

Monday 8 June 2009

Public rank carers alongside emergency services

Unpaid carers rank alongside the emergency services in terms of their contribution to society, according to new YouGov research, commissioned for Carers Week.¹

In the survey, 88% of people in the South East believe that carers make a valuable contribution to society, behind only nurses (90%) and firefighters (89%).

Plumbers are valued by 46% of the public, the Royal Family receive the support of 35%, with politicians (13%), bankers (13%) and footballers (5%) bringing up the rear.

The research was commissioned for Carers Week 2009 (8-14 June), which is organised by 10 national charities to support those who provide unpaid care to a relative or friend who is ill, frail or disabled.

Despite being valued almost as much as nurses and firefighters, the main benefit for carers, Carers' Allowance, is the lowest of its kind at just £53.10, which equates to £1.52 per hour. According to the survey, almost three-quarters (73%) of the public in the South East believe this level of Carers' Allowance is unreasonable.

Broadcaster Jonathan Dimbleby, who has been a carer himself, supports the public's view of the essential role they play. He said:

"Just imagine for a moment what would happen if carers ceased to care and simply gave up. There would be no-one to look after millions of frail, elderly and disabled people. It would be nightmare: chaos, panic and much worse.

Of course carers would never behave like that. They are motivated by love, duty and compassion. But those of us who have been in that role, even for a short time, know how testing and draining it can be. That is why Britain's 'secret service' must not be forgotten, ignored or exploited."

Carers Week manager, Paul Matz, said:

"In many instances carers can be equated to the emergency services - because they do step in when there is an emergency, often becoming a carer literally overnight. As the public has recognised, the level of

Carers' Allowance simply isn't adequate, particularly when the work they do saves the UK economy an estimated £87 billion every year.³

"Carers Week is calling on the Government to do more to support carers, along with other organisations such as the NHS, which can do so much to improve carers' lives. Carers shouldn't have to struggle on alone when they contribute so much."

Carers Week campaigns for greater recognition and support for carers – the six million people in the UK who provide unpaid care to a relative, friend or child who is ill, frail or disabled. Carers can find out what events are happening in their area by visiting www.carersweek.org or by calling 0845 241 2582.

Other celebrities supporting this campaign, all of whom have had experience of caring, include Sir Geoff Hurst, Fiona Phillips, Arlene Phillips, Tony Robinson, Paul O'Grady, Gloria Hunniford, Sir David Jason, Pam Ferris, Phyllida Law and Miriam Margolyes.

For more information, a full breakdown of survey results, to obtain images or an interview with a case study, Carers Week spokesperson or celebrity supporter, please contact **Sushila Snell, Carers Week Media Officer**, on **020 7378 4958** or **07900 605770**, or at sushila.snell@carersuk.org.

Notes to editors:

1. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov plc. Total sample size was 2,106 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 5th–7th May 2009. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+). The statistics in this release are from the 288 survey respondents from the South East. A breakdown of national and regional survey results is available.

Full results are as follows:

Which, if any, of the following do you think are valuable contributors to society? [please tick all that apply]

Nurses - 90%
Firefighters - 89%
Unpaid carers - 88%
Plumbers - 46%
The Royal Family - 35%
Politicians - 13%
Bankers - 13%
Footballers - 5%
Don't know - 3%
None of these - 2%

Carers who are totally or mainly unable to work because they care for someone for at least 35 hours per week can claim a benefit called Carers Allowance. The weekly payment of Carers Allowance is £53.10.

To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "This is a reasonable amount to support carers who are unable to work because of their caring responsibilities"

Strongly agree - 6%
Agree - 7%
Neither agree nor disagree - 11%
Disagree - 34%
Strongly disagree - 40%
Don't know - 3%

2. Leeds University/Carers UK, 2007
3. All celebrity quotes are available at: www.carersweek.org/newsroom_page.asp?id=28
4. Carers needing support and advice can find out about local organisations and learn what is happening in their area during Carers Week by visiting www.carersweek.org or calling 0845 241 2582.
5. Carers Week takes place from 8-14 June and is organised by: Carers UK, Counsel and Care, Crossroads Caring for Carers, Help the Hospices, Macmillan Cancer Support, MS Society, Parkinson's Disease Society, The Princess Royal Trust for Carers, Vitalise and WRVS.