

Carers Lives - *juggling work and caring*

As a carer, you may currently be juggling caring with paid work and care. You may be considering giving up work so that you can continue to care, or your role as a carer may have recently ended and you are looking for work. No two carers are the same and caring can be unpredictable; it can happen overnight and it often cannot be planned.

It is important that you know your rights and the options available to you when making decisions about caring and paid employment. In this section, you will find information on staying in work, giving up work and returning to work.

Juggling work and care can be a challenge in the life of many carers. As a carer, you have rights at

Your Rights At Work

Caring can be unpredictable so combining work and care can be a challenge for working carers. However, there are things that you can do to help you to cope with the pressures of caring and paid work. You may need a range of support and different levels of support at different times.

Getting the right mix of support from employers and care services is important in enabling carers to continue to work. Carers have defined rights at work which are summarised below. Your employer may be willing to offer other forms of support in addition to these rights, it's always worth asking.

Statutory rights for carers

The Work and Families Act 2006 and the Employment Rights Act 1996 give working carers rights to help them manage work and caring including the right to request flexible work and leave entitlement. (In Northern Ireland they are called The Work and Families (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 and The Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996).

These rights apply to employees. Your employment status can affect your entitlement to statutory rights. If, for example, you are self employed, on a short-term contract or employed through an agency you may not be covered by these rights.

[If this applies to you it is important to seek advice from ACAS on 08457 47 47 47.](#)

1. Right to request Flexible working

Flexible working can allow employees to manage both work and their caring responsibilities. Since April 2007 carers have a right to request changes to their working patterns to better manage their caring. [For more information about flexible working contact our advice team on 020 7708 4407.](#)

work that can make this easier and there is support available to help you continue both working and caring. You have a right to request flexible working and you will find information on how to apply for this and how to challenge decisions if you are not happy with the outcome. You may also have rights to various forms of time off.

To find out more about any aspect of working and caring, or returning to work after caring contact our Advice Team on 020 7708 4497 or visit Carers Direct section about work at www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/workandlearning/work/Pages/Overview.aspx

2. The right to time off in emergencies

Also known as time off for dependants, this gives all employees the right to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off work to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. Whether the time off is paid or not is at the discretion of the employer. A dependant could be mother, father, son, daughter, parent or anyone who lives with you who is solely dependent on you.

An emergency could be:

- A disruption or breakdown in care arrangements
- The death of a dependant
- If a dependant falls ill or has been assaulted
- To make longer term arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured (but not to provide long term care yourself)

To use this right to time off, employees must inform their employer as soon as possible after the emergency has happened.

3. Parental leave

If you have at least one year's continuous service with your employer and are responsible for a child aged under 5, or under 18 if the child is disabled, you are entitled to:

- 13 weeks (unpaid) leave per child to look after a child, or
- 18 weeks (unpaid) leave per child to look after a disabled child

Parental leave can be postponed by employers if taking leave at the time requested would cause particular disruption to the business e.g. during a seasonal peak in work or if multiple requests for parental leave are made at the same time.

[For more detailed information about Parental Leave contact our Advice Team on 020 7708 4497.](#)

Returning To Work After Caring

If you want to start or return to work there are lots of things to consider and many schemes that can help you.

If you've been recently bereaved or your caring responsibilities have come to an end because the person you were looking after has gone into a care or nursing home you may need time to adjust to your new circumstances.

After someone goes into a care home

There may come a time when the person you're looking after can no longer be cared for at home and needs to move into a residential or nursing home to receive the care they need.

When this happens you'll no longer be involved in their care in the same way. Some carers experience a sense of loss and others lose a sense of purpose when their caring role changes.

You may need to return to work to earn money. For some carers who haven't worked for some time, this can be daunting. You may have lost your confidence, or feel you no longer have the skills you once had.

Training

Jobcentre Plus can help you access training schemes to update your skills or help you learn new ones. You may also be eligible for a career development loan. This is a bank loan of between £300 and £8,000 to fund the cost of a vocational or training course.

Other sources of help include:

- Learning for Living. This is an online learning course for carers and former carers developed by City and Guilds. Contact them on 01455 201 020 or visit their website (see External links).
- The Careers Advice Service, which provides free and confidential advice and information on learning and work. Contact its free confidential helpline on 0800 100 900 or visit the website (see External links).
- Nextstep. This is a free service that offers face-to-face help and provides information and advice on learning, training and getting qualifications. You can contact Nextstep through its website (see External links).
- In our hands. This is a service provided by the Learning and Skills Council that specialises in training advice and runs a helpline. Phone 0800 011 30 30 or contact them through the website (see External links).

Routes into employment

There are several routes back into employment. For example:

- part-time work,
- full-time work,
- job-sharing,
- self-employment, or
- voluntary work.

You may wish to continue some of your caring responsibilities when you go back to work. You don't have to tell your employer that you're a carer. However, if you choose to do so there are many ways in which they can help. These include offering:

- flexible working arrangements,
- time off for emergencies,
- carer's leave (either paid or unpaid),
- compassionate leave, or
- a career break.

Financial support

You may no longer be eligible for Carer's Allowance if the person you look after goes into a residential or nursing home. You must inform the Disability and Carers Service about any change in your circumstances or those of the person you care for. You can do this online (see Further Information).

If you're ready to look for a job there are benefits, such as Jobseeker's Allowance, to help you. Jobseeker's Allowance includes a payment that helps with any mortgage interest you have to pay. You may also be paid Housing or Council Tax Benefit to help you pay rent and council tax bills. You may also be eligible for back-to-work benefits.

There is a range of back-to-work benefits available including:

- mortgage interest run-ons,
- extended payment of Housing and Council Tax Benefits,
- job grants,
- adviser discretions grants,
- Return to Work Credit, and
- In Work Credit.

There are also rules about going back onto the rate of benefit you were on before you gave up work. This means you can try working without having to go back on to benefit at a lower rate. In addition, Jobcentre Plus runs a range of schemes including:

- work trials,
- work preparation, and
- employment on trial.