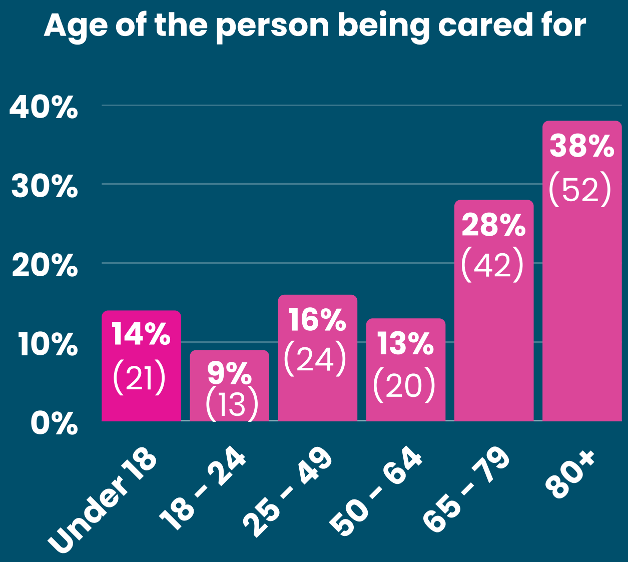
Carers First
Michael Gill Building
Tolgate Lane
Strood
ME2 4TG

Email us at:
CarersService@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Appendix
Who are people caring for?

The next two pages provide an overview of the demographics of the people respondents were caring for. In the free text responses it became clear that individuals often caring for more than one person often with more than one need or health condition. Carers themselves also often had a health condition.

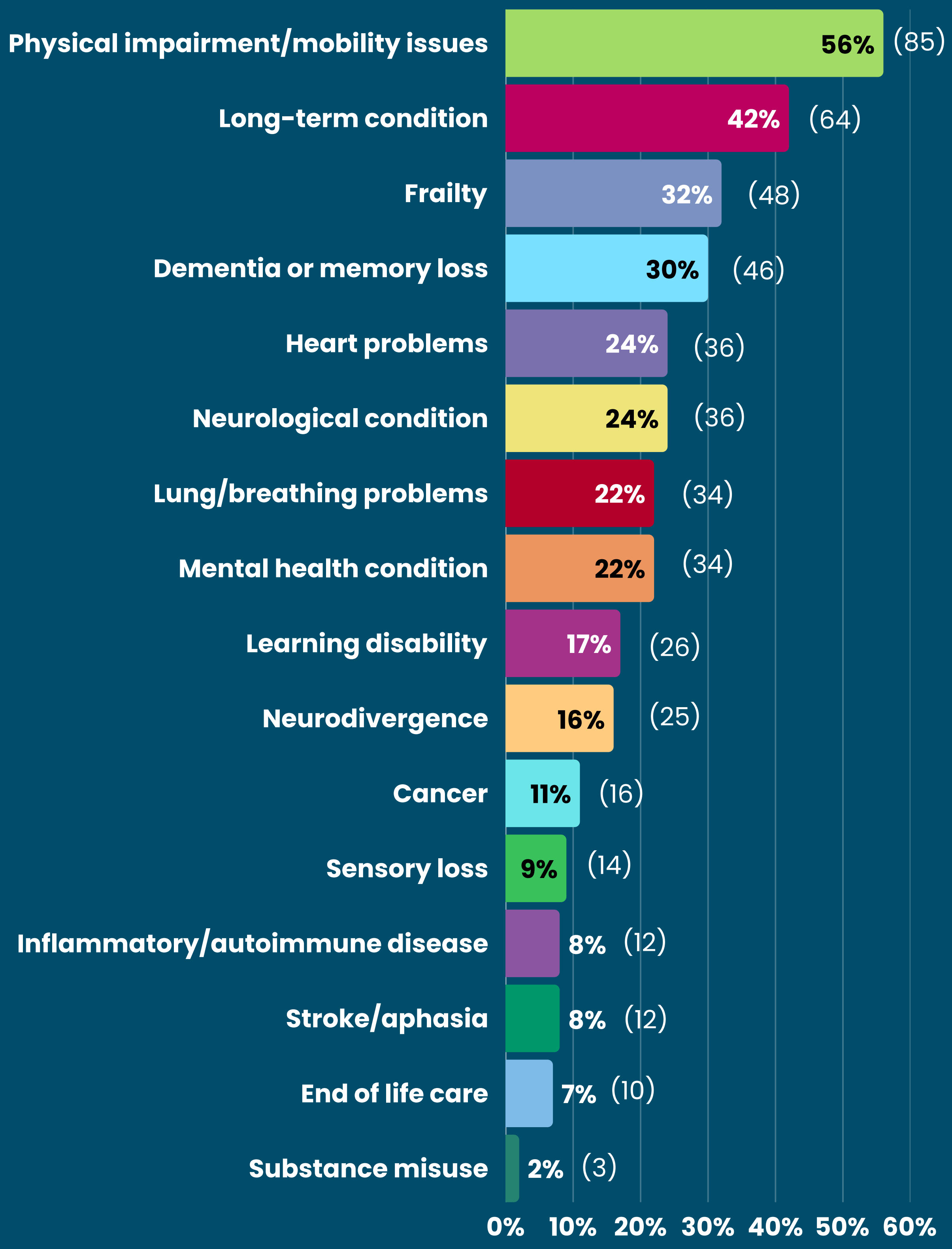




Respondents were providing care for a range of and often multiple complex needs including dementia or memory loss, mobility impairment, frailty and long term health conditions. For a full breakdown please see the graph on the next page. For the majority (70%) of carers the person/people they were providing care for lived at home with them and 4% (6) lived in a residential or nursing home.

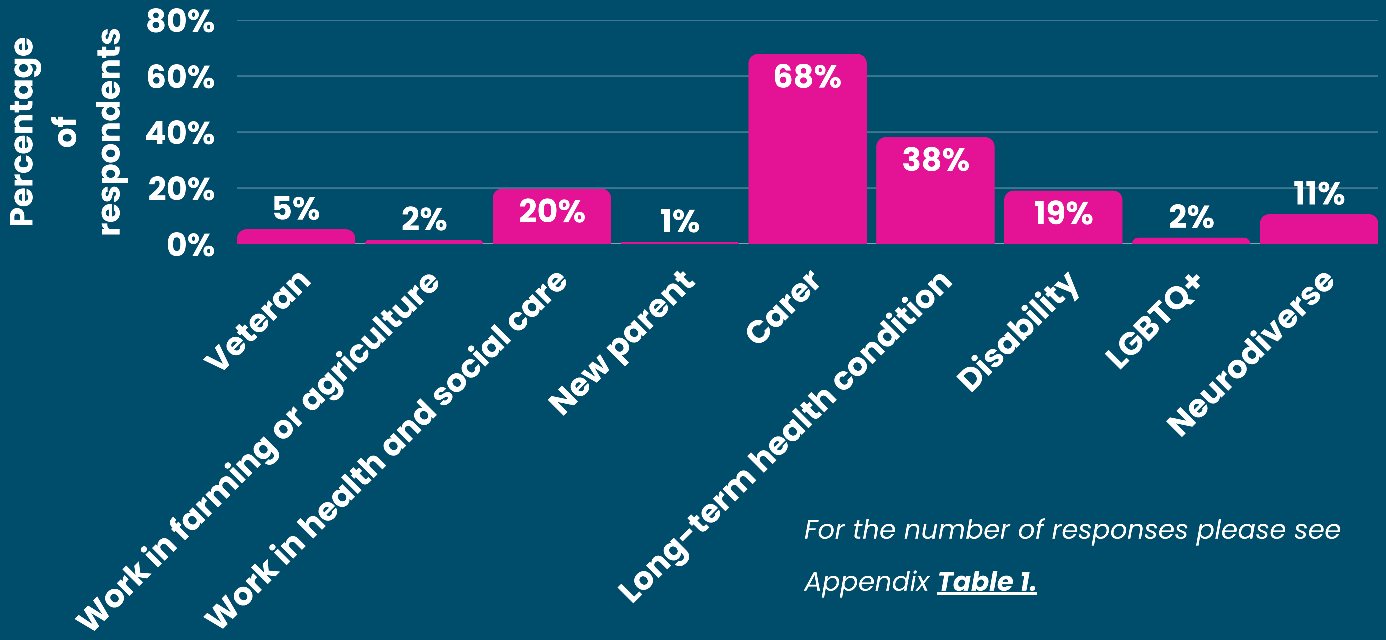
Appendix
Who are people caring for?

The conditions or needs of the person or people you care for

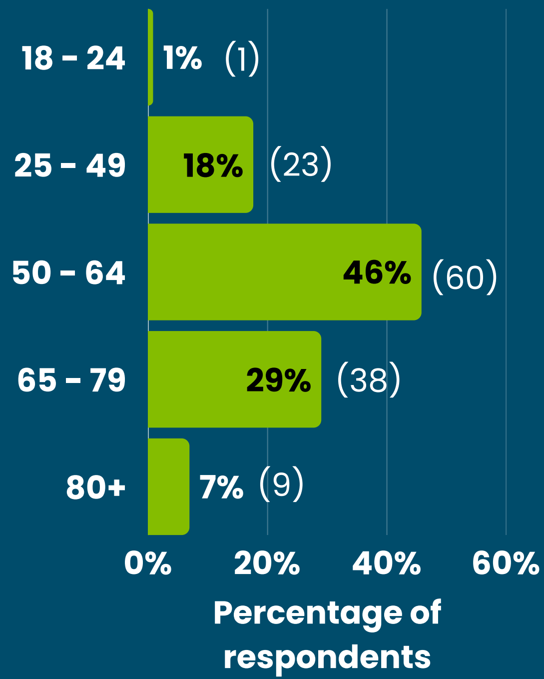


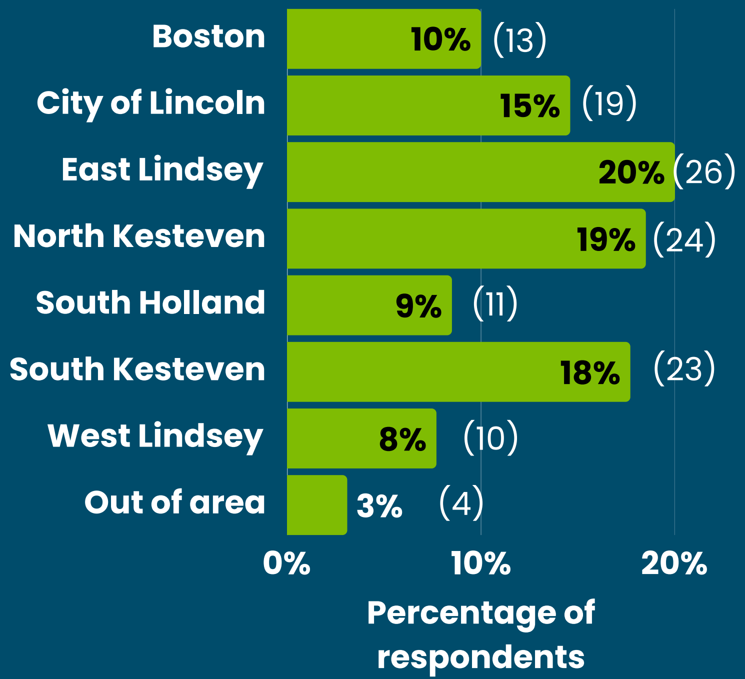
A breakdown of the demographics of respondents (carers) can be see in Appendix Table 1.

Appendix
Who shared their views? - Carers Survey



For the number of responses please see Appendix ***Table 1.***

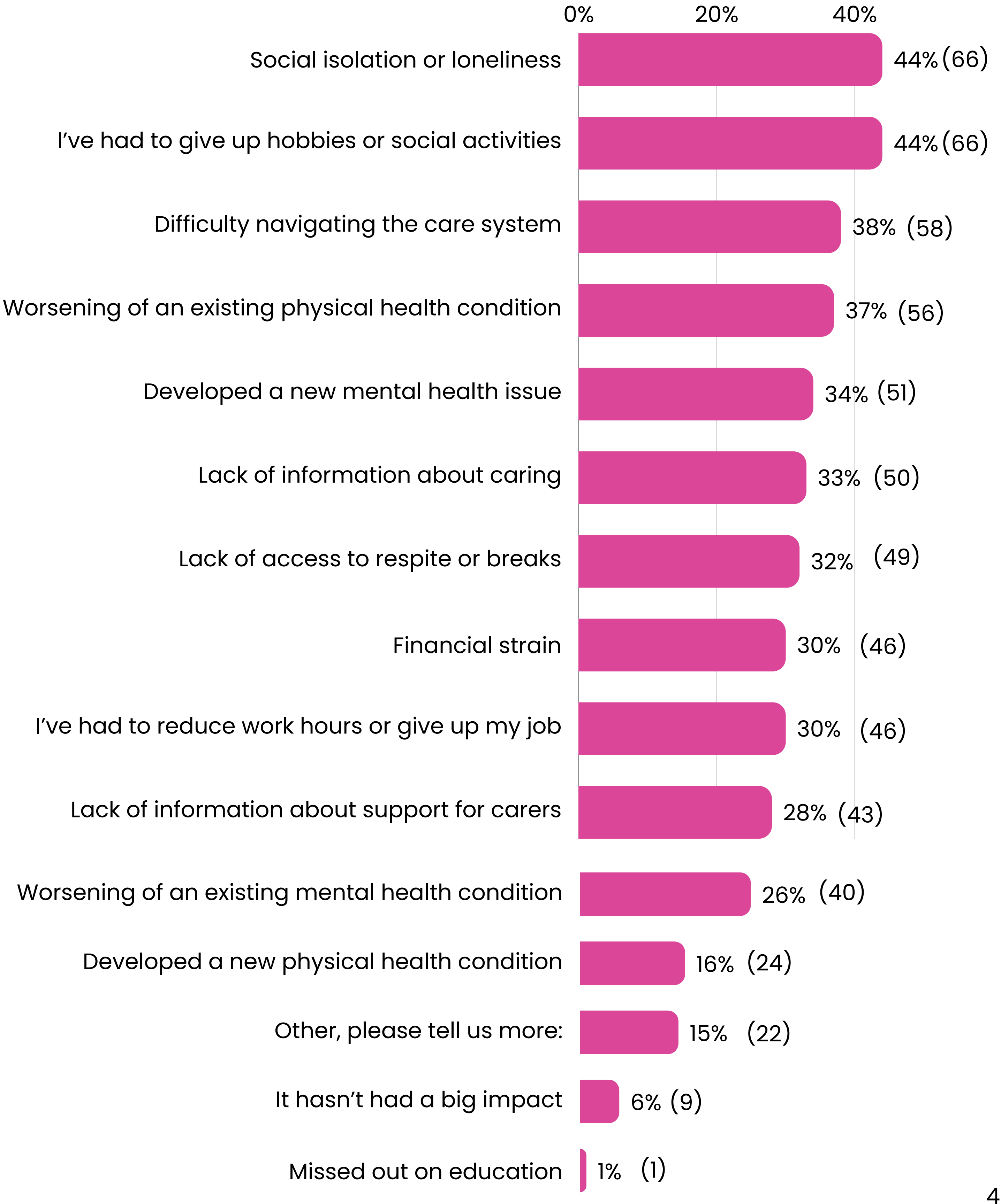




- 78% (102) were female
- 94% (116) were White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh
- 36% (47) 46% shared their financial situation was ‘just getting by’ (money for basic necessities and little else)

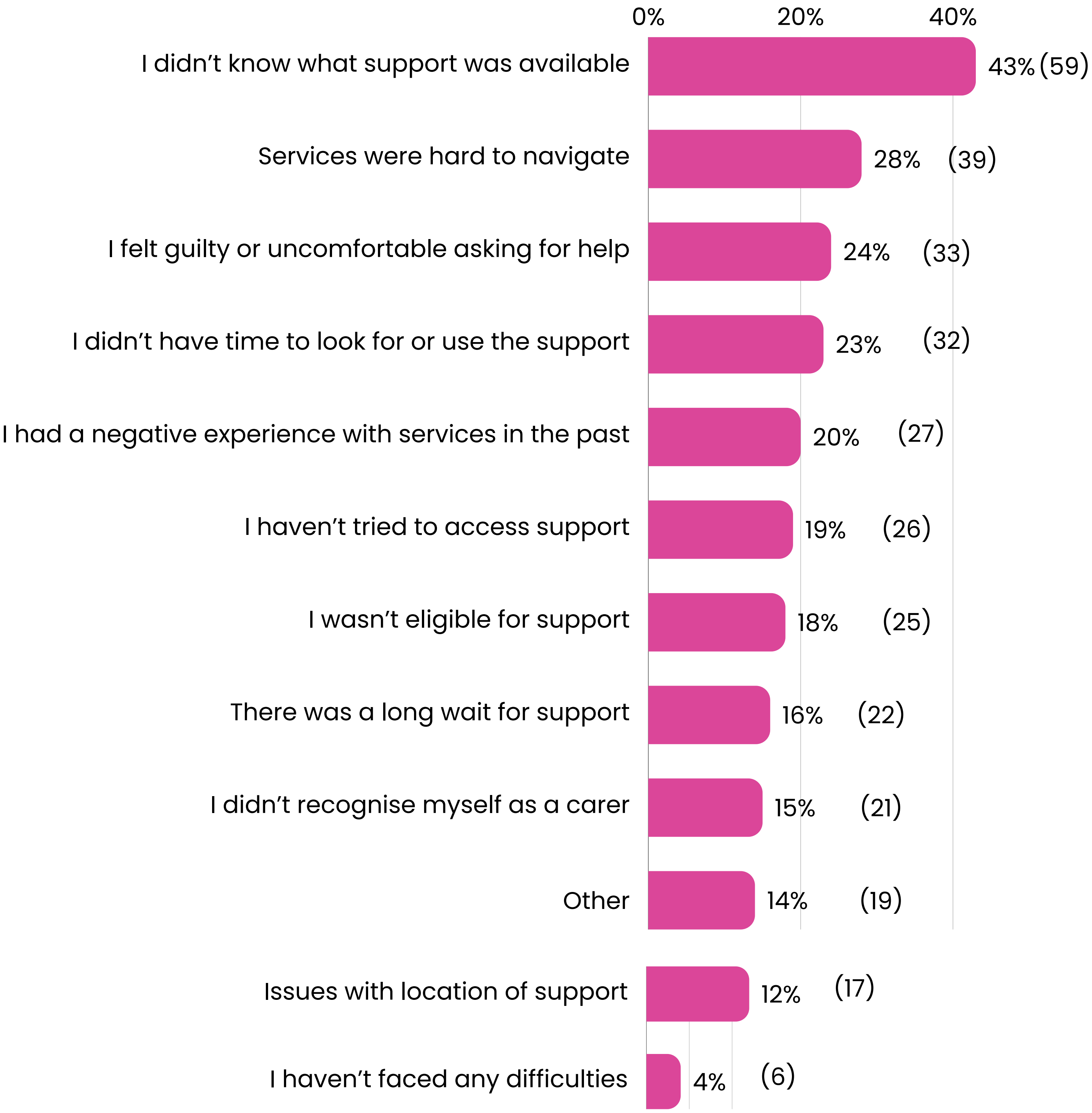
Appendix 1
Graph 1

Graph 1 - What challenges have you faced as a carer? (Please tick all that apply)



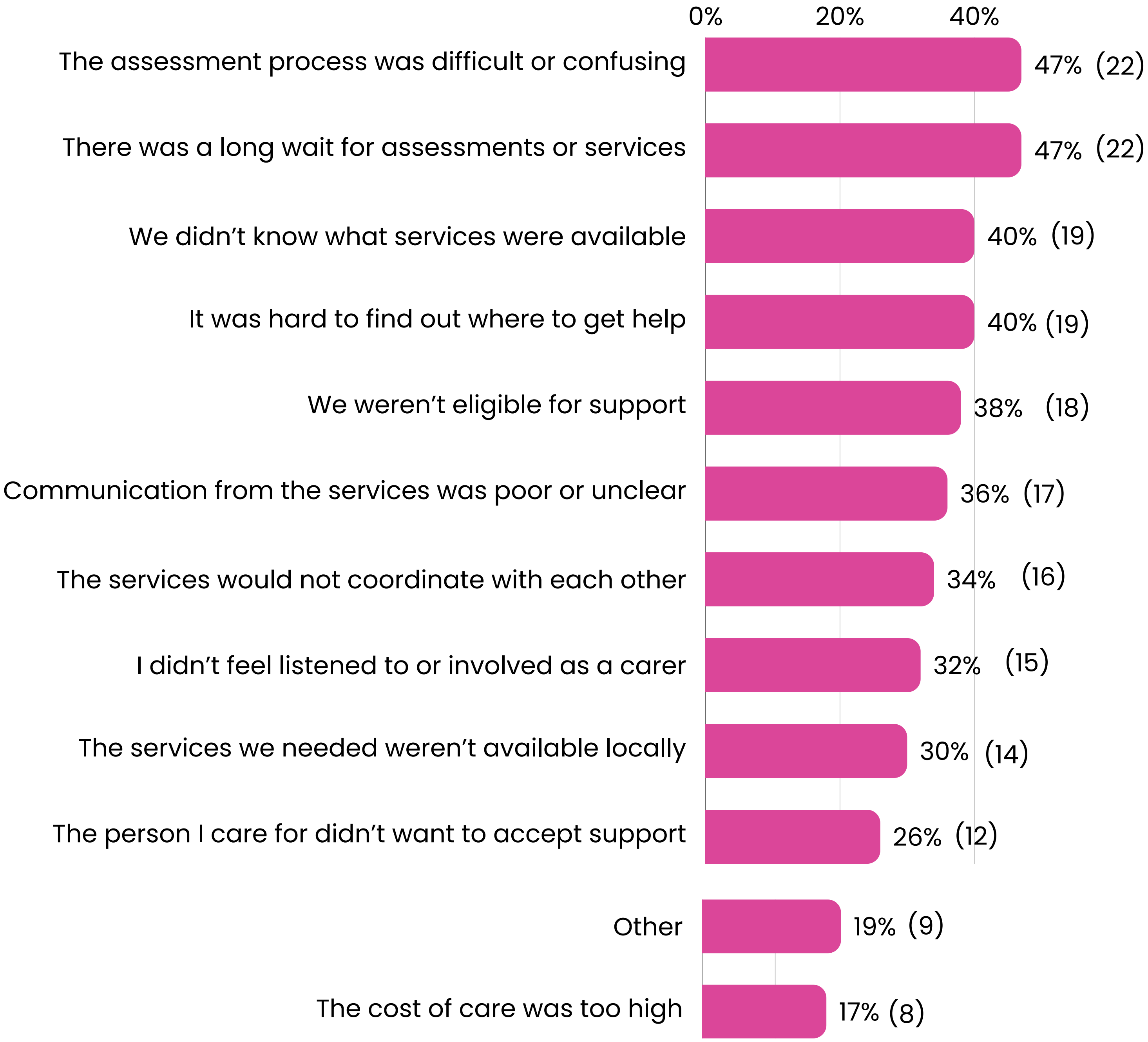
Appendix 1
Graph 2

Graph 2 - Have you faced any barriers accessing support for yourself as a carer? (Please tick all that apply)



Appendix 1
Graph 3

Graph 3 - What barriers or difficulties have you faced when trying to access or arrange social care? (Please tick all that apply)



Appendix
Table 1 - Demographics for Carer Survey

Demographic	Percentage (number)
Age	
18 - 24	1% (1)
25 – 49	18% (23)
50 – 64	46% (60)
65 – 79	29% (38)
80+	7% (9)
Gender	
Male	22% (29)
Female	78% (102)
Ethnicity	
Black / Black British: African	1% (1)
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Any other mixed background	2% (2)
White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh	94% (116)
White: Any other White background	1% (1)
Prefer not to say	2% (3)
Area of Lincolnshire	
Boston	10% (13)
City of Lincoln	14.6% (19)
East Lindsey	20% (26)
North Kesteven	19% (24)
South Holland	9% (11)
South Kesteven	18% (23)
West Lindsey	8% (10)
Other (inc those who live on borders of Lincolnshire)	3% (4)

Appendix

Table 1 - Demographics for Carer Survey

Demographic	Percentage (number)
Financial situation Very comfortable (I have more than enough money for living expenses, and a LOT spare to save or spend on extras)	4% (5)
Quite comfortable (I have enough money for living expenses, and a LITTLE spare to save or spend on extras)	44% (57)
Just getting by (I have just enough money for living expenses and little else)	36% (47)
Really struggling (I don't have enough money for living expenses and sometimes run out of money)	8% (10)
Prefer not to say	9% (12)
I am a veteran	5% (7)
I work in farming/agriculture	2% (1)
I work in health and/or social care	20% (26)
I am a new parent	1% (1)
I am a carer	68% (89)
I belong to the LGBTQ+ community	2% (3)
I have a long-term health condition	38% (50)
I consider myself to be neurodiverse	11% (14)
I have a disability	19% (28)

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If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact us at the address above.

We know that you want local services that work for you, your friends and your family.

That's why we want you to share your experiences of using health and care services with us – both good and bad. We use your voice to encourage those who run services to act on what matters to you.

Healthwatch Lincolnshire proudly delivered by HWLincs.

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