

# CARING AND WORK

## Carers

This guidance note is to help you consider your options and look for solutions as you combine caring responsibilities and work or plan to return to work after caring for someone.

35% of women aged 51 to 65 have caring responsibilities; 1 in 6 workers have eldercare responsibilities; 75% of grandparents look after grandchildren. The number of carers is large and increasing. It is not always easy juggling caring and working. Many carers leave work early or take ill informed decisions about early retirement with little thought for the financial consequences. For those who leave work early, 70% did not consider either the immediate or longer term financial implications of their decision to retire early.

You can expect to live 10 years longer than your relatives of 50 years ago. Leaving work temporarily or permanently may be the best solution for you but you should not jump to that conclusion hastily. You need to explore and understand your work options, pension position and retirement options to enable you to plan ahead for your life and reach the right decisions. There are currently 3 million carers who are combining work and care. Work is important for wellbeing, income and to keep social contacts.

## Support

Many organisations offer different kinds of support for carers, and they may have an office local to you (see Resources list overleaf). It's too easy to feel that no-one can help, or that carers don't deserve help, or that you will feel guilty if you ask for help with your caring. Listen to anyone who suggests finding support in your area, and telephone around, ask at your GP surgery – you don't need to struggle on alone with your caring role – it's ok to ask for help. It's important to have 'time off' for yourself whether it's a few hours, days or a holiday. Many carers find that working in the right place can help them with their self esteem as well as financially. If you had a career or job when you became a carer, you need to keep in touch and stay employable even if you have to leave work temporarily.

Your local council may have services where they can arrange to collect the person you look after and take them out to a day centre or residential home for you to have a break. Your employer may be able to help.

## Employers

Many employers take into account carers' commitments and may be able to find a variety of ways in which they can help. This does mean that you need to tell your employer that you have caring responsibilities, whether temporary or permanent. In the past many carers have been worried about talking to their employer. Today it is recognised that carers need a range of support in the workplace and more and more employers are realising the benefits of supporting carers. The Government has provided some statutory rights to carers to ask for flexible working to help employees manage both work and caring responsibilities and time to deal with emergencies, but your employer may offer additional support and you should check out your employer's policy in your staff handbook or your contract.

## How might an employer help?

Frequently the best help will be a change in your working arrangements. Your employer might be able to help with flexible working, times of being at work, working from home, compressing your working hours into less days, working the same hours but spread over the whole year, or term times. Larger employers may also offer help through their occupational health adviser, support group for carers or employee services.

If you drive to work, a quick access parking space to enable you to pop home; a telephone to ring who ever you are caring for are other ways in which employers can help. If you think you have to leave work temporarily, taking a career break or sabbatical would keep your options open, ensure you had a job to return to, and keep you in touch with the world of work.

## Carers' assessments

If you care or intend to care for someone for a substantial amount of time on a regular basis you can ask your local social services for a 'carer's assessment'. This will enable you to discuss with social services the help you need with caring, plus the help to maintain your own health, and balance caring with your life, work and family commitments. Social services will use the assessment to decide what help to provide to you. The assessment covers what support you need if you want to or are already working or studying. Before you have your meeting for your assessment, you may find that it

helps you if you make a list of all the things you do for the person you look after, and a diary to show how often you do these activities. Many carers say that they prefer to talk to the people from social services away from the person they care for, so that they can be more honest about how the situation affects them.

Your income, property or savings do not affect the assessment or the services that can be provided by your local social services, however if your income or assets are large enough, you may have to pay for some or all of the services offered.

It may be very helpful to ask for an assessment if you are thinking of giving up work, are struggling to stay in work because of your carer responsibilities, or are thinking of returning to work.

### Thinking of leaving work?

If you are thinking of leaving work, consider whether you really want to and what may help you stay in work. 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 your work? Will you lose valuable skills if you leave? How would leaving affect your future pension entitlement?

Then think about ways round the problem. Could you ask for flexible working arrangements? Take a career break? Ask for extra help from social services? Buy in care?

### Caring responsibilities changing and thinking of returning to work

It may be difficult to go back to work if you have been a carer, and you now have less responsibility or no responsibility. Your health and self confidence may have suffered as a result of being a carer. You may feel a bit out of touch with the world of work or have lost a bit of confidence. You will also be thinking about your benefits and what support is available to get you into training and work.

Generally it takes time to recover once you are no longer caring for someone, when you have been in the past. People who have been caring for over 20 hours a week will probably take longer to feel better and able to look at work or study options.

There are ways in which you can be helped to consider your options. The Learning Skills Council provides information, advice and guidance about learning opportunities via Learn Direct and Next Step. City & Guilds has developed a learning programme specifically for carers and former carers.

If you no longer have any caring responsibilities your financial position will change and you will need to seek advice about what to do next. If you are thinking of combining work and care, you may be able to do this and continue to claim some benefits or receive extra help when you start work. You will need to ask your local advice centre or Jobcentre Plus for a better off calculation so that you know how starting work will affect your income and that you claim all the help you can. Jobcentre Plus will be able to provide you help in finding work and to help you out when you start work. This could be:

- training programmes (including New Deal programmes) to learn new skills or refresh existing skills
- support to make applications, write your CV or prepare for interviews
- financial help when you move into work.

### Relationships

All your relationships with family and friends are likely to have changed when you became a carer, and it takes some effort and time to look at how to rebuild them. It may be that you could look at groups that you could join, or some voluntary work, to ease you back into a social scene that suits you.

### Resources

There are many resources available to help you in your local area. Some are listed on the next page.

## Resources

- [www.direct.gov.uk/en/CaringForSomeone/CarersAndEmployment/DG\\_4000206](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/CaringForSomeone/CarersAndEmployment/DG_4000206)
- Age Concern have 15 books about caring for people with different impairments, prices ranging from £6.99-£9.99. Order from 0870 44 22 120 or [www.ageconcern.org.uk/books/index.cfm](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/books/index.cfm)
- Learning and Skills Council; [www.iag.lsc.gov.uk/](http://www.iag.lsc.gov.uk/); [www.learndirect-advice.co.uk](http://www.learndirect-advice.co.uk). Tel: 0800 100 900
- Carers UK; [www.carersonline.org.uk](http://www.carersonline.org.uk); Carers Line: 0808 808 7777
- [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org). Carers online chat room for sharing your thoughts and ideas

### Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

- [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/social/carers/carers](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/social/carers/carers)  
Carers Support Team, Shire Hall, Cambridge, CB3 0AP, Tel: 01223 712235
- Age Concern Cambridgeshire; [www.accambs.org](http://www.accambs.org)  
2 Victoria Street, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire, PE16 6AP; Tel: 01354 696650
- Independent Living Services  
Cambridge City Council, Ditchburn Place, Mill Road, Cambridge, CB1 2DR; Tel: 01223 458003
- Nextstep Cambridgeshire & Peterborough; [www.nextstepcambs.org.uk](http://www.nextstepcambs.org.uk)  
7 The Meadow, Meadow Lane, St Ives, Cambs PE27 4LG
- Carers Contingency Fund, Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service; Tel: 01223 464696
- Hilltop Day and Carers Centre; Tel: 01223 712055
- Cambridge and South and East Cambs Carers Consortium; Tel: 01223 363494
- Respite Care; Crossroads (Cambridge City) Ltd; Tel: 01223 415600
- FORUM Lunch Club, Cambridge; Tel: 01223 881267
- Alzheimer's Disease Society, Cambridge; Tel: 01223 884031
- Peterborough Carers Centre; [www.carers.org/local/east/pe](http://www.carers.org/local/east/pe); Tel: 01733 342683 / 311016

### Bedfordshire and Luton

- [www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/HealthAndSocialCare/ServicesForAdults/Carers/Carers.aspx](http://www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/HealthAndSocialCare/ServicesForAdults/Carers/Carers.aspx)  
County Hall, Bedford MK42 9AP; Tel: 01234 363222
- [www.nextstepbedsandluton.org.uk](http://www.nextstepbedsandluton.org.uk); Tel: 0800 107 4177
- Short Breaks Bureau (Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity – BRCC); [www.bedsrcc.org.uk](http://www.bedsrcc.org.uk);  
Tel: 01234 838771
- [www.bedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.bedfordshire.gov.uk); Support from charities and other support groups in Bedfordshire
- Carers information from James Robinson-Morley; Tel: 01234 276790 / ext.44790  
[www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/HealthAndSocialCare/Carers/Servicesforcarers.aspx](http://www.bedfordshire.gov.uk/HealthAndSocialCare/Carers/Servicesforcarers.aspx)
- DWP in Bedfordshire 01234 361500 (if you are in North or Mid Bedfordshire)  
or 01582 744000 (if you are in South Bedfordshire)
- Bedford Social Services; Tel: 01234 363222



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