

# Carers and Work

You may be working when you start being a carer. Many carers wish to continue working, perhaps for financial reasons but also because it provides a break from caring.

Some carers shoulder the responsibility for juggling work and caring in isolation. They are anxious that their role as carers will be seen as a difficulty or something undesirable by their employer / manager. They fear that, at some point, this will be held against them and harm their future career prospects. However 90% of working carers are aged 30+ and they are at the peak of their careers with a valuable amount of experience and knowledge. They are vital to the success of any organisation.

Caring for someone can often mean unexpected demands, and care arrangements can be complex. So it is a good idea to talk to your employer about your concerns and commitments. Employers value committed, experienced and capable staff so it is in their interests to help you to continue to work and care.

Often little things can make a difference such as

- permission to 'phone home to check that the person for whom you care is all right,
- a guaranteed parking place
- permission to go home at lunch time

Working carers have the legal right under The Work and Families Act to request

- part time working
- job sharing
- working during term time only
- working school hours
- staggered hours
- compressed hours
- a change in shifts

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Or possibly another work pattern that suits them and their personal circumstances. As part of the Act, a strong business reason must be given by an employer if a carer's request is declined.

All employees have the right to take 'reasonable' time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. This time off does not have to be paid and a dependant could be a mother, father, son, daughter partner or, anyone who lives with the employee and is solely dependent on them. Part-time workers have the same rights as their full time counterparts.

Carers UK has some useful information about caring and work on their website <http://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career> including a factsheet which can be downloaded. They also have a free e-learning course, namely Learning4Living. The aim of the course is to help carers note the unique skills they have gained through their caring experience. These transferable skills can be of significant value in the workplace. The course includes a number of modules that cover everything from good communication to setting effective goals <https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/learning-for-living>

However working part-time or taking unpaid holidays could affect your redundancy or maternity rights. So it is a good idea to discuss the balance between work and caring with your manager, human resources (personnel office), union representative or local carers' organisation.

### Returning to work

If you would like to combine your caring role with paid employment, Jobcentre Plus offers a range of training and financial help for you if you want to start, or restart, work at some point. They have advisers trained to understand carers' needs and they can talk to you about what is available. For more information, go to [www.gov.uk/moving-from-benefits-to-work/help-for-parents-and-carers](http://www.gov.uk/moving-from-benefits-to-work/help-for-parents-and-carers) or contact your local jobcentre to make an appointment to see an adviser. It won't affect your benefits and there's no obligation to do anything else.