

Embargo: 00.01am Tuesday 5 March 2013

Brits who care for friends or family worry for nearly 200 million hours every week

A third of elderly and ill worry about getting out of the house with confidence

O2 Health launches mobile care service to provide peace-of-mind for carers and boost independence for elderly and ill

Tuesday, 5 March 2013: Brits who care for friends or family who are old or have conditions such as diabetes or epilepsy collectively spend 196 million hours worrying about them every week, according to new research from O2 Health.

On average carers spend about four hours each day fretting about the well-being of those they support. With seven million unpaid carers in the UKⁱ that adds up to nerve-racking 22,000ⁱⁱ years worth of shared torment crammed into every seven days. A notable minority (4 per cent – an estimated 280,000 peopleⁱⁱⁱ) say they worry all their waking hours (18 or more hours a day). The research coincides with the launch of O2 Health's new mobile care service, Help at Hand, which aims to help cut this worry.

When asked what impact caring has on them and their lives, 15 per cent said they feel stressed and 7 per cent said physical ill health. A staggering one in ten (8 per cent) – an estimated 560,000 people^{iv} – say they have had to give up work or are considering doing so in order to fulfil their caring role.

According to the research, carers are worrying for good reason. A third (34 per cent) of elderly people or those with a long-term health condition say they lack the confidence or reassurance they need to get out and about. Nearly half (46 per cent) lack this confidence because they worry they will be affected by their condition or vulnerability when out of the house. Two thirds (66 per cent) of people say their long-term health condition or age stops them from doing many every-day tasks such as going for a walk, meeting friends, seeing family, going out for a meal or to a museum or exhibition. A fifth (20 per cent) say they worry every time they step outside the front door.

Just under two thirds (65 per cent) of those who do some caring agreed or strongly agreed that they would feel more at ease if the person they supported had a way of alerting others to a fall, a fit, or just being able to call for help whenever or wherever they needed it at any time of the day. Knowing that help and support was available to the person they care for at the

touch of a button for would make them feel reassured (48 per cent) or would provide peace-of-mind (35 per cent).

Help at Hand aims to provide this reassurance or peace-of-mind by connecting people to those they depend on for care. It comprises a special handset with a fall detector, GPS tracking, designated 'safe zones' and a special one-touch button that links to a 24/7 support centre that can contact loved ones, carers, or the emergency services if help is needed.

Nikki Flanders, Managing Director, O2 Health, says: "We all know someone who has to care in some way for a friend or family member. Whether it's checking in on an elderly parent who is becoming forgetful or keeping an eye on a son or daughter who has bad asthma, it's only natural to worry about them – even if incidents rarely happen. Often, this can be remedied through the reassurance that support can be called for at any time, in any place, in or out of the home using the mobile network.

"The Help at Hand mobile care service gives people who have a health condition or feel vulnerable the confidence to get out and about safe in the knowledge that help is the press of a button away. This differs from traditional fixed telephone line 'telecare', which gives people help, but only in the confines of their home – trapping them indoors. Meanwhile, carers are reassured they can be called simply and easily if anything should go wrong. It's all about independence for users and peace-of-mind for carers."

Helen Bickley, 30 from Pontypridd suffers from dyspraxia which causes falls. She trialed the service in autumn 2012 and says: "Help at Hand gives you the freedom to start doing things that previously you wouldn't have been able to do. It gave me the confidence to learn to cycle. I didn't think something so small could make such a big difference to me. It's made me look to the future in a different way."

Luen Thompson from the Carers Trust says: "Worry about the person they care for can become detrimental to a carers own physical health and mental wellbeing. Importantly, carers are entitled a life of their own, outside caring, but so often feel trapped by their circumstances. 3 in 5 of us will become a carer at some point in our lives. Tools which help carers to care but give them the confidence to get on with their own lives at the same time are a great addition to the package of support that carers may be entitled to. This technology is a welcome addition to the static telecare packages currently available to carers providing freedom and confidence outside of the home."

Help at Hand is now available on O2's website, in O2 shops and in 100 Sainsbury's pharmacy stores and works anywhere in the UK covered by the O2 network. The service costs £20 per month with a one-off RRP £99 payment to buy the handset.

- Ends -

Twitter: #O2HelpatHand

For more information, interview requests or further comment, please contact:

O2 Health Press Office

Email: o2healthteam@redconsultancy.com

Telephone: 0207 025 6645

Supporting Quotes and information

Carers UK

Carers UK points out that O2 and Sainsbury's are members of Employers for Carers, a forum administered by Carers UK that promotes good practice in workplace support for carers.

Telecare Services Association (TSA)

"It is important that all forms of technology, including mobile, are used to support individuals with a health or social care need. Increasing the independence, but also the security of an individual through technology, and providing peace of mind for their carers enables everyday life to be enriched."

Trevor Single, CEO of The Telecare Services Association (TSA)

Notes to Editors

Methodology

The research was commissioned by O2 Health and undertaken online by OnePoll between 24 September 2012 and 1 October 2012 among 1,000 people with long-term conditions or who feel vulnerable due to their age and 1,000 carers. OnePoll are members of ESOMAR and employ members of the MRS.

About Help at Hand

The service includes:

- A handset that is discreet, easy to carry and connects individuals to a Support Centre from anywhere in the UK with O2 mobile network coverage
- The secure Help at Hand website which allows people using the service, carers or social care organisations to efficiently manage individual profiles by setting up bespoke guidelines based on their care requirements, detailing how to react to any issues as and when they arise
- A UK-based alarm Support Centre is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year (British Standards certified and Telecare Services Association code of practice compliant)

About O2 Health

O2 Health believes in the power of technology to improve healthcare in the interests of patients. It brings patients closer to care by removing barriers and limitations and drives the future potential of care through technology and innovation. O2 Health puts patients in control and gives them the freedom to live independently while enabling health and care organisations to optimise resources and deliver a better level of care to patients. O2 Health

is a business unit within Telefónica Digital, a global business unit of O2's parent company that is dedicated to innovating and delivering growth in areas such as eHealth with resources dedicated to the UK health sector. More information about O2 Health can be found at our website, www.o2health.co.uk

All O2 news releases can be accessed at our website: www.o2.co.uk/news

About Carers Trust

- **Carers Trust** is a major new charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, unpaid, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.
- We do this with our Network Partners - a unique network of 124 independently managed carers' centres, 73 Crossroads Care schemes and 107 young carers services. Together we work as one organisation united by a shared vision for carers - to make sure that information, advice and practical support are available to all carers across the UK.

ⁱ There are 7 million carers in the UK according to the [Carers Trust](#). 4 hours per day multiplied by 7 days a week is 28 hours. 28 hours multiplied by 7 million is 196 million

ⁱⁱ 196 million hours ÷ 24 hours ÷ 365 days = 22,374 years

ⁱⁱⁱ 4% of 7 million carers = 280,000

^{iv} 8% of 7 million carers = 560,000