

This week has been Carers Week. I often write about the various awareness weeks that we celebrate but this one in particular is very important to many people across our area. Being a carer, whether you are a young carer looking after a parent, a parent caring for a child or a spouse caring for their beloved, is unbelievably tough. It becomes a duty and responsibility that most do without complaint but without proper support can take its toll.

I have had many people come to see me about services that might be available for the person they care for and one thing I always notice is their unselfish approach to what they often considered their job. I consciously make sure I ask if they are OK. If they are getting the support they need. If they get a break from their "job". Often you can see from the emotion in their eyes that they are not despite their stoic response.

In the UK 6.5million people care unpaid for an ill, frail or disabled family member or friend. Each day a further 6000 people will take on a new caring role. Many carers are required by their dependent to be available 24 hours a day. Most carers would not think they are doing anything out of the ordinary but they are. And many end up becoming socially isolated or ill themselves.

That's why Carers Week this year is focusing on building carer friendly communities, making sure that the services are integrated and support is available where needed most. Ultimately carers save the state a lot of money but they do so often at the expense of their own health and well-being.

You probably know a carer but they probably don't describe themselves as that. We should all probably thank them more than we do...and maybe check to see how they are because often we forget the wonderful, heroic work they do.