

Gaddum ... Carers

Hi, I'm Gaddum.

Let's talk about balancing work and care...

Many people who provide care for family members do not categorise themselves as carers. This is often because they don't consider themselves to be "caring full-time". Caring responsibilities can suddenly increase because a person's needs change. It's really common to feel responsible for looking after family members or friends at these times to ensure they are ok. Often, we're balancing that care with jobs and are "working carers".

There are around 3 million working carers in the UK. You are entitled to your statutory rights under the law, and contractual rights within your employment. Statutory rights means you have a right to request flexible working after you have worked for the same employer for 26 weeks (six months). This could be home work / part-time / term-time / flexi-time.

Legislation

- The Care Act 2014 puts a duty on local authorities to have guidelines on specific ways to provide unpaid carers support. This is most often in the form of information, advice and guidance (including carers assessments). [Click here](#) to read more.
- The Equality Act 2010 also protects people with caring responsibilities. A carer is protected by this Act by their association of the person they care for. It is illegal to be discriminated against because of your caring role. This includes housing, retail, services or goods. You also have the right to request flexible working under the Work and Families Act 2006 if you care for a partner, relative or adult living at the same address. Your employer must take this into consideration (but they are under no obligation to accept it).
- You may also be aware of the Mental Capacity Act 2005, which would be in relation to support you provide someone to manage their finances or wellbeing (if they cannot make decisions themselves). This Act has guidelines of what should happen if someone is unable to make a decision themselves. In some instances, you can apply for a lasting power of attorney before that person is unable to make decisions; this is sometimes called "advanced care planning."

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All employees have the right to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off work to deal with an emergency that involves a person who is dependant on them.

Most people inform friends and family, some decide to tell their employer, neighbours or anyone else who may support them. You should decide who you would like to be informed but talking about the subject could open a range of support for you when you need it.

You are under no obligation to tell your employer or anyone else that you are a carer but if caring is affecting your daily life, explaining how this impacts on you may give you access to further support and help at work. Some companies have specific carer policies that may not be easy to find, so discussing this with your manager may lead to more information and support for you regarding your caring role. As we have already discussed, disclosing to your employer can sometimes mean you are then protected in law.

ACAS - Provides information, advice, training, conciliation and other services for employers and employees which can prevent or resolve workplace problems. Their number is 0300 123 1100 and you can find them at www.acas.org.uk.

Carers assessments: You can contact your Local Authority's Adult Social Care department to arrange an assessment. This assessment will help you explore your caring role in more detail and offer you relevant advice and guidance which could help you feel more in control and improve things. You may also be entitled to a personal budget so you can have a break from caring or get some help. For our area, call 0161 631 4777.

For those supporting carers: If you would like to arrange a care needs assessment for a family member that you care for, you can refer them to Adult Social Care using the online form. [Click here](#) to access this, or telephone 0161 631 4777.

Working Families: Working Families is the UK's work-life balance charity. They provide support to remove the barriers that people with caring responsibilities face in the workplace. They provide free legal advice to parents and carers on their rights at work and provide employers with the tools they need to support their employees. [Click here](#) for more information.

Carers UK: Carers UK provides information and advice about caring. Their helpline (0808 808 7777) is open 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday. They also have a range of factsheets, a live forum and information on their website, [click here](#) to access them.