

We Care You Care

Working Carers Report 2021-22



Table of Contents

Foreword	3
What is a Working Carer?	5
Beyond rights. Being inclusive.	5
Protection from discrimination	7
What value and worth would you place on working carers?	7
The Number of Carers and their Employment Status.....	8
Paid Carer's Leave.....	9
Case study.....	10
The potential to improve the lives of working carers and their loved ones.....	12
Proposals	12
What qualifies as caring?	12
Applying for Carer's Leave	13
An option to make better use of flexible working?	14
Carers – Exploring Demographics.....	15
Older carers	16
Young Carers.....	17
Gender	17
Race and Ethnicity.....	18
Cultural differences, being a carer and accessing services.....	19
Working carers and well-being	20
Employers making a difference	22
The impact on employers	23
The financial impact on employers.....	24
The impact of COVID-19	25
The need for legislation	27
Recommendations and thought perspective	29
Thank you	30

Foreword



As someone who has been a carer, looking after my father who had pancreatic cancer, and now having my own care needs due to my disability, I've seen first-hand the difficulties faced by those who juggle work and provide care for a loved one.

Over the years, we've brought together working carers, professionals working in the health and social care industry and companies to explore the benefits of implementing paid care leave for working carers. I'm delighted that this report can help us to continue those important conversations and engage companies to better support working carers.

Chris Jeffery

Mending the Gap

Mending the Gap was established in 2013 and is chaired by disability campaigner, Chris Jeffery. The organisation campaigns for equality for working carers including for companies to provide paid care leave to employees.



It's hard to imagine a world without caring. A world where we turn away from providing support and help to our loved ones, our friends, our family and our neighbours and their personal, emotional, financial, health and social needs. It's also hard to imagine workplaces where working carers are burdened with the additional worry and pressure of having to balance the important needs of those they care for and the priorities at work.

The latter is, unfortunately, the reality for many working carers who face the monthly, weekly and sometimes daily challenge of providing care for their loved ones and ensuring that they deliver on their work objectives.

Working carers are significant contributors in our society, very often propping up under-funded and under-resourced health and social care support, yet this group is so often overlooked.

In the workplace, and particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, we've seen an increase in employees taking on caring responsibilities and becoming working carers. For many this was an overnight change with little time to plan or reprioritise and with little option other than to take on this new role.

This report looks at the unmet needs of working carers and how paid carer's leave could be the determining factor that keeps our loved ones cared for and our employees performing in their role. Importantly, this report also looks at the impact paid carer's leave can have on the emotional, physical and financial well-being of working carers.

I'm delighted to be supporting Chris Jeffery, and Mending the Gap, in their efforts to raise awareness of the need for paid care leave. This joint report brings together research and our most recent conversations, in a compelling narrative that asks employers to consider implementing inclusive paid leave that explicitly includes working carers.

Kelly Higson
Executive Director
Inclusion Included

Inclusion Included Ltd is a diversity, inclusion, culture transformation consultancy, with over 20 years of experience, translating inclusion ambitions into sustainable, evidence-based interventions that create lasting impact. With a social purpose to give back, through pro-bono work, support of emerging talent and through the elevation of community spirit, Inclusion Included freely share best practice, insights, their learned view and experiences because they know that this will quicken the pace of equality.

What is a Working Carer?

We wanted to start this report by acknowledging the various definitions used to describe what a working carer is. This varies depending on who you talk to, their personal and professional experience and their understanding of the agenda. Whilst there is no single definition, we prefer the one used by NHS England. It's also widely agreed upon, including by the UK Government:

“A carer is anyone, including children and adults who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.”¹

A working carer is in employment (whether full-time or part-time) and also has caring responsibilities. This means undertaking personal or practical activities for another person, for example, taking them to hospital appointments, making meals or helping someone to get dressed or bathe. In the last couple of years (and we have seen this more starkly because of the pandemic) the way we've lived our lives has become far more digital, immersing us in the online world.



As we think about the definition of what it means to be a working carer, we must consider this new way of working and living. The care that's provided may not always be in a face-to-face format. Therefore, we suggest that the definition should be expanded to explicitly include care and support provided via digital and online sources. For example, using mobile devices to connect with those who are receiving care, or joining a three-way GP consultation or medical appointment.

Beyond rights. Being inclusive.

Now that we've settled on the definition we'll use in this report, we want to explore some of the statutory rights that carers already have. These include:

- The right to **request** flexible working.
- The right to time off in **emergencies**.
- The right to **parental** leave.

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/comm-carers/carers/>

These are in addition to any contractual rights that an employee may have in their employment contract. However, since employment contracts, roles, leadership and management attitude to supporting working carers varies, we know that this variance, and the interpretation of carer rights, can lead to an inconsistency in how these rights are applied or accessed.

For example, if a working carer only has the right to request flexible working, or if that right is afforded only after an agreed period of time working for the company, perhaps 6 months, what happens if that request is refused, or the carer needs support within the first 6 months?



Or, if a working carer asks for time off to deal with an emergency, but their manager doesn't agree it's an emergency, how will this situation be resolved?

Many employment policies are often written in a way to allow for manager discretion, and with good intent. Rarely are two employee situations the same. However, we know that when allowing for manager discretion, this very often leads to an inconsistency in decision making and in employee experience.



How comfortable are businesses and HR leaders that policies that affect working carers are being consistently and fairly interpreted and applied? We suggest that it's a business imperative to routinely look at those decisions through the lens of inclusion, equity and accessibility, to identify trends across business functions, across diversity demographics and across employee engagement metrics.

Let's address a couple of the pain points we hear from HR and business leaders across a range of industries: "If I say yes to this flexible working or emergency leave request it will set a precedent and then everyone will want to work flexibly" or "Is the request genuine? They might just want time off!"

We know that there are some roles and industries that find it hard to implement flexible working policies, but even taking this into account there is usually a solution to be found. It's likely that the working carer will come to the conversation with options, an open mind and will have thought through the impact of their request. Using skilful conversations, creativity and an

open mind, it's likely a sensible solution can be found that works for both the working carer and the business.

Don't worry, it's very unlikely that the rest of your team will now ask for flexible working, but if they do, then be bold and explore those requests. It might well be there are other working carers in your team who would benefit from having more flexibility in how and when they do their work. Being open to working in agile and dynamic ways is a business and leadership asset.

If an employee "just wants time off" then there is a conversation to have about what's driving this. Is the employee's workload appropriate? Is the employee experiencing a well-being issue, or do they have a personal situation that means they need time to take care of themselves, or could benefit from support? Understanding the driver means you can tailor the response and support a request.

Protection from discrimination

Whilst we're focusing on the behavioural and culture transformation that we want to see across business, we also need to remember the collective responsibility. We must ensure that no one is discriminated against due to their protected characteristic, or association with someone else with a protected characteristic. Discrimination by association can occur where a person is treated less favourably by another due to their association with an individual. Therefore, carers are protected under the Equality Act 2010 if they are discriminated against due to their caring responsibilities, for example towards an elderly person or a person with a disability.²



Ultimately, using a legal framework in our decision making is a low baseline to which to work from. Must we only ever offer the bare minimum legal rights to our working carers? Are we confident that in doing so it demonstrates our value of their contribution to workplaces and society?

What value and worth would you place on working carers?

Carers UK, a charity that supports carers across the UK, states that "the vast majority of care in the UK is delivered by family and friends" and that without their provision of care, social services and the NHS would collapse. The care given by the nation's unpaid carers is "worth an estimated £132bn per year – considerably more than the total spending on the NHS in England".³

² Equality Act 2010 s.13

³ Carers UK, Research November 2020

We know that carers feel undervalued. Those we've spoken to through our work with clients and their Carer Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) are grateful to have a workplace support group, but this doesn't go far enough to meet their needs. Many talk about how the care they provide helps free up hospital beds and enables their loved ones to stay at home, in familiar environments, with home comforts. These things really matter.

"It is often a complex business, and if the NHS ambition to keep people out of hospital and at home is to be fulfilled, then carers really need better support."

Dame Philippa Russell

Chris Jeffery and Mending the Gap, not only want working carers' rights to be strengthened but to see recognition for carers and the invaluable work that they undertake:

"Carers saved the country millions. Once we used to clap for carers. Then we clapped for the NHS and key workers. Carers are key workers and help prop up the NHS. They deserve equality."

Chris Jeffery

The Number of Carers and their Employment Status

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it was estimated that there were between 5 million and 8.8 million unpaid, adult carers in the UK.⁴ We know this figure is conservative. Many do not want to identify themselves as carers as they feel this label is restrictive, especially in the workplace. Employees raise concerns that they will be overlooked for promotion and development opportunities because of the bias a manager may hold about working carer capabilities, or indeed, the stereotypes that may be associated with being a working carer.

The actual number of carers may never truly be known, but what we do know is that it's going to continue to increase. Carers UK, who estimated the top figures based on the 2011 census, are clear that this number will only rise due to demographic change: "the number of older people receiving unpaid care would need to rise from 2.1 million in 2015 to 2.65 million in 2025

⁴ Nicola Brimblecombe, Jose-Luis Fernandez, Martin Knapp, Amritpal Rehill and Raphael Wittenberg, 'Unpaid Care in England: Future Patterns and Potential Support Strategies' [2018] LSE. Cited in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's Consultation on Carer's Leave

(a rise of 27%)” leading to an increase in demand for carers for this demographic of beneficiaries alone.

With this changing demographic and likelihood of an increased number of carers, the Government has recognised that carers may require “specific new employment rights”. A consultation by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) stated that almost half of unpaid carers are employed – a statistic also shared by the 2011 ONS Census.⁵

Within this, part-time working and being economically active is more prevalent among carers than non-carers implying that carers are discouraged from working full-time due to the difficulties balancing both caring responsibilities and work.⁶ The BEIS consultation paper on Carer’s Leave states that carers, by experiencing such difficulties, “may leave work entirely, reduce their hours or avoid going for promotion”.⁷ The Government Office for Science’s report ‘Future of an Ageing Population’ also contended that “carers often withdraw from paid work and do not return”.⁸

The projected increase of the number of older people needing care could have implications for the UK workforce and nature of employment. As a response to this, the Government are considering a new entitlement of one week of additional leave for unpaid carers otherwise known as Carer’s Leave.⁹

Paid Carer’s Leave

The proposed entitlement of Paid Carer’s Leave would only apply to employees and would “form the minimum of what employees are entitled to, and it would be at the employer’s discretion to enhance the entitlement in length or offer pay”.¹⁰

⁵ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (n 3) 3; Carers UK, ‘Policy briefing August 2019 - Facts about carers’ (n 14) 13 (original footnotes omitted).

⁶ Carers UK, ‘Policy briefing August 2019 - Facts about carers’ (n 14) 13 (original footnotes omitted); Government Office for Science, ‘Future of an Ageing Population’ (*Government Office for Science*, 2016) 37.

⁷ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (n 3) 3.

⁸ Government Office for Science (n 19) 37.

⁹ Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (n 3).

¹⁰ Department for Work and Pensions, ‘Family Resources Survey 2017/18’ (*Department for Work and Pensions*, March 2019) 9-10

The BEIS consultation paper states that an employee's eligibility to take Carer's Leave would be based on the facts of each employee's case as discussed with their employer. The Government is considering three criteria:

- The employee's relationship to the person cared for.
- (Whether) the employee will have caring commitments which are longer-term to apply to specific situations where the need is significant.
- (Whether there is a need for) a qualifying period of continuous employment with their employer.

So, what does this mean in practice and are these criteria helpful?

If we look at the first criteria, how can an employer determine who is important to an employee and who isn't? For many reasons an employee may have created an extended network of friendships that they deem equally as important, or more important, than the relationship they have with their family. It's important that the employer considers the views of the employee and the importance they place on the relationship with the person they care for, and not discount the relationship because it's not a family member.

Case study

Paul (he/him/his), a media manager, came out as a gay man in his early twenties. He isn't in contact with his family but has an extended group of close friends, who have become his "family" over the years.

"I was brought up in a relatively rural area, with a strong community, mainly based around our schools and our church. I knew I was gay, probably in my early teens, but I didn't tell my parents until I was 23. Both my parents struggled to accept my sexual orientation, perhaps because of their religious beliefs, perhaps for other reasons and despite many efforts to build our relationship, this deteriorated, and I was asked to leave the family home.

As a single man, and a student on very low income, I found it difficult to find a rental property within my financial means, and I didn't qualify for social housing as I wasn't seen as a priority. I was lucky to have a few friends in the LGBTQ+ community who let me stay on their sofa for a short while until I could find a room to rent (also through this community support) and get back on my feet. Without the support of this group of friends, I would have likely had to stop studying and possibly would have been homeless. Over the years, this group of friends has become my family. We holiday together, sometimes spend Christmas together and we have a shared understanding of the stigma that still exists and the

challenges that we face because of homophobia, biases and prejudice. We're there for each other. We're family.

Last month, Jamil, who had allowed me a space on his sofa many years ago, and who I now consider a brother, suddenly became ill and needed support and care after an emergency operation. He asked me and our other friend, Sue, if we could help for a couple of weeks. Without hesitation we both said yes. Sue is an accountant for a company with a fantastic reputation for supporting working carers. Her line manager supported her to finish earlier each day so that she could pop in and help with the shopping and evening meal.

I asked my line manager if it would be possible for me to start 30 minutes later each day for a couple of weeks, taking a shorter lunch break to make up the time and to take two Friday afternoons off to take Jamil for his hospital appointment, as he couldn't drive. Our workplace policy states that care leave and emergency leave only applies when employees are providing care for family or close relatives. I was told the policy wouldn't apply to me and therefore I'd need to take annual leave or unpaid leave. However, our HR management system didn't allow for me to record an hour's leave each morning, so for simplicity, and to be able to confirm quickly to Jamil that I could support him, I took unpaid leave."

When we asked about the impact of this policy Paul said, "Financially, it was really tough. I had the extra expense of travelling to and from Jamil, plus the transport to the hospital appointments and the loss of earned income. It wasn't just the unpaid leave that was an issue. In having to 'explain' to my line manager who Jamil was, and the importance of our friendship, I had to come out, again. There was an awkwardness about this conversation. It was all unnecessary, really. If the policy had not been so binary and exclusive in its nature it would have been so much easier."

Paul concluded, "This has also had an impact on my professional and personal relationships. It's also been a discussion point in our friendship circles and the LGBTQ+ community I'm part of. Jamil has said he feels guilty for asking for support and I feel awful that he feels this way. Of course, I'd offer up my support again, but I know there will be a worry for me about the impact this might have on me, and I feel selfish for feeling this way. If I'm being honest, I also feel slightly resentful at work too. That a pre-determined view on 'family' excludes those I love and care for."

The potential to improve the lives of working carers and their loved ones.

The BEIS consultation paper proposes that Carer's Leave would allow qualifying employees an annual entitlement to **one week's unpaid leave** to deliver care to an individual with whom they have a relationship akin to those concerning dependents. For example, a spouse/civil partner, a parent, a child, a person who lives in the same household as the employee and who does not share a contractual relationship with the employee, someone else who reasonably relies on the employee for care.

The Government proposes to **restrict Carer's Leave to employees** "caring for individuals with physical or mental health problems, disability or issues related to old age and where the care need is likely to last for a longer period such as six months or a year". They also propose that some specific care needs "should automatically qualify as care needs for the purposes of the Carer's Leave regardless of their duration", such conditions that are automatically classed as a disability under the Equality Act 2010.

Carers UK, in response to the proposed definition of the care need, feel that as well as including an automatic qualification for people under the Equality Act 2010, "there should be no minimum qualification of the length of time that someone has a disability or condition" as a period of six months may exclude "older people who would not qualify, people with fluctuating conditions" and "early onset conditions where the prognosis is not known".¹¹

The appropriate qualifying period is yet to be determined by the Government; however, we'd suggest that **carer's leave should be an entitlement from the first day of employment**. Carers UK also support this view, and "strongly believes that the right to take Carer's Leave should be a day one right".

Proposals

What qualifies as caring?

The Government proposes that the definition of "caring" should encapsulate a large range of activities for the purpose of taking carer's leave. It is proposed that one or more of the following reasons be given for the leave entitlement:

- Providing personal support.
- Providing practical support.

¹¹ Carers UK, 'Consultation response August 2020 - Carers UK's response to the BEIS Carer's Leave consultation' (Carers UK, August 2020) 10.

- Helping with official or financial matters.
- Providing personal and/or medical care.
- Making arrangements.

Accompanying an individual to an appointment is a reason still being deliberated upon.¹²

It is proposed that supporting an individual's recovery and childcare (other than those reasons stated above) sit outside the scope of Carer's Leave.

Applying for Carer's Leave

In the BEIS consultation paper, it suggests it would be deemed suitable for "employees to, in the first-instance, self-certify their eligibility for carer's leave" and it would "be reasonable for employers to request further evidence" about the care need or activity to ensure no misuse of the right.



Our view is that working carer self-definition is a fundamental essential and an enabler to inclusive working practices that allow employees to balance their work and caring responsibilities. We are mindful that for many working carers, they will have no formal documentation to "prove their carer status" and thus to have to provide evidence in the first instance would further increase the burden on carers, who are already time poor, and resource stretched.

The BEIS consultation paper states that "the actual number of days available could be linked to the equivalent of a full working week for a person and that it would be pro-rated for part-time work". It is still being determined whether the leave could be taken as a single block of one whole working week or individual or half-days accumulating to one whole week. The notice period for taking the leave is still being deliberated upon.

"In 2011, the then business secretary, Ed Davey, said that five days' paid carer's leave would be a burden on business, and at the moment it just seems to be the same answer - it's a burden on business. Have we still not found a solution, ten years on?"

Chris Jeffery

¹² Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (n 3) 13-14.

An option to make better use of flexible working?

The In-Work Progress Commission holds the belief that “offering greater access to flexible working could have benefits for all” and that providing an increasingly flexible work environment could aid removal of additional barriers to progression that women, older workers and people with disabilities face. Research conducted by Timewise found that 91% of female employees stated that they either work flexibly already or say that they would like to.¹³ Timewise also found that the highest preference for flexible working came from younger workers and that 93% of non-workers who would like a job “would prefer to work either part-time, or flexibly in a full-time role”.



We know that some working carers are further marginalised and overlooked from mainstream services and in policy design and process implementation. Young carers, men, and those who themselves are disabled or have a health condition, tell us that they often find it difficult to speak up about their caring status and ask for support. It makes sense that the benefits of working in a dynamic and flexible way can positively impact the lives of working carers, can increase productivity in the workplace, and reduce some of the stigma attached to caring.

The DWP report stated that low-paid sectors can encompass flexible working by producing opportunities for “job-sharing, offering the choice to work compressed hours, or providing flexibility around start and finish times”. The report cited research conducted by the Behavioural Insight Team and Zurich Insurance, who trialled advertising job positions to include the option to work part-time or as a job-share, in addition to full-time. It was found that there was a “significant increase of 16.4% in the proportion of female applicants to roles at Zurich Insurance and there was an increase of 19.3% in the proportion of females applying to senior roles within Zurich Insurance”.¹⁴ This reinforces the fact that women actively seek work opportunities with organisations where they can work flexibly.

“During the pandemic, for many, flexible working became part of how work was delivered. Employers quickly adapted flexible working policies, introduced rotas and diversified service delivery, demonstrating that it is possible to respond to change. It might not have been easy, but it was possible for most organisations.”

Kelly Higson - speaking at Mending the Gap’s Working Carer event 2021

¹³ Timewise, ‘Flexible Working: A Talent Imperative – Research Report’ (*Timewise*, September 2017)

¹⁴ The Behavioural Insights Team, ‘Switching the default to advertise part-time working boosts applications from women by 16%’ (*The Behavioural Insights Team*, November 2020); Government Equalities Office, ‘Changing the default: a field trial with Zurich Insurance to advertise all jobs as part time - Research report’ (Government Equalities Office, November 2020).

The result of “stay at home” restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic has altered the remit of flexible working, demonstrating the success of being able to work from home and working flexible hours. The In-Work Progress Commission does not see any reason as to why a blended approach (working in the office and at home) does not become standard practice in relation to jobs that are desk-based.

There is work to be done to ensure that employers extend this principle to all roles, not just those which are desk-based.



Throughout the BEIS consultation paper there is the implication that flexibility is advantageous to carers, that Carer’s Leave would offer carers flexibility to remain in employment whilst providing care. Flexible working would alleviate employees’ financial situations in the long-term and positively impact employee “work life balance” and subsequently “their health and well-being”.

Carers – Exploring Demographics

“There are intersectional challenges within the unpaid care sector. Caring is highly gendered, but also other communities, such as Black communities, struggle to access care in the first place, which can then put a greater burden on informal caring. It is important we really understand what the barriers to being cared for are, and the barriers and challenges faced by those people who are doing the caring.”

Jane Portas - speaking at Mending the Gap’s Working Carer event 2021

It is important that we understand the contexts and experiences of carers in the different demographics with a focus on employment. Carers UK have put together an exemplary compilation of statistics relating to the different demographics.¹⁵

Older carers

Most carers are aged between 50 to 64 years old. One in five people in this age bracket are carers, equating to over two million people.

However, carers are becoming older. Carers UK states that the fastest increase in the number of carers is of those aged 65 and over; the research summary from Carers Week 2019 stated that “the number of people aged 65 years or over who are caring has grown from 1.4 million to 2 million”, a “43% increase from 2011 to 2019”.¹⁶



With part-time working and self-employment being most prevalent for those aged 50+ this may be indicative of the possible flexibility required for care commitments. This is acknowledged by the Mid-Life MOT that was developed by the DWP. The Mid-Life MOT provides online support for people in their 40s to 60s to encourage planning for later life including actively planning the future of their career.¹⁷

The Mid-Life MOT website provokes people to question “whether caring responsibilities or other priorities” will establish a need for flexible working and states that as situations change when getting older, employers creating flexible working arrangements could make a difference by helping individuals stay in employment. This illustrates that older carers need flexibility within their work to deliver caring needs and that full-time employment cannot encompass such flexibility.

The Survey of Working Carers 2019, found that people aged 45+ were more likely to have stopped working to provide care, reinforcing the idea that “people are most likely to have a caring responsibility upwards of 45+ to around 64 years of age”.¹⁸ This is problematic as this is when individuals are in their prime of their careers, “at their most skilled” but also,

¹⁵ Carers UK, ‘Policy briefing August 2019 - Facts about carers’ (n 14).

¹⁶ Carers UK, ‘Policy briefing August 2019 - Facts about carers’ (n 14) 4; Carers Week, ‘Getting Carers Connected – Research Summary Carers Week 2019’ (*Carers Week*, June 2019).

¹⁷ Department for Work and Pensions ‘Supporting progression out of low pay: a call to action’ (n 44) 33 (original footnotes omitted); Your Pension, ‘The midlife MOT: take control of your future now’ (*Your Pension*, 2021)

¹⁸ Carers UK, ‘Juggling Work and Unpaid Care’ (n 104) 9.

unfortunately, at the most risk of leaving the labour market early with consequences for their future pension contributions.

Young Carers

According to Carers Trust, in the UK, there are approximately 376,000 young adult carers. These are young people aged 16-25 who are providing unpaid care. Carers Trust say that 29% of young adult carers have discontinued their university/college education due to their caring role, “four times greater than the national average for degree courses”, suggesting that caring responsibilities are hard to balance with the personal investment needed for education.



Action for Carers Surrey understands that young adult carers will find it difficult to commit to full-time work whilst caring. They have provided information for young adult carers to, among other things, “master the juggling act” between work and caring.¹⁹ They provide information about options including part-time work, temporary employment, shift work and zero-hour contracts.

Gender

The CIPD ‘Supporting working carers’ report found that women made up 56% of working carers and men made up 44%.²⁰ The report stated that “women comprise a larger proportion of working carers than men in every age group, although the gender composition of working carers is more equal in the 35-54 age band”. The Family Resources Survey 2017/2018 illustrates that whilst women were the main gender to provide unpaid care, they were also the gender that was less likely to be working full time, instead being more likely to undertake part-time employment or be economically inactive.

Carers UK uses the 2011 ONS Census which indicates 58% of carers are female and they state that “women are more likely to be sandwich carers” meaning they undertake “eldercare” and childcare. They are also increasingly likely to discontinue work in order to provide care.²¹ Carers UK states that women are “more likely to face the pressure of simultaneously shouldering

¹⁹ Action for Carers Surrey, ‘What you need to know’ (Action for Carers Surrey, 2021)

<<https://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/who-we-help/young-adult-carers-18-24/what-you-need-to-know/>> Accessed September 2021.

²⁰ CIPD, ‘Supporting working carers – Report’ (n 69) 11.

²¹ Carers UK, ‘Policy briefing August 2019 - Facts about carers’ (n 14) 5 (original footnotes omitted).

responsibility for young and old” and these responsibilities (of raising a family and looking after ageing parents who need support) are thrust upon them “at the age of when many women are at the peak of their careers” (age 40-44).²²

The percentage of workers who responded “that it was difficult to combine work and care” was larger in the public sector than in either the voluntary or private sector. 47% of men and 56% of women in the public sector experienced difficulties and this difference remained when confined to employees that held managerial responsibilities. It is not suggested that the gender differences are because of the total amount of care provided (the mean number of hours provided per week was 26 for men and 27 for women) or the number of individuals being cared for (81% of men and 78% of women cared for one person). A possible explanation given by the report is that “women were spending more time than men fulfilling childcare duties in addition to providing care to others”.

The research implies that the difficulty of balancing working with caring responsibilities, as well as providing an additional childcare role, are interlinked and they may produce an added pressure on sustaining employment.

Race and Ethnicity



A Race Equality Foundation Briefing Paper titled ‘Supporting Black and minority ethnic carers’ stated that according to the 2011 ONS Census “there were just under 600,000 Black and ethnic minority carers in England and Wales” with carers in this demographic rising.²³ The briefing paper also stated that most of these ethnically diverse carers are of working age, and simultaneously manage paid employment and unpaid care.

The NHS Survey of Carers in Households 2009/10 found that carers from ethnically diverse backgrounds are more likely than their white counterparts to provide care for at least 20 hours per week (56% compared to 47%).²⁴ However, it was also found that white respondents were more likely than those from Black and minority ethnic groups to provide care for someone (12% compared with 10%).

²² Carers UK, ‘Policy briefing August 2019 - Facts about carers’ (n 14) 9 (original footnotes omitted).

²³ Race Equality Foundation, ‘A Race Equality Briefing Paper - Supporting black and minority ethnic carers’ (*Race Equality Foundation*, August 2018) 3.

²⁴ NHS, ‘Survey of Carers in Households 2009/10’ (NHS, 2010) 41.



We're acutely aware that those who provide greater hours of care are more likely to be those from ethnically diverse backgrounds and this, along with poorer access to support, may increase the risk of social exclusion and poorer health outcomes.

Cultural differences, being a carer and accessing services

In 2014, Ahmed and Rees Jones explained in their research into the experiences of Bangladeshi women living in London providing care, that those who are ethnically diverse and providing care are less “likely to self-identify as carers than white carers”.²⁵ In their qualitative study, Bangladeshi women saw caring simply as a duty linked with their faith and religion. This may be linked to the idea that within ethnically diverse groups, “caring may not be regarded as distinct from other familial relationships”. We also know that in some languages that originate from the Indian subcontinent (e.g. Punjabi, Gujarati and Urdu) there are no words that translate as “carer”, implying an unquestioned duty to provide care within these communities.²⁶

This unquestioned duty to care identified in the report may also provide a reason as to why ethnically diverse carers are less likely to access care services; ethnically diverse carers may not “want to acknowledge needing outside help”.²⁷ Other potential reasons preventing ethnically diverse carers from accessing services include:

- Misconceptions amongst service providers about the availability of support from extended families.
- Language barriers.
- Difference in cultural expectations and stereotypes.

Another explanation for “the delayed and low uptake of services” includes unwillingness to admit to caring for someone with stigmatised conditions such as mental illness, dementia or HIV.

²⁵ Nilufar Ahmed and Ian Rees Jones, “‘Habitus and Bureaucratic Routines’”, Cultural and Structural Factors in the Experience of Informal Care: A Qualitative Study of Bangladeshi Women Living in London’ [2008] Current Sociology 57.

²⁶ Race Equality Foundation, ‘A Race Equality Briefing Paper - Supporting black and minority ethnic carers’ (n 88) 5 (original footnotes omitted); Ahmed and Rees Jones (n 96).

²⁷ Race Equality Foundation, ‘A Race Equality Briefing Paper - Supporting black and minority ethnic carers’ (n 88) 5 (original footnotes omitted).

Working carers and well-being

The Carers UK 2019 report ‘Juggling work and unpaid care’ stated that the number of people “giving up work to care has increased to 2.6 million”, (an increase of nearly twelve percent) and that “2 million carers have reduced their working hours”.²⁸ Additionally, during the pandemic, with pressures on NHS and social care services, we saw carers taking on more caring responsibilities, and reducing their hours in work.



We know that this leads to increased financial pressures, as we heard in Paul’s story earlier in the report. A reduction in paid work, an increase in travel to and from appointments or the cared for person’s home, and less time to manage their own personal finances, has led to additional stress and poorer health, well-being and economic outcomes for working carers.

“When you take unpaid leave, it’s not just the loss of earnings, it’s the travel costs, for example, to the hospital. When my wife was working full-time, we would be looking at a minus of £180 a time, because you’re travelling at peak time for train fares and that’s a hell of a lot of money to lose.”

Chris Jeffery



Encouragingly, though, we’re seeing employers step up and improve the support on offer to working carers, through their Employee Assistance Programmes and through Employee Resource Groups/Employee Networks, where peer to peer support and having a safe space to talk is regarded as important. We still have a gap to close though on paid carer leave, and there is more to be done to respond to the impact of caring on well-being.

²⁸ Carers UK, ‘Juggling Work and Unpaid Care’ (*Carers UK*, 2019) 5,10 (original footnotes omitted).

³¹ Carers UK, ‘State of Caring Report 2019’ (*Carers UK*, 2019) 22.

“What we're finding is that in the workplace, carers report lower levels of well-being. They report greater levels of work/life conflict, and lower levels of job satisfaction.”

Kim - speaking at Mending the Gap's Working Carer event 2021



Carers UK, in their 2019 'State of Caring' report, stated that eighty-one percent of all carers reported feeling lonely or isolated as a result of their caring role.³¹ A working environment provides interaction with colleagues and a different setting from caring. However, the benefits of working are counteracted if balancing work and life is a hardship due to lack of support given by an employer.

There is also a financial implication for working carers.

Carers UK cites the 'National Opinion Polling for Carers UK's Caring & Family Finances Inquiry 2014' when stating that “70% of carers were over £10,000 worse off as a result of reduced earnings” and that “carers reported very significant drops in income as a result of reduced working hours- 1 in 3 (30%) had seen a drop of £20,000 a year in their household income as a result of taking on caring responsibilities”.²⁹

The CIPD report stated that the most common method of managing work and care commitments was for working carers to utilise personal time to provide care, for example by using “annual leave to provide care” or working evenings or weekends to “make up for the hours spent caring”.³³ The report acknowledges that “this may contribute to the ‘burnout’ that many working carers experience”.

Chris Jeffery illustrated the strain on working carers trying to balance work and care commitments, recounting his wife's personal experience: “She'd been up for 42 hours at a time.

²⁹ Carers UK, 'Policy briefing August 2019 - Facts about carers' (n 14) 14 (original footnotes omitted).

³³ CIPD, 'Supporting working carers – Report' (n 69) 16.

It doesn't do the carer's health any good either, especially since she's type 2 diabetic, which makes it even harder. It all impacts on their health and on mine”.

Employers making a difference

We know employers want to do more. Those who responded to our invitation to join our Working Carers Best Practice Roundtable shared a genuine desire to support working carers. Concerningly though, respondents of the Survey of Working Carers 2019 most frequently stated that “their employer provided no measures to support them in their role as carers”. The most common form of support was allowing the use of a telephone for private phone calls. The report stated that “unpaid carer's leave was available to around one in five, but fewer than one in ten had access to paid carer's leave”.



We've been exploring some of the most useful elements of a working carer support package. Flexible working and a paid care leave policy, that is explicitly inclusive, are the most important elements valued by employees. However, these features alone are not enough. Peer to peer support, through carer networks, and simplifying conversations and processes through the introduction of carer passports are wrap-around services that can make a difference.

“We also have to remember that for some, work is a place of respite from caring responsibilities. A well thought through working carer support package, that has been co-designed with working carers and business leaders, will make significant difference. With a little bit of creativity, diversity of thought and exploration of the art of the possible, it's not hard to make it easier for working carers.”

Kelly Higson - speaking at Mending the Gap's Working Carer event 2021

The impact on employers

Central to the debate around Carer's Leave is the cost to business. When a carer leaves their employment substantial costs are incurred "in terms of recruitment and lost productivity" because of the significant amounts of time, money and expertise spent on "training and developing these employees".³⁰



Carers leave a deficit of skill and expertise when they leave the labour market and people in the prime of their careers (there is a concentrate of carers in the 45-64 age range) are leaving work due to caring commitments. Losing these individuals means losses of value-creation for employers as well as the management and development of other employees. The Corporate Leadership Council estimates that the cumulative costs to an employer for an employee leaving work are equal to an employee's last salary, while the Hay Group suggests it could cost anywhere from 50-150% of their salary.

There is also the risk of workers operating "at a lower skill level to get the flexibility or locally based employment that enables them to care", which could mean that productivity cannot reach full potential. In addition, absenteeism, due to caring commitments or sickness, places a heavy burden on public and private sector organisations; the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) estimates the direct costs of absence at £14 billion in 2013.

The strain of balancing working and caring duties not only negatively affects employees but also employers. Employers for Carers says, "the impact of staff turnover, absence and stress as a result of juggling work and caring unsupported could be costing UK businesses over £3.5 billion every year".³¹

³⁰ HM Government, Employers for Carers, Carers UK, 'Supporting Working Carers: The Benefits to Families, Business and the Economy' (*HM Government*, 2013) 10.

³¹ Employers for Carers, 'The Business Case for Supporting Working Carers' (*Employers for Carers*) <https://www.employersforcarers.org/files/Business_Case_new.pdf> Accessed September 2021 3 (original footnotes omitted).

The financial impact on employers

There is also the issue of who should pay for carer's leave. The real question is, can the government afford not to introduce a paid carer's leave for employees? Especially, when the current climate includes a wounded economy and a NHS and social care system which are experiencing extreme pressure and would experience more so if less people undertook caring duties.

“Who pays? Is it the government? Is it the employer? Is it a combination of the two? And, also what happens in smaller firms? Is it the case that we differentiate between small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and large firms from the point of view of these sorts of issues, given the fact that larger firms may have greater capacity to pay? SMEs may not.”

Kim - speaking at Mending the Gap's Working Carer event 2021

Jayne Davies from the Derbyshire Carers Association suggests that an employment practice for paid carer's leave may mean that employers gain financial support from the government to facilitate this leave, or the government provides incentives for organisations, including SMEs, to initiate a paid carer's leave policy.



Carers UK, in their response to the BEIS consultation on Carer's Leave, stated that the impact of staff leaving is arguably greater for smaller businesses, who must deal “with the loss of knowledge and skills, the time out to train someone new and recruitment costs”.³² It, therefore, “makes business sense to put in place a supportive and flexible culture”. Furthermore, Carers UK states “for smaller firms who often know their employees and the challenges they are facing, this might be something they are already offering even if they may not be describing it as carer's leave”.

“So, it's not just about putting in burdens for business. It's about the benefits, and it's also looking at the package of policies that need to be implemented within organisations around having good equality practice in place, getting a good work family culture in place and flexible working arrangements. All of those are a bigger part of the picture in terms of what employers need to be doing to actually make things better.”

Kim - speaking at Mending the Gap's Working Carer event 2021

³² Carers UK, ‘Consultation response August 2020 - Carers UK's response to the BEIS Carer's Leave consultation’ (n 30) 8

“Paid carer's leave should be part of a package to support working carers. It's also about identification, removing the negative bias associated with being a carer, carers passports and proactive support for carers.... And having a paid backup when a crisis occurs. We should be trying to prevent a crisis.”

Jodie - speaking at Mending the Gap's Working Carer event 2021

The impact of COVID-19

The pandemic produced “one of the largest ever shocks to the UK economy and public finances”.³³ In May 2021, the UK economy “was approximately a quarter smaller than in February 2020 and the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) assesses that the country is on track to record the largest annual fall in GDP in 300 years”.

An additional 2.8 million workers took on caring responsibilities within “a matter of weeks” of the COVID-19 outbreak.³⁴ In 2020, vast amounts of people, mostly “in their 40s and 50s and in employment” began providing unpaid care for family members and friends who were vulnerable to COVID-19. Employers for Carers and Carers UK found that, since the start of the pandemic, many employers stated that one in five of their staff were carers instead of the figure of one in seven pre-pandemic. Employers for Carers and Carers UK also heard from carers that 9% had given up work and 11% “have reduced their hours to juggle work and care”.

“In thinking about recovery, very often, paid leave is thought of something that older carers would primarily need, which indeed they do. But some work I'm doing with the South East England Forum on Ageing and the University of Brighton is looking at intergenerational differences. We're also finding a lot of young adult carers who have become carers during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also need paid carer's leave to continue to further develop their skills and support the businesses or organisations within which they're working.”

Dame Philippa Russell - speaking at Mending the Gap's Working Carer event 2021

³³ GOV.UK, ‘The next chapter in our plan to rebuild: The UK Government’s COVID-19 recovery strategy’ (GOV.UK, 24 July 2020)

<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy/the-next-chapter-in-our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy--2#fnref:5>> Accessed September 2021.

³⁴ Carers UK and Employers for Carers, ‘Supporting working carers in COVID-19: response and reflections – Employer survey report’ (Carers UK and Employers for Carers, 2020) 4 (original footnotes submitted).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Employers for Carers member organisations installed provisions to create a carer-friendly workplace. These included:

- Extending health and well-being provision for carers, including linking up to specialist sources of support (e.g. Carers UK) or promoting existing resources more proactively.
- Increasing flexible working arrangements for carers including informal adjustments around work times, days patterns, and location (75% of member organisations stated that they had offered flexible working arrangements for carers).
- Creating/enhancing virtual carers networks to enable employees to connect and engage, e.g. via social media, virtual drop ins, tea and talk sessions and webinars (44% of organisations stated they had a carers network or support group).
- Offering enhanced leave arrangements to carers, including new or additional paid carers leave (or paid special/family leave) emergency leave and longer periods of unpaid leave.³⁵

Their survey in 2020, found that 40% of their member organisations offered employees who were caring paid leave, 33% offered unpaid leave, and 20% enabled their carers to be furloughed. Almost 60% of respondents stated there were no “particular challenges” which prevented them from supporting their employees “as they would have wished”. This subsequently illustrates that enhanced support, including paid leave for carers, as well as arrangements for flexible working, is not a hardship for businesses. Such “enhancements of support” occurred in a pandemic, a time of societal and economic upheaval. If paid Carer’s leave can be embedded into workplace practices at such a disruptive time, they can be embedded in a post-COVID environment.

The 2020 Employers for Carers survey found that almost 60% of respondents stated there were no particular challenges which prevented them from supporting their employees.³⁶ On the issue that some people only need a few hours to care, a possible solution is that companies offer paid carer’s leave in terms of hours rather than days, in conjunction with flexible working opportunities.

³⁵ Carers UK and Employers for Carers, ‘Supporting working carers in COVID-19: response and reflections – Employer survey report’ (n 161) 6, 8.

³⁶ Carers UK and Employers for Carers, ‘Supporting working carers in COVID-19: response and reflections – Employer survey report’ (n 161) 7.

The need for legislation

There is a strong need for statutory paid carer's leave to be introduced. At the Working Carer event, Dawid Konotey-Ahulu, Co-founder at Redington, stated that there are some organisations "who are waiting for the government to legislate". Legislation could initiate change in the unpaid care sector and alleviate the lack of clarity that already exists in relation to unpaid carers and their rights.

"There's also the issue that a lot of employers still don't view this as something which could be potentially beneficial for them, for example, from the point of view of staff retention. Whereas they do get it in relation to policies like parental leave. My view is that when you change the law companies get it, because very often legal change, regulatory change itself, can drive attitudes. Then companies actually start to change their behaviour. So, we shouldn't expect employer attitudes to be 100% there before we make any legislative change.

Kim - speaking at Mending the Gap's Working Carer event 2021

Having clear, inclusive policies takes the burden off decision makers and legislation would provide consistency. In their unpaid care leave policy, the NatWest Group allows line managers to postpone valid leave requests to meet business needs. Guidance is provided on the reasons that may be used to postpone leave, but this arguably, is still subjective and open to the manager's discretion which may produce inconsistencies in policy application throughout the company.³⁷



We believe that when you leave the decision around granting leave to the discretion of line managers you open up inconsistencies in both the application of the policy and the experience of the working carer. When you remove that inconsistency by applying paid carer's leave or having explicit wording around carers in flexible working policies, you take away inconsistency and provide certainty. This is something that is valued by working carers as they can better plan how they balance their work and caring responsibilities.

³⁷ NatWest Group, 'Carers Leave Policy' (NatWest Group, July 2020) < <https://www.rbspeople.com/policyinformation/docs/carers-leave-policy-gbr-nir-uko.pdf> > Accessed September 2021 2-3.

Research undertaken in this report may help to uncover the best practices of companies, but it is clear that support for paid carer's leave must be shown by both the government and those who hold positions of power in organisations.

“The S in social is fast becoming a huge part of the conversation. For corporations, it's really the notion that we need to create organisations that are fit for purpose, that provide workplaces that people want to work in, and can work in, effectively. Organisations that look less to shareholders and, for balance, look more to the employee. It's around inclusion, and it's around diversity. That's the huge conversation.”

Dawid Konotey-Ahulu - speaking at Mending the Gap's Working Carer event 2021

Recommendations and thought perspective



We believe that employers and the government can and should do more to support working carers, through a package of inclusive policies and practices that ensure a consistent approach, parity and fairness in the workplace.

Our specific recommendations are that employers should:

1. Appoint a senior leader or executive with specific accountability for the well-being and support of working carers.
2. Introduce paid working carer's leave of at least 5 working days for all employees.
3. Introduce explicit wording in all emergency leave or dependant leave policies that includes working carers.
4. Expand any definition of working carers that is currently used to include the broadest definition, including relationships that extend beyond family relations.
5. Allow self-identification of working carer status.
6. Ensure that HR management systems have the ability to record working carer status and to use aggregated data to inform policy decisions.
7. Consider flexible working as an enabler to employee well-being.
8. Set up a working carer network or employee resource group, providing a safe space for discussion and peer support, and provide explicit permission for employees to attend meetings in work time.
9. Introduce a carers passport scheme.
10. Engage carer support organisations to enable the delivery of best practice initiatives.

We know that there are some employers who are already excelling at providing working carers with the best workplace experience and we positively applaud and celebrate their approach and work.

We encourage employers to renew their commitments to supporting working carers in balancing their work and caring responsibilities. Those employers who take a brilliantly bold approach will reap the benefits of an engaged workforce who are equipped to respond to the challenges and uncertainties that being a working carer brings. Those employers who demonstrate a considered curiosity to the well-being of their working carers, will be better placed to support their employees in a way which reflects their individual needs and that of the business.

Thank you

This report would not have been possible without the input and support of the following people, to whom we extend our thanks and gratitude:

Chris Jeffery, Founder of Mending the Gap, for his tireless campaigning for paid care leave.
Charanjit Simran Kaur, Diversity Consultant, for her research and content capture.
Dawid Konotey-Ahulu, Co-founder at Redington, for his continued support.
Jayne Davies, Derbyshire Carers Association, for sharing her professional view.

and those who generously gave their time and thought perspective at Mending the Gap's Working Carer event, in the summer of 2021.

