

FACTSHEET

Carers & Employment

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Are you working and looking after someone?

Carers provide unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this help. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse issues.

You may be a working carer, dealing with the stresses of what might see like two jobs - one paid, one unpaid - and meeting the needs of both.

This factsheet is designed to give you some information about what you can do to maybe help and things to take into consideration should you need to make some decisions.

Example

Bronwen looks after her husband who has multiple sclerosis and needs help with most daily living tasks and their 12 year old daughter. Bronwen also works in a local office as a clerk with customer complaints. She works from 9am to 5pm and finishes at 4.30pm on a Friday. She also has to work one Saturday in every four but has a day off in lieu during the week. She has been there for five years and really enjoys the job having made friends there. She is beginning to feel that work is getting more difficult with the caring she has to do for her husband, she has been late quite often and has to take time off to take him to hospital on a regular basis for physiotherapy.

Things to consider:

- What sort of help may be available?
- What help and support might Bronwen need?
- Does Bronwen have friends, family and/or neighbours that could help?
- Has Bronwen thought about tapping into support during holiday periods to help with children?
- Could Bronwen take a short break as a short-term measure?
- Is Bronwen allowed to have extra time off work for doctor/hospital appointments for the person she cares for?
- Does Bronwen have any contingencies in case of emergency?
- Does Bronwen need financial help and benefits - maybe parental leave for disabled children?
- Has Bronwen spoken to any carer support projects?
- Has Bronwen spoken to the Social Services department?
- Does Bronwen need help with travelling?
- What about using Assistive Technology for the person cared for?

Should you tell your employer?

It is up to you whether you tell your employer or not. As an employee, you have statutory rights to flexible working and emergency time off (your employer must offer these), but your employer may also offer additional support, for example; compressed hours, unpaid leave or job sharing. Before you decide to speak to your employer, you should find out more about your employer's policy for supporting working carers (if they have one). Do this by checking your staff handbook or speaking to your:

- Boss
- Line manager
- HR/personnel department
- Welfare officer or occupational health adviser
- Union or staff representative

Telling your Manager and Colleagues

When considering telling your manager or colleagues that you are a carer, you may feel fearful of being stigmatised, being considered to be having favoured treatment, having poor relationships with work colleagues or letting the team down. However, your manager and colleagues can be very supportive, and it may help to discuss your situation with someone you can trust at work. You might find that colleagues are also carers, and that together you are more able to talk to your employer about ways in which you could be supported. You might ask your employer to set up a support group, to find out how, together, you can find better ways of juggling your job and caring.

Telling your manager and colleagues will help you access a variety of support mechanisms including:

- Recognition as a carer (and associated rights).
- Emergency time off.
- Flexible working.
- Access to support groups.
- Information and signposting.
- Less stress for employee.
- May strengthen relationships.

What is Flexible working?

Flexible working can allow employees to manage both work and their caring responsibilities and may include:

- Flexible starting and finishing hours.
- Compressed working hours e.g. a 35-hour week over 4-days instead of 5.
- Annualised working hours e.g. your hours are calculated over a year and you works some fixed shifts, but have flexibility over some of your hours to allow you to work more or less hours to accommodate your caring role and the needs of the business.
- Term-time working.
- Job sharing and part-time working.
- Home working or tele working.
- Staggered hours.
- Shift working.
- Temporary reduction in working hours.
- Career breaks.

Who can apply for flexible working?

From 30th June 2014, all employees who have a minimum 26-weeks' continuous service have the right to request flexible working and to have their request considered seriously by their employer (some employers may offer flexible working to all employees). Particularly, parents of children under the age of six or disabled children under the age of eighteen have a right to apply to their employer to work more flexibly. This request can cover hours of work, times of work and place of work and may include requests for different patterns of work.

How to make an application for flexible working

Employment policies may differ in detail, and you are advised to check your employers policy before applying, but most follow the general principles below.

The application must:

- Be made in writing, stating that it is being made under the statutory right to apply for flexible working
- Confirm the employee's relationship to the child or adult

- Set out the employee's proposal and explain the effect the employee thinks this will have on the employer's business and how this may be dealt with.
- Specify a start date for the proposed change giving the employer reasonable time to consider the proposal and implement it, this may take 12-14 weeks.
- State whether a previous application has been made and if so what date it was made.
- Be dated.

On what grounds may you be refused?

Applications for flexible working arrangements cannot be unreasonably refused, but may be refused for the following reasons:

- The burden of additional costs.
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand.
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff.
- Inability to recruit additional staff.
- Detrimental impact on quality.
- Detrimental impact on performance.
- Insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work.
- Planned structural changes.

Carers UK has more information regarding flexible working.

Contact them on:

Tel: 0808 808 7777

Website: www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career

What if you want to leave work?

If you are thinking of leaving work, consider whether or not you really want to, and if not, what help you need to stay in work? First think about the things you would be giving up, and whether you really want to lose them.

- Will you manage with less money?
- Do you want to give up the independence and social contact you have through work?
- Will you lose valuable skills if you leave?
- How would leaving work affect your future pension entitlement?

Then, think about ways around the problem, could you:

- Make a request for flexible working?
- Take a career break?
- Ask for extra help from social services? You have a right to an assessment of your support needs as well as the needs of the person you care for. If you want to work, this must be taken into account when they are assessing and planning care for the person you look after.

Benefits for carers

You may be entitled to welfare benefits such as Carers Allowance. See below for some contact details.

For further information

Carers UK

Information on carers' rights.

0808 808 7777

www.carersuk.org/Employersforcarers

ACAS

Information on flexible working and legal rights.

08457 474747

www.acas.org.uk

CATCH UP

For help completing forms including home service & appeals/tribunals

01554 776850 / 774570

CATCHUP@ctcww.org.uk

www.ctcww.org.uk/catchup-welfare-benefits-advice-service/

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Carmarthenshire Carers Information Service

The Carers Information Service provides free and confidential information, advice, and support to Carers.

We produce and distribute information for carers and organise regular events in partnership with other organisations.

The service is joint funded by Carmarthenshire County Council and Hywel Dda University Health Board.

Contact details

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