



Stigma Free Lanarkshire

Caring and mental health: A survey of carers in Lanarkshire



Completed in partnership with North Lanarkshire Carers Together and Lanarkshire Carers Centre, this report shares the responses of un-paid carers in Lanarkshire who were asked about their mental health and wellbeing in relation to their caring roles.

November 2019

Introduction

Stigma Free Lanarkshire (SFL) recognised the need to address the mental health stigma and discrimination faced by carers in Lanarkshire and laid out its intentions to make connections with local organisations in order to facilitate a programme of work that would be led by carers.

In June 2018 the seriousness of the situation was highlighted further when CarersWeek.org published a report highlighting the effect an unpaid caring role can take on an individual's mental health and wellbeing.¹

This report revealed the following statistics:

75% of carers in Scotland said they had suffered mental ill health as a result of caring.

58% of carers in Scotland expect their mental health and well-being to get worse in the next two years.

40% of carers in Scotland expect that they will be able to provide less or no care in the future because of poor mental health.

Through existing partnership working, SFL requested meetings with North Lanarkshire Carers Together and Lanarkshire Carers centre to scope out a project around the stigma and discrimination experienced by carers in Lanarkshire and a survey was launched to gather opinions and feedback from local carers. The following report contains the findings of the survey which was available to complete both online and in print.

¹ https://www.carersweek.org/images/Resources/CW18_Research_Report.pdf

The survey

The survey findings are based on 40 responses to the 'Caring & Mental Health Questionnaire' which invited carers of friends, family members or neighbours who struggle with poor mental health or carers who struggle with their own mental health to respond.

The first question was a simple profiling question to ascertain who in the carer/cared for relationship experiences a mental health problem.

Of the 40 responses:

42.5%

Are carers for somebody with mental ill health

35%

Are carers for somebody with mental ill health and also struggle with their own mental health

1 respondent described themselves as not being a carer, but a professional working with carers.

Please refer to Appendix B, Q1 for further information.

Key Findings

The remainder of the survey aimed to explore in what ways the carers responding have been affected by mental health problems, either their own or those they care for, and the different types of stigma associated with mental ill health. Below are the key findings from the responses with the full responses available in Appendix B.

87.5%

Caring for somebody with mental ill health affects their own mental health

65%

Fear of being treated differently has stopped them from asking for help

60%

Believe that mental health stigma has had an impact on their caring role

47.5%

Say that they or the person they care for have been discriminated against because of mental ill health

In the comments section for the last question about being discriminated against we invited respondents to expand with some examples of what this discrimination looked like. The common themes emerging from these comments were:

Public humiliation	Being verbally abused, insulted and ridiculed
Exclusion	Avoided by family and friends, ignored by professionals or refused access to services, not taken seriously, discouraged from applying for certain education and/or jobs
Workplace bullying	Constructive dismissal, employers unaware of employee rights and/or unwilling to provide support
Inequity of support	Less support relating to mental illness vs physical illness, less knowledge of mental illness by support agencies

We also asked respondents: What, if anything, would prevent you from talking about the mental health of the person you care for, or your own?

The common themes emerging from these comments were:

Being dismissed	Not being listened to and/or not being believed
Self-stigma	Embarrassed or ashamed to admit to others, feel would be a burden on others, people don't want to hear your problems, guilt for needing help or letting others down
Discrimination	Fear of being treated differently, negative reactions and critical comments from service providers, broken trust in health care professionals
Confidentiality	Fear of other people finding out

We asked respondents to tell us what they think is the best way to tackle mental health stigma, not all survey participants left a comment in this section but of the 34 that did an overwhelming 44% believe that talking, openly and honestly, is the best way to tackle stigma. Closely followed by a need for more public awareness and training/education for health and care professionals as well as carer support agencies.

Some other suggestions included:

Health and social care working with other services
Mental health can be invisible so for health professional to remember this and be reminded often
set up open days 1 or 2 times a year in town centres and have more twice a week in local community centres ,also have a group in every local health centre or sports centre twice a week for young people to meet share their stories this would cut mental health down in Scotland for young people
Everyone has trauma and everyone needs counselling not just the ill people and the people that are in crisis because my parent never used to be in crisis
Speak out to have mental ill health recognised as an equal illness to physical illness

Summary

While it may seem like common sense to suggest that unpaid carers will have higher levels of stress and anxiety than the general population the results above also highlight an urgent need to address some much deeper issues in our local community. The comments left show that some of the very worst examples of stigma and discrimination (as well as some more subtle) are happening in Lanarkshire, stopping carers from realising their basic human rights and freedoms as laid out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission³ and acknowledged in Lanarkshire's newly launched Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, GIRFEP². (Getting It Right For Every Person.)

Carers in Lanarkshire are experiencing barriers as a direct result of stigma and discrimination that cut across all 6 key areas included in the 'Good Mental Health for All: Action Plans' for North⁴ & South Lanarkshire.

Next Steps

1. Share this report with local partners and request feedback
2. Contact survey respondents that left details, share report and request feedback
3. Share report with national partners
4. Consultation with respondents to start forming an action plan

¹ https://www.carersweek.org/images/Resources/CW18_Research_Report.pdf

² <https://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk/download/mental-health-wellbeing-strategy-2019-2024/>

³ <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights/what-are-human-rights>

⁴ <https://mars.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/egenda/images/att88863.pdf>

Appendix A

Sample questionnaire



CARING & MENTAL HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

Who should complete this questionnaire?

This questionnaire should only be completed by carers providing care and support to friends, family members or neighbours who struggle with poor mental health. You may also struggle with your own mental health. Even if you also consider yourself to have a physical disability, "there is no health without mental health"

Q1. I am:

- A carer for somebody with mental ill health
- A carer that struggles with my own mental health
- Both
- Other (Please specify)

Q2. As a Carer, does providing support to someone for their mental health affect your mental health?

- Yes
- No
- Does not apply to me

Q3. Have you or the person you care for ever been discriminated against because of mental ill health?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Q4. If you answered yes to question 3 can you tell us briefly what happened? (Please don't identify any individuals here.)

Q5. Has a fear of being treated differently ever stopped you from asking for help? (either for yourself or the person you care for.)

- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
-

Q6. What, if anything, would prevent you from talking about the mental health of the person you care for, or your own?

Q7. Do you believe that mental health stigma has ever had an impact on your role as a carer?

- Yes
 No
 Not sure

Q8. In your opinion, what is the best way to tackle mental health stigma?

Q9. Anything else you would like to tell us about?

Stigma Free Lanarkshire is working hard to partner with organisations across Lanarkshire and develop a carer led project to tackle stigma and discrimination but we will need to hear your voices. If you would like to be contacted about being involved in this project please leave an e-mail address or your first name and contact number below.

Name _____

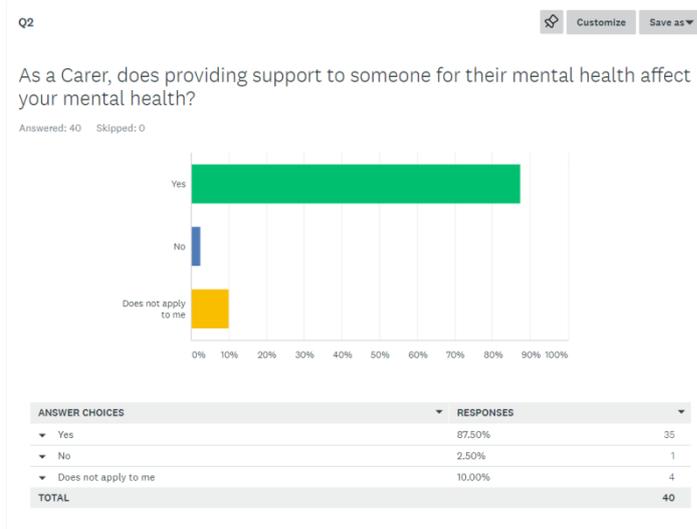
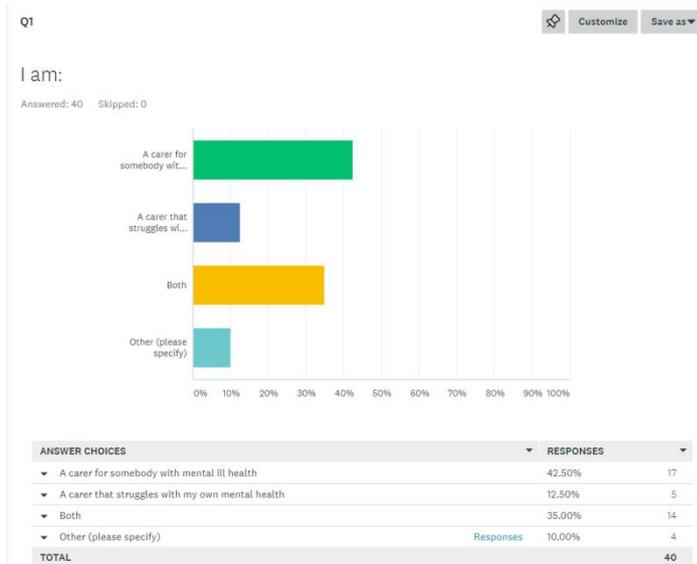
Contact number _____

Email _____

Apendix B

Survey results from multiple choice questions

(Free typed responses have not been included to preserve anonymity of respondents)

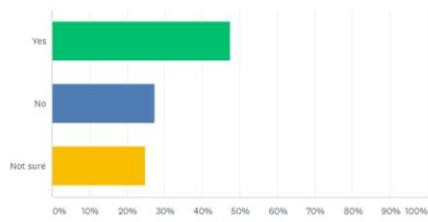


Q3

Customize Save as

Have you or the person you care for ever been discriminated against because of mental ill health?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



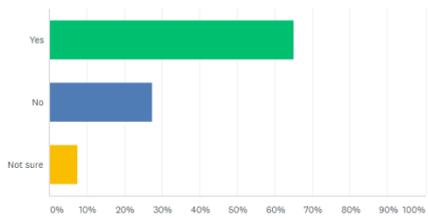
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	47.50%	19
No	27.50%	11
Not sure	25.00%	10
TOTAL		40

Q5

Customize Save as

Has a fear of being treated differently ever stopped you from asking for help? (either for yourself or the person you care for.)

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



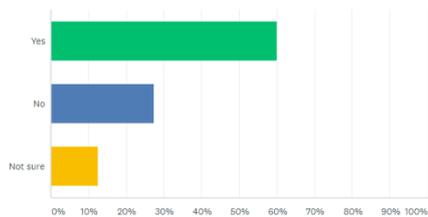
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	65.00%	26
No	27.50%	11
Not sure	7.50%	3
TOTAL		40

Q7

Customize Save as

Do you believe that mental health stigma has ever had an impact on your role as a carer?

Answered: 40 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	60.00%	24
No	27.50%	11
Not sure	12.50%	5
TOTAL		40

This report was written by:

Stigma Free Lanarkshire
Lanarkshire Links
Rooms 3.5-3.6
Dalziel Business Centre
7 Scott Street
Motherwell
ML1 1PN

(t) 01698 265232

(e) SFL@lanarkshirelinks.org.uk

With the Assistance of:

North Lanarkshire Carers Together
51 Hope Street,
Motherwell
ML1 1BS

(t) 01698 404055

(e) enquiries@carerstogogether.org

