

# Survey of Adult Carers in England (SACE) 2021-22

## Background

SACE is a biennial survey that first took place in 2012-13. Due to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) the 2020-21 survey was postponed by one full year and took place in 2021-22.

The eligible population for the SACE is all informal, unpaid carers aged 18 and over, who are caring for someone aged 18 or over, and who are known to the Local Authority. Carers are included regardless of whether they have received an assessment or review in the previous year.

149 of the 152 Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities (CASSRs) took part in the 2021-22 SACE.

The survey asks carers questions about their caring responsibilities around the following themes:

- Information about the carer
- Information about the cared-for person
- The impact of caring and quality of life
- The quality of any information and advice received
- The carer's needs and experiences of support
- Carers' involvement in arranging services for the cared-for person

The 2021-22 survey also included an additional four questions asking carers about their experience of their caring role during the pandemic. (March 2020 to October 2021, which was when the survey was sent out)

## Sample and response rates

A total of 498 surveys were sent out with 160 returns, giving a response rate of 32.1 per cent, a decrease from the previous survey in 2018 when a response rate of 55.5 per cent was achieved. However, this is comparable with the National mean of 20.6 per cent which also decreased from the last survey 2018-19 figure of 37.3 per cent.

**It is important to note when examining these results, that the fieldwork was conducted between October and November 2021 when there were still restrictions due to the (COVID-19) pandemic.**

Therefore, results have been compared to our Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)<sup>1</sup> where possible, instead of the previous SACE in 2018.


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<sup>1</sup> Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.


According to CIPFA our 15 nearest statistical neighbours are Cumbria, Derbyshire, Devon, Essex, Gloucestershire, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, North Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Suffolk, Warwickshire, West Sussex, Worcestershire. Together with England these Local Authorities are used throughout for comparison where possible.


## Key findings for Suffolk


**Note that SACE surveys were sent out during October and November 2021 when Covid 19 pandemic restrictions were still in place.**


 43.0 per cent (n<sup>2</sup>=56) of Suffolk carers responding to the survey who had received support or services said that they were very or extremely satisfied with the support and services received.

 44 per cent (n=49) of Carers responding to the survey had been aware/involved in discussions felt engaged and consulted about the support and services for the cared for.

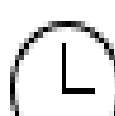
 However, 6.3 per cent (n=8) said they were extremely or very dissatisfied.

 62 per cent (n= 93) of carers responding to the survey have been carers for over 5 years with 25 per cent (n=37) caring for over 20 years or more, this is consistent with the National figures of 65 per cent and 25 per cent. However, Suffolk has a higher percentage of Carers who are caring for more than 100 hours or more per week (40 per cent, n=59) compared with 36 per cent Nationally. Higher figures were recorded among Suffolk's nearest CIPFA statistical neighbour authorities. Worcestershire, Gloucestershire and Derbyshire LA's all had 47 per cent of carers caring for more than 100 hours or more a week.

 There have been increases in carers reporting that their health has been affected by their caring role, with 56 per cent (n=86) feeling depressed, 53 per cent (n=82) feeling short tempered, and 67 per cent (n=103) reporting general feelings of stress. The number of carers reporting feeling tired remains static at 84 per cent (n=129).

 57 per cent (n=87) of Suffolk carers reported that their caring caused them **no** financial difficulties, this is an increase from the 53 per cent recorded in 2018.

5.3 per cent (n=8) of carers said that caring caused them a lot of financial difficulties, this is a decrease from the 2018 figure of 10.1 per cent.

 14 per cent (n=22) of Suffolk carers reported that they always have enough time to care for the other people they have a caring responsibility for. This is lower than the national average of 17.6 per cent.

15 per cent (n=23) of Suffolk carers reported that they 'don't do anything they value or enjoy with their time', lower than the national average of 18.3 per cent. The survey does not specifically ask if this is due to caring responsibilities.

### COVID19

In Suffolk 29 per cent (n= 44) of carers responding were extremely or very satisfied with the support or services they or their cared for received during the pandemic. While this is a relatively low proportion, this does compare favourably with both the national figure of 18.4 per cent and is the highest rate amongst Suffolk's CIPFA statistically similar authorities. The range in satisfaction levels in these similar authorities to Suffolk was between 10 per cent (Warwickshire) and the highest (29 per cent) in Suffolk.

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<sup>2</sup> N = number of respondents not all respondents answered every question hence differing percentages or respondents could tick more than one response.

## Key highlights from the survey with Suffolk response

### Satisfaction with support or services in the last 12 months

The fieldwork for this survey was conducted whilst Covid restrictions were still in place.

### Respondents

For Suffolk 17.4 per cent of respondents recorded they had not received any support or services from ACS in the last twelve months, this is below the 28.6 per cent recorded for England. To give context these figures have been compared with our CIPFA statistical neighbours, the highest being 43.1 per cent (Cumbria) and the lowest at 12.5 per cent (Staffordshire), all other comparator LA's fall within these parameters.

### Excluding those who answered "We haven't received any support or services from Social Services in the last 12 months"

Local Authority	Table 1. Question 4 excluding those who answered "We haven't received any support or services from Social Services in the last 12 months" Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the support or services you and the person you care for have received from Social Services in the last 12 months?						
	I am extremely satisfied	I am very satisfied	I am quite satisfied	I am neither satisfied not dissatisfied	I am quite dissatisfied	I am very dissatisfied	I am extremely dissatisfied
Cumbria	14.5	27.1	27.4	17.8	7.4	2.7	3
North Yorkshire	11.6	25.9	28.9	18.5	7.4	3.9	3.9
Lancashire	13.5	23.4	30.9	17.4	6.7	4.3	3.9
Warwickshire	10.4	26	22.1	18.2	10.4	6.5	6.5
Staffordshire	12.7	25.1	30	15.6	6.8	5.2	4.6
Worcestershire	17.9	25.9	26.5	17.9	5.6	3.7	2.5
Lincolnshire	19.1	19.7	26.4	18.5	7.3	3.4	5.6
Derbyshire	17.4	23.9	31.4	10.6	6.8	5.3	4.5
Nottinghamshire	11	22.4	32.4	21	8.5	1.5	3.3
Norfolk	12.3	24.5	29.6	18.6	7.9	3.8	3.5
Suffolk	12.5	30.5	34.4	12.5	3.9	0.8	5.5
Essex	13.6	19.4	34.9	14.4	9.1	4.4	4.2
West Sussex	14.4	22.4	25.8	17.4	10.7	6	3.3
Gloucestershire	11	23.8	29.3	21	8.6	3.1	3.1
Somerset	10	18.6	24.4	26.4	7.7	4.5	8.4
Devon	11.6	28.2	27.6	17	7.5	3.7	4.4
England	13.6	22.7	30.1	17.4	7.9	3.8	4.7

Table 1 Compares Suffolk levels of satisfaction with our CIPFA statistical neighbours and highlights where each LA value falls within that range. Suffolk compares well with statistical neighbours having one of the highest overall levels of satisfaction, with 77.4% of carers saying the were either

extremely, very, or quite satisfied with the support or services they have received from Suffolk County Council in the last 12 months.

**Suffolk added an additional text box to this question asking: - Please tell us why you are satisfied or dissatisfied:**

### **What's working well?**

From analysis the following positive themes were identified:

- Helpful and caring staff (both social work and care support staff)
- Good knowledge and understanding of Social Services staff
- Excellent support from care agencies
- Comforting and reassuring to know help available when needed i.e., an emergency
- Social workers are amazing - very caring and supportive
- Able to access respite support when needed
- Flexible care packages when needed
- Social workers who listen and understand
- Help, advice, and provision of equipment (beds, wheelchairs) and Alcove which is a voice and video calling tablet. (Especially during the pandemic).

*'Every time I needed help it was just a phone call away'*

*'Whilst workload means a delay, they are always helpful and knowledgeable. They provide resources, and support as they are able.'*

*'well trained, friendly and helpful staff'*

*'I know how stretched the social care system is and I did find it difficult at times to get through by telephone and getting my calls returned but when our social worker was involved, they were absolutely excellent. I found them to be caring, understanding and very professional and was outstanding in their knowledge. I also found the care providers absolutely marvellous. The care was faultless, and they became friends as well as carers not only to my husband but also to myself'*

### **The following themes identified where improvements could be possible\***

**\*To give context this survey was sent out whilst CV19 restrictions were still in place and Adult Social Care had to suspend review work at the beginning of the pandemic.**

- Difficulty and waiting times to get through to the right person/team
- Reviews – overdue – some waiting two years due to the Covid 19 pandemic when reviews had to be stopped\*
- Chasing for carers assessments
- Poor communication
- Frustration with no response to messages to social workers

- Not having a direct contact with the right person/social worker
- Timing of care and support visits – too late/early
- Lack of communication from care agencies regarding missed or late visits
- Lack of choice for support/activities in the area
- Lack of support from Mental Health services
- Knowledge – knowing what support is available and how to access

*‘I have to chase for a carers assessment, and it takes so long I miss out on months support from that due to the time between assessments’*

*‘I am disappointed that it took 6 months for the social services support to begin. Since they have been involved it has been a very good experience’*

*‘I have had difficulties accessing people, waiting for people to return my calls etc. I have not always felt listened to and I feel a particular incident/ event was not handled well which impacted on my mental health - communication/ explanation would have helped. I now have a new worker which seems to be working better as this person has contacted me to update on what is happening’*

### **Duration of caring**

#### **About how long do you spend each week looking after or helping the person you care for?**

Suffolk has a percentage of Carers caring for more than 100 hours per week (40 per cent) than the National average (36 per cent). In comparison, CIPFA statistical neighbours recorded still higher figures. On analysis, Suffolk was ranked 11<sup>th</sup> out of 16 similar authorities, with the range between Lincolnshire with 21 per cent and Derbyshire, Gloucestershire, and Worcestershire, who all reported that 47 per cent of carers said they cared for more than 100 hours per week.

#### **About how long have you been looking after or helping the person you care for?**

Similarly, Suffolk ranked 10<sup>th</sup> out of 16 CIPFA statistical neighbours where carers recorded caring for over 20 years. The range of was between Lincolnshire with 14 per cent, and Worcestershire with 49 per cent.

### **The effect on health of caring role.**

Table 2: In the last 12 months, has your health been affected by your caring role in any of the ways listed below?	England %	Suffolk %	Range of CIPFA neighbour scores %
Feeling depressed	48	56	42-57
Loss of appetite	14	9	9-14
Disturbed sleep	67	70	63-75
General feeling of stress	64	67	60-73
Physical strain (e.g. back)	35	37	29-41
Short tempered/ irritable	44	53	39-53
Had to see own GP	22	18	15-32
Developed my own health conditions	23	25	17-30
Made an existing condition worse	22	23	19-27

Table 2 illustrates Suffolk respondents reported higher percentage scores than the national average for how their caring role was affecting their health. However, compared to CIPFA statistical neighbours Suffolk was not the highest in any category.

## **Finance**

### **In the last 12 months, has caring caused you any financial difficulties?**

57 per cent of respondents reported that their caring role did **not** cause them any financial difficulties, a 12 per cent increase from the 2018 figure. Similarly, for those reporting 'Yes a lot' there was a 6.0 per decrease. However, the survey was completed before the current financial crisis started and therefore this result may no longer be relevant.

## **Time to care and caring responsibilities.**

### **Thinking about the other people you have caring responsibilities for, which of the following best describes your current situation?**

54 per cent of carers responding did not have caring responsibilities for anyone else, this is marginally lower than the national score of 56 per cent and one of the lowest scores when compared to our nearest CIPFA statistical neighbours where the range varied from 49 per cent to 70 per cent.

### **Which of the following statements best describes how you spend your time?**

The survey also enquires about how carers spend their time; however, it is not specific in asking if their caring role impacts on this. 14 per cent of Suffolk respondents replied, 'I'm able to spend my time as I want, doing things I value or enjoy', this is slightly below the national average of 16 per cent, but higher than the lowest recorded score of statistical neighbours of 11 per cent.

## **Experience of Suffolk carers during the Covid 19 pandemic**

### **Thinking about how much social contact you've had with people you like during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which of the following statements best describes your social situation during this time?**

18 per cent of Suffolk respondents 'had as much social contact as I want with people I like' this is the same as the national average of 18 per cent. The highest recorded score amongst statistical neighbours was 22 per cent.

### **Thinking about your experiences during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, did you feel you were involved or consulted as much as you wanted to be, in discussions about the support or services provided to the person you care for?**

21 per cent of Suffolk carers responding reported that 'I always felt involved or consulted' this is higher than the National average of 15 per cent and the highest of the CIPFA statistical neighbours.

## **Suffolk response**

**In response to the findings of the Survey of Adult Carers in England Suffolk County Council Adult and Community Services (ACS) has:**

- Informed both local area ACS and county wide service development for carers
- Used Carer feedback from SACE to inform the All-Age Carers Strategy action plan

In addition the following actions to improve support for Suffolk carers have been identified and are happening:-

- Improve provision of information for carers and increased opportunities for Carers to access support.
- Mental health social work has returned to ACS since April 2022 giving easier access to support for carers.
- Changes made to the way carers contact Suffolk County Council. This was developed and trialled successfully in October 2022. And is now being expanded across the county to ensure a more streamlined and efficient approach to carers requesting support.
- Carers assessment contract with Suffolk Family Carers (April 2021)

## **Further information**

This report only presents the key findings for Suffolk from the survey, the full NHS Digital published report and data is available from

[Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England, 2021-22 - NHS Digital](#)