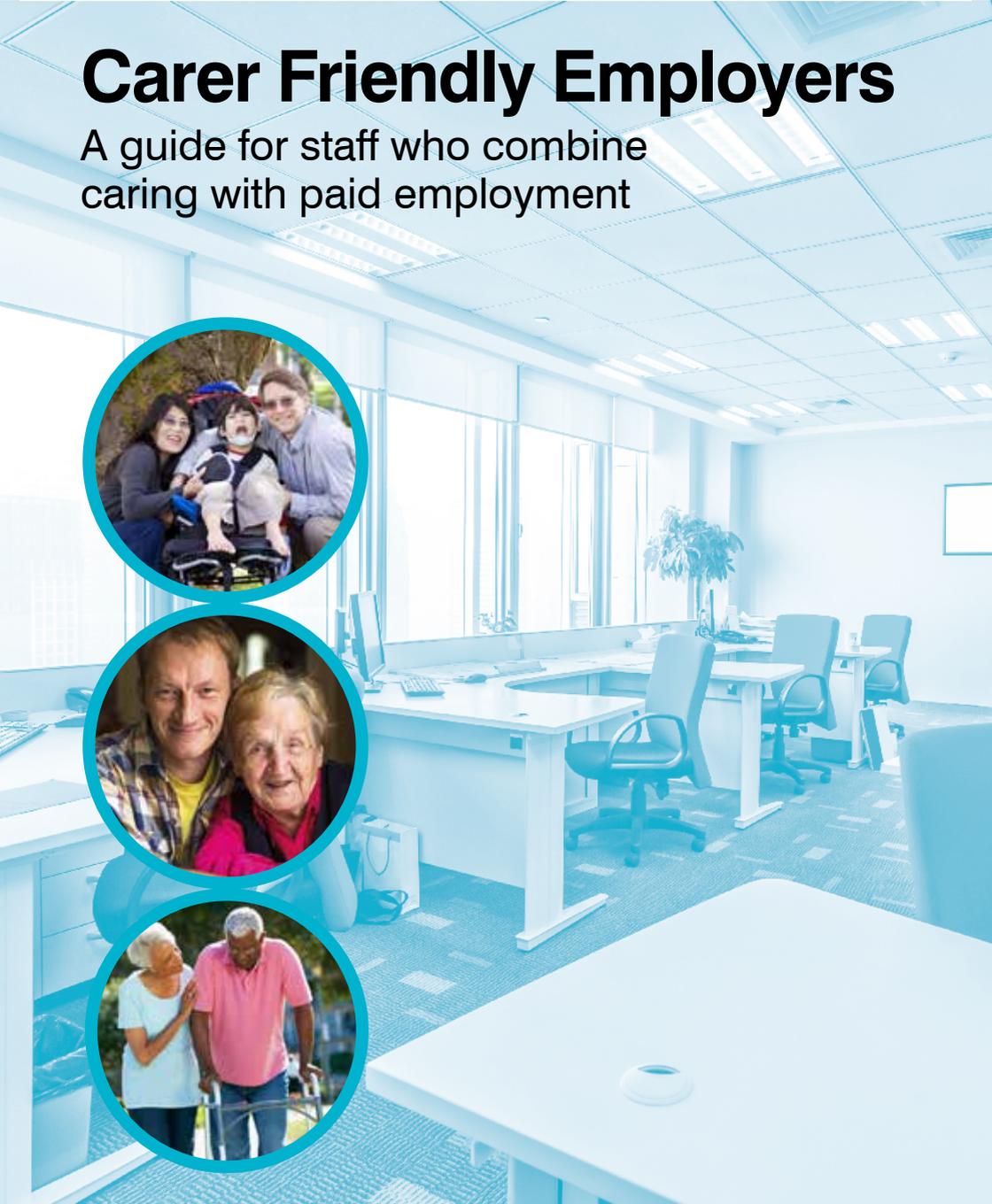




# Carer Friendly Employers

A guide for staff who combine caring with paid employment



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## Who is a working carer?

We define a working carer as...

**“a person in full or part-time employment, who also provides unpaid care for a friend or relation who couldn’t cope without their support”.**

We all know someone who is a carer but they just might not recognise themselves as one. A carer is someone who looks after a relative or friend who is ill, has a physical, sensory or mental impairment, is older and frail or is affected by substance misuse. A carer may be a parent, spouse or partner, son or daughter, another relative or a friend or neighbour. A carer may be providing practical care, emotional support and encouragement or in many cases both. Some carers provide support from a distance.

If you believe you are in such a role and combine this with full or part time employment there may be support for you either from your employer, a carers’ centre or from your local authority. This guide aims to tell you a little about what might be available.



## General advice

All local authorities have a legal duty to provide and maintain an advice and information service for carers and the people you care for. They don't have to provide this themselves so may have funded a Carers Centre or other organisation to do so. You should be able to get confidential advice on a range of matters including:

- In and out of work benefits
- Assessment and support from the local authority for you and the person you care for
- Social activities or mutual support from other carers
- Housing issues
- Employment and training

If all you need is someone to talk to, they may well be able to help. They may signpost you to other colleagues or organisations if they feel this is more appropriate to your needs.



## Other support for carers

You may need information, advice or support from other sources. These could include from Health Services, the Department of Work and Pensions as well as from the local authority or a carers organisation. Details of who to contact can be found on local authority websites. Many organisations provide email contact details for those who prefer this method or find it difficult to make time to call organisations during their office hours.

If you are not able, or prefer not to use the internet, you can contact or visit your local carers centre or other local advice provider or call the council's first point of contact for advice. It may be that sufficient information can be provided at that point to meet your needs or they may signpost you to a more appropriate organisation or agency.



## Combining care with paid employment

There are over three million working carers in the UK. It may feel as if you are juggling two jobs when you are holding down a paid job and caring for a friend or relative, but work can be important for your well-being, income and for maintaining social contacts.

Balancing the demands of caring with the responsibilities of a paid job is a tough call. People often feel pulled in two directions and as many as 1 in 5 people with significant caring responsibilities end up giving up work.

Those who fall out of work pay a heavy price - facing financial hardship and missing out on their own pension. So it pays to think carefully about the support you need to maintain your caring role while continuing to be a valued member of staff for your employer.



## Support for you in the workplace

Over half of all carers are in some sort of paid work. As a working carer, you are likely to need a range of support at different times - from access to a telephone to check on the person you care for, to flexible or urgent leave arrangements to support with someone coming out of hospital or another kind of emergency.

The good news is that carers have some statutory rights and more and more employers are realising the benefits of supporting carers in the workplace. If your employer gave you this guide – then that is a great start.



## Carers' rights at work

Carers have certain legal rights at work and outside.

### Flexible working

The Children and Families Act 2014 says that all employees who have 26 weeks or more service can make one flexible working request per year to their employer. Flexible working can mean reduced hours, flexitime, home working, job shares, compressed, or annualised hours to name a few. Some employers will have a formal procedure, but this is not statutory, and they can also use the standard form [www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview](http://www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview)

Employers are not bound to accept the request but must consider it and if denied must give reasons as to why the request was refused. The employee can then appeal if they feel it is appropriate. The employer has 3 months in which to respond to the request formally.

The legislation is designed to support those who wish to make a long term change in their working. Some carers may wish to request a temporary change due to particular circumstances and this may be able to be dealt with more informally.



## Time off for dependants

The Employment Relations Act 1999 gives employees the right to take a reasonable amount of time off to deal with emergencies involving a dependant. A dependant is defined as someone who depends on an employee for care, so can potentially include a wide range of relationships. There is no limit to the number of times an employee can take time off, however, whether this is unpaid or paid time off is at the employer's discretion. Time off for dependants is for emergency use only, and not for pre-planned occurrences.

## Parental leave

Employees will qualify for this if they have worked for the employer for at least one year and have legal parental responsibility for a child under five, or a disabled child under 18 years of age.

Employees can take up to 18 weeks' leave for each child, up until their 18th birthday. A maximum of four weeks can be taken in one year for each qualifying child. Parental leave is unpaid unless contracts say otherwise. Employers may have extended parental leave to include other workers, for example foster carers, grandparents or employees who have been employed for less than a year.

For full information on the above rights see the ACAS website<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup><http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1362>

## Protection from discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 brought together a range of anti-discrimination acts and regulations including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It states that employers and employees have a responsibility to create and be part of a fair work environment which complies with the law. Under the Equality Act, older or disabled people are protected against direct discrimination or harassment. Carers are protected by law as they are classed as being 'associated' with someone who has special protection from discrimination. For instance, in the world of work, it would be direct discrimination to refuse a job offer based on the fact that someone is a carer, or to deny an employee promotion because you feel that the caring role could hinder their work.

For full information on the above rights see the ACAS website<sup>1</sup>

## Right to a carer's assessment

All carers have a right to an assessment of their needs either as a result of the Children and Families Act, if you care for a child with an illness or impairment, or the Care Act if you care for an adult<sup>2</sup>. This right also applies if you haven't yet started to provide care but intend to do so.

If the local authority is already working with the person you care for, they must also assess you and any other people providing care – unless you don't wish to be assessed naturally. Local authorities can, if they wish, arrange for other organisations to carry out assessments on their behalf, such as the local carers' centre. The purpose of the assessment is to find out if you are willing and able to care and if you need any support to help you in your caring role. It should cover all of the aspects of your life which you feel are important – including your wish to maintain or take up employment and /or training. You have a right to say that you cannot provide all or part of the care that a person requires. Local authorities have a duty to involve you in an assessment of the person you care for. Ask for further information about how this works as both you and the person you care for have rights in respect of what information is shared.

There is a set of national eligibility criteria for adult carers who wish to access long term support – this may include provision of support to the person you care for. However, depending on what outcomes you want to achieve, you might find that your needs can be met by advice and information, short term or preventative support or by the use of a range of community based activities or services.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1362>

<sup>2</sup>There are some additional rules which apply in some cases to those in transition from children to adult services, and to carers ( such as grandparents) without parental responsibility for a disabled childbut essentially all carers have the same rights one way or another

## How to get the support you need from your employer

Talking to your employer about your caring role is not always an easy step. You may feel it depends on whether your employer is likely to be supportive. Find out by asking your colleagues, HR department, personnel officer or union representative. A union representative is allowed to attend your meetings with your employer. Carer organisations can help to support you in discussions with your employer by providing you and your employer with information about your rights and responsibilities as a working carer. However, if you ask around, you may find that there is existing support that you are not aware of, or you may find that your employer is open to exploring ways to support you. There has been a lot of research to show employers the benefits to them of supporting working carers in terms of increasing staff morale and loyalty, staff retention, reducing sick leave and absenteeism and even improving service delivery and increasing productivity.

Working closely with your employer so that you both benefit can help to reduce any negative impact caring has on you. Work is a really important part of life for many people and can often provide the psychological challenge and emotional support we all need. Simple changes at work might be all that is needed to make a big difference to you or you may need to make more substantial changes.

## What to think about before you approach your employer

What outcome do you want to achieve? For example, are you looking for:

- A small change, like privacy to go and make a phone call, or permission to keep your mobile phone on at work
- Information about your employer's policies that could help you as a carer –e.g. Flexible Working
- Someone to explain things to your colleagues if you feel unable to do this
- A temporary change due to an emergency or a short term difficulty
- Arrangements to be made in case you have to leave work unexpectedly to deal with an emergency
- A permanent change in your working hours – or reduction or other option such as flexitime, home working, annualised hours, compressed hours, shift swapping, self- rostering, staggered hours, job sharing, term-time working, part time working and flexible holidays

Do you have an ideas of how this may work in the context of your role

Have you something to offer in exchange (eg working later one day so that you can leave earlier on another

It will also be helpful if you map out what your caring role is and how it affects you. You don't have to tell your employer everything of course but they will need to know the general picture of your responsibilities if you are to get the support you need.

And don't forget you could do this in conjunction with a request to your local authority for information about assessment especially if you think that they could help you by providing more support to the person you care for.

## Useful information for carers

### **Carers UK - Help and Advice**

[www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice](http://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice)

### **Carers UK - Work and Career**

[www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career](http://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career)

### **Carers UK - Carers Rights Guide**

[www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/get-resources/carers-rights-guide](http://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/get-resources/carers-rights-guide)

### **Carers Trust - Help and Advice**

[www.carers.org/section/help-advice](http://www.carers.org/section/help-advice)

### **Carers Trust - Online Chat for young adult carers**

[www.matter.carers.org/](http://www.matter.carers.org/)

### **Contact a Family - Supporting parents of disabled children**

[www.contactafamily.org](http://www.contactafamily.org)

### **DWP Benefits - Information about benefits**

[www.gov.uk/browse/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits)



**Find out  
more about  
support for  
carers in your  
area**

**Caring for an someone in Coventry visit**  
[www.coventry.gov.uk/carers](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/carers)

**Caring for a child in Coventry visit**  
[www.coventry.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer](http://www.coventry.gov.uk/sendlocaloffer)

**Caring for someone who does not live in  
Coventry - Carers Trust website has a search  
facility to help you find local services**  
[www.carers.org/section/help-advice](http://www.carers.org/section/help-advice)



**West  
Midlands  
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This guide has been produced by WMADASS which represents the 14 local authorities which make up this region: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Herefordshire, Sandwell, Shropshire, Solihull, Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent, Telford & Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton and Worcestershire. It funds a number of initiatives to encourage consistent information and support for carers across the region.  
[www.wm-adass.org.uk](http://www.wm-adass.org.uk)

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