

# Working Carers Guide

A guide for carers balancing paid work and caring responsibilities

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However caring affects you, we are here for you. By joining Carers Wales, you can be part of a supportive community and a movement for change.

It's free to join us. Visit: [www.carersuk.org/join](http://www.carersuk.org/join) or call 029 2081 1370

# About this guide

One in seven people who work in Wales also provide unpaid care for family or friends. Working carers are the group most likely to miss out on information and advice and are the least likely to have any formal support at home. Without support, working carers can struggle inside and outside the workplace.

However, with the appropriate support in place, working carers can function effectively in both capacities and are a vital element in the Welsh economic landscape.

This guide is designed to help working carers identify themselves as carers and raise awareness of their legal rights for support in the community

and the workplace. If you are an employer, this guide can help you to understand ways to offer support for working carers.

Carers Wales would like to thank the many working carers who provided their words and guidance for this guide. Their anonymous quotes are seen throughout.



# Am I a working carer?

A carer is anyone who provides care and support for another person or persons. A working carer is someone who does this while doing paid work.

You may be caring for someone who has an illness, disability, is older, has difficulties with addiction or has mental health concerns. This person is typically a close family member like a parent, partner or child but can also be a friend, neighbour, or more distant relative.

This person doesn't have to live with you, and you may share your caring responsibilities with other family members or friends.

Providing care means different things to different people. It could be giving and/or organising medication and attending medical appointments, managing the person's finances, providing practical support and/or emotional support or generally caring for a person's wellbeing. This may be something that you do a few hours per week, or it may take up all your free time outside your paid work.

You may not immediately recognise that you are a carer. Many carers provide help and support to loved ones and feel that caring is 'just something I do', rather than formally label themselves as a carer. It can take on average two years to self-identify as a carer. But, if you provide

care as described above, you are a carer, and being able to identify yourself as such can help you to get access to the help and support you need.

A working carer is anyone who provides unpaid care while being in employment. Your employment status doesn't matter. You may work full-time or part-time. You could work behind a desk, in a shop or on a building site. You may work for a multinational organisation or for yourself.

**As long as you are being paid for something that is not directly connected to caring for the person you care for, you are a working carer.**



# Challenges of being a working carer

## Juggling work and care

Having to choose between the needs of an employer and the needs of the person who requires care can lead to you feeling pressured, overwhelmed, confused, frustrated or even guilty.

The challenge of juggling these two opposing demands means you may need need to be particularly organised. This often works well until an event occurs that unbalances this carefully curated system that creates a ripple effect on both sides.

“I know that I have colleagues that have a caring role away from work but I’m not sure they would class themselves as carers. I didn’t really class myself as a carer until the last year – it’s just something that I do.”

The best way to relieve this pressure is good communication with your employer, the person you care for and anyone you share your caring role with. Working carers often take the responsibility on their shoulders but sharing concerns can often support you through difficult times.



## Loneliness and Isolation

Many working carers can feel lonely or isolated. You may feel reluctant to discuss your caring role due to concerns about assumptions others may make about you or how it could impact future work prospects. You may feel uncomfortable talking about the pressures of caring with your colleagues.

“In my team of 20 colleagues, they’re all a lot younger than me and don’t have children. They have no idea and don’t really understand; I’m just the woman with a disabled son and they lump me with ‘parent’.”

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However, research shows that being a working carer is far more common than most people think. Before the pandemic, 1 in 7 people surveyed had a caring role alongside work commitments. This figure rose to 1 in 4 during the pandemic. The number of working carers in Wales could now be between 223,000 and 468,000 people.

**This means that not only are you not alone, but someone you are working with may also be a working carer or have had experience of being a working carer.**

### Hint/Tip

Talk to your manager about creating a ‘carer get together’ once a month for you and other carers to spend time together. Peer-to-peer support is often the best place to gain vital information and support. This can even be done remotely via video chat.

## Appointments and emergencies

Providing unpaid care often means it is necessary to have time off to attend medical appointments, meetings with service providers or emergency leave to support the person requiring care.

This can create difficult situations for working carers. Many carers have used up all their contractual leave to cover for these absences, while others feel that they need to work longer hours to compensate.

However, as a carer, you have rights to leave. You have statutory rights for unpaid leave for caring responsibilities, and many companies now offer contractual paid leave for carers.

### Hint/Tip

Ask your HR department if your company has a Carer’s Policy or Family Friendly Policy. You do not need to tell them why you are asking about it.

## Self-care

It is difficult to find time for yourself when effectively working two jobs as an employee and a carer. Resulting stress and pressure can often lead to working carers choosing to alter their employment. Our research shows that up to 6% of working carers across Wales leave employment, and 16% reduce their working hours.

If you are facing this situation there are different options you could discuss with your employer, such as changing your working arrangements to give you more opportunities to have time for yourself.

See the section 'Talking about your caring role' for more information on page 23.

## Hint/Tip

Sometimes the only time for yourself is travelling between work and your caring role. Consider finding a favourite podcast or song and play that for yourself in these moments. You can also find information and advice on short ways to practice mindfulness and stress management on the Carers Wales online wellbeing hub. Visit the hub:

<https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing/>



# Your rights at work

Many of the support mechanisms carers have are informal. You may get support from friends and family, charities or community groups. However, you also have legal rights as a working carer, and you may have rights as part of your contract of employment.

These are:

- statutory rights under the Social Services & Well-Being (Wales) Act
- statutory rights under the Equality Act
- statutory rights under Employment Law
- contractual rights as part of your contract of employment.

Knowing your rights is the first step to gaining support. This will help give you the knowledge you need to confidently approach statutory bodies and employers to request support.



Employee  
Rights



## Carers' statutory rights

As a carer, you have legal (statutory) rights in Wales through the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014. This law enshrines rights that every carer, whether in employment or not, has to:

- be given appropriate information and advice
- have an assessment of your needs as a carer (called a **Carer's Needs Assessment**)
- choose whether to continue caring and what parts of caring you want to do
- have a life outside of caring
- work alongside caring.

These rights must be acted on by your local council. They will have information about being a carer in your local area on their website and this will also provide contact details for you to get further advice or, if you choose to, organise a carer's needs assessment.

"It helps to know that Mum's carers attend her twice a day whilst I'm at work and can let me know straight away if anything is wrong."

The person that you care for also has rights under the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act. This includes the right to access information and advice and to receive the support they are assessed as needing. Often, the person who requires care and the

carer are assessed for their support needs at the same time, however, it is your choice if this happens together or separately.

### Hint/Tip

Talking about your caring role with a professional can be emotional and tiring. Ask your line manager whether you can take the day off when you have a carer's needs assessment.

Carers also have some rights connected to the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act protects against being treated unfairly due to a protected characteristic like a disability, faith or ethnicity. For carers, the Equality Act applies when they are disadvantaged due to their need to support someone with a protected characteristic.

You can find out more about your rights (and the connected rights of the person you care for) in our **Looking after Someone guide**. This guide explains more



about your rights and other support options that may be available to you as a carer. We also have a specific **guide about getting assessments in Wales**, including carer's needs assessments. For more information and advice, please visit:

<https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/get-in-touch-with-us/>

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **Q: How does my job impact a carer's needs assessment?**

The legal right to work, and to be able to support yourself, the person you care for and any other dependants that you may have, is an integral part of the law. If your caring role is, or is likely to become, too difficult to continue without support then an offer for support must be made. This could be in the form of care workers taking on key tasks, technology to allow you to monitor the person you care for remotely, or a variety of other ideas you may have. The professionals carrying out your assessment must be open to your suggestions.

## **Q: Can you get a carer's needs assessment outside traditional working hours?**

Some local councils can offer carer's needs assessments outside traditional working hours, some do not. Discuss your working hours with the council to see if you can find an appropriate time to have the assessment.

## **Q: Does support cost more for a working carer?**

You have the right to have a free carer's needs assessment whatever your income is. However, if it is assessed that you need support, your financial situation is taken into consideration when this is being put into place. This means you may be required to pay a certain amount towards the additional support. The maximum that can be charged for services provided to you or to the person that you care for is currently set at £100 per week (2021/22). For more information about paying for care, please see our guide, [Getting an](#)

### **Assessment in Wales:**

<https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/practical-support/carer-s-needs-assessment/>

## **Q: Does my employer have to give me time off to attend a carer's needs assessment?**

No, there is no legal duty that requires an employer to give a carer time off to attend a carer's needs assessment. However, do speak to your employer. If you have paid carers leave in your contract, this can be applied to the assessment. Your employer may also be willing to give you an additional leave of absence to cover the assessment.

# Statutory rights in the workplace

By knowing your rights, you can take simple but effective action to enable you to balance your work and care more healthily and productively.

These rights are legally mandated in UK employment law. The following rights apply whatever your employment status is and whoever your employer is.

## Right to emergency leave

All employees have a right to take 'reasonable time off' to deal with emergencies and unforeseen matters involving a dependant. A dependant includes a spouse, partner, child, parent, or someone living with you. Others who rely on you for help in an emergency may also qualify.

Whether you will be paid or not is at the discretion of your employer. Some employers may have additional supportive practices in place, or you may have additional benefits in your contract. You must inform your employer as soon as possible after you are notified of the emergency.

This right also gives you protection from victimisation and dismissal. Take further advice if you think you have been treated unfavourably because of using this right. If you need further help, please visit the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Services (ACAS).

This independent public body provides free and impartial advice to employers, employees and their representatives on:

- employment rights
- best practice and policies
- resolving workplace conflict.

You can visit ACAS at: [www.acas.org.uk/](http://www.acas.org.uk/)

### Hint/Tip

By talking to your employer about your caring role, you can discuss what happens in an emergency and see if they will offer you additional support for emergency situations including paid leave. Companies with 'Carer Passports', (which can also be known by names such as 'reasonable adjustment passport' or 'workplace adjustment') or other carer-friendly policies, such as a carers policy or family-friendly policy can solidify this as part of that agreement. Please see the section 'contractual rights in the workplace', page 15 for more information.

## Right to emergency leave

If you have worked for your employer for over a year and are responsible for a child under 18, you are entitled to 18 weeks of unpaid parental leave to look after your child. You must give 21 days' notice before you can take parental leave.

## Right of protection from discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 protects you against direct discrimination or harassment because of your caring responsibilities. This is due to you being counted as being 'associated' with someone with a protected characteristic such as age or disability.

Direct discrimination is where you are treated less favourably than someone else because you are caring for an elderly or disabled person. This can include:

- being refused a job because of your care responsibilities
- not being offered a promotion because of your care responsibilities.

## The right to request flexible working

From April 2024, the law regarding flexible working has changed. When you join a new employer, you immediately have the right to request changes to your working pattern that may suit your personal situation. The law also allows you to make this request twice every calendar year. If you make two applications in a calendar year, you can choose to make a new application as soon as the following year begins.

Your employer must respond within two months of your application and provide evidence to show why they have made their decision to accept or reject your application. If your application is rejected, they must work with you to try to create a different solution for your need. For more information about flexible working, please see page 19.

### **Q: What is the difference between emergency leave and parental leave as a working parent carer?**

In general, the difference is that you use emergency leave when something unexpected happens and parental leave when there is a planned need for you to take a break from work. For many working carers, parental leave is used when their child needs a medical procedure and there is going to be disruption to their support and/or they will need additional support due to the recovery.

# The Carers Leave Act

The first carer specific employment law that gives you the right to 5 days unpaid leave to provide care.

From the 6th April 2024, unpaid carers across Great Britain, including Wales, will have new rights under the law. This right is for all unpaid carers to take up to one week of unpaid leave from their employer per year to provide unpaid care to someone.

“Taking unpaid leave isn't ideal but it started a conversation with my employer who has chosen to make this 5 days of paid care leave. Without the law, this conversation wouldn't have started”

## What new rights will this give me as a carer?

The Carer's Leave Act will:

- introduce a new and flexible entitlement to one week's unpaid leave per year for employees who are providing or arranging care for a relative or dependant
- be available from the first day of their employment
- allow employees to take the leave flexibly for planned and foreseen caring commitments
- offer the same employment protections to employees taking this leave that are associated with other forms of family-related leave, meaning they will be protected from dismissal or any detriment because of having taken time off.

## How will this new law work?

Carer's Leave will work like any other leave request you make to your employer. You will use your employer's leave request procedure and define that you would like this to be carer's leave.

Your employer will grant or postpone carer's leave like any other leave request but must consult and discuss with you if they want to postpone this request. Your employer must evidence that you taking carer's leave on the date requested would unduly affect their business.

By taking carer's leave, you are potentially forfeiting the money you may have earned by working that time for your employer. However, this is additional leave from holiday or sick leave and gives you the same employment protections as taking any other type of leave.

Anyone who takes carer's leave will have the full rights and entitlements of any other statutory or contractual leave so your employer can not discriminate against you in any way for taking it. If you have concerns you are being discriminated against due to taking carer's leave, you should immediately contact your Human Resources team or get in contact with a union or other representative.

"Knowing that I have the ability to make a hospital appointment without having to justify it will make a big difference.

I might even be able to take some of my holiday to actually have a break"

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### Is this going to be easy to access?

Carers Leave is a law so every employer must provide this for you as a carer. However, it is a new law and there are some uncertainties. For a bigger breakdown of the Act, visit our website at

<https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/work-and-career/carers-in-employment-hub/carers-leave-act/>

If your employer needs support signpost them to Employers for Carers. Find out more about EfC on [page 18](#)

### What about paid carers leave?

It is Carers Wales' ultimate goal for all unpaid carers to have two weeks paid carers leave as part of employment law.

The Carers Leave Act is the first step on this journey to achieve that goal.

However, this doesn't mean you are unable to claim paid carers leave now. Many employers are choosing to install paid carers leave as part of the implementation of the Carers Leave Act. Others already have it in their contracts and are unaware that it exists. You should contact your HR to see what might be available.

It is also up to your employer whether they choose to take your wages away when you take carers leave. If you work for a small business, maybe ask your manager or the company owner if they would be happy for you to have paid carers leave on an informal basis.

If you want to campaign for contractual rights of paid carers leave, Carers Wales can provide you with the evidence for why it is a good idea. Get in contact with us for more information.

# Contractual rights in the workplace

Contractual rights will vary depending on the organisation you work for. You can ask your Human Resources (HR) department, your line manager, or consult your organisation's policies to find out what support they offer.

Several possible contractual rights may apply to you:

## Carers policy

A carers policy is a document that solidifies how a company will support working carers and any additional rights and benefits are available. In some organisations, these have different names such as a 'family-friendly policy'. Ask your HR department which policies cover carers.

"I had no idea of any carer friendly policies or initiatives available through my employer."

## Paid carers leave

Increasingly, employers are offering additional paid leave to employment contracts for someone to undertake elements of their caring role in work hours. This is in addition to paid holiday leave. Carers leave allows carers to be take loved ones to medical appointments and other essential activities without having to take holiday or unpaid leave.

"My child needed to go in for an operation and I spoke to my line manager to book some holiday. When I explained what it was for, they immediately changed it from holiday time to paid care leave. I had no idea that was an option."

## Carer Passport

A Carer Passport is designed to support discussions between carers and line managers or HR departments. It is a confidential document that records what has been agreed to support you to balance work and care. It can also be known by other names in some organisations – such as an adjustment passport or workplace adjustment.

The document moves with you if you change roles within the organisation or if your line manager changes. The agreements in the passport continue without the need to go through the process again. The aim is to provide a straightforward way to document support so it can be carried into your future roles, without having to repeat the same conversations.

## Carer champion

A carer champion is an employee who volunteers to help raise awareness of the impact unpaid caring has on employees within their workplace. They are often knowledgeable and a carer themselves.

"We have done stalls alongside Carers Wales. We had people come over asking for advice, it was only when you actually say 'what do you do for somebody? If you weren't there how would the person cope?'. They would respond saying they wouldn't ... 'So you're a carer then?' ...'Oh, I suppose I am!'"

who have been in a similar situation and emotional support which can help you as a carer to feel less isolated and manage stress.

Networks can also help save time for line managers by communicating information to employees. Carers have reported that even if they do not take up the support on offer such as accessing networks, just knowing that help is there if needed has made them feel more supported and motivated at work.

## Employee assistance programmes

Your employer may offer employee assistance programmes. Some of these programmes have provisions that can assist you to find and access practical support for the person you care for.

## Carers network

A carers network is a group of carers and people who want to support carers who meet, usually within company time, to offer each other peer-to-peer support. Peer support, networks and carers champions can provide informal help that can make a difference for working carers. This includes practical tips from people

## Wellbeing support and counselling services

Some employers will offer wellbeing support such as counselling services. This may happen through an internal counsellor connected to your organisation or be in the form of outsourced support or vouchers.

**Q: How do I find out if I have contractual rights as a carer?**

Ask your line manager or HR department. Most will send you any relevant documentation if you choose to make your employer aware that you are a carer.

**Q: Is there any way of finding out about contractual rights before I tell someone I am a carer?**

All contractual rights should be available to you on your company's intranet system. If you cannot find these documents, you could also discuss looking for them with a colleague who may be able to assist.

**Q: What if my workplace doesn't have carer-specific support?**

Employers are becoming increasingly aware of the need to support carers in their workplace. On the next page there are some ways you can encourage your employer to be more carer friendly.



**Q: What is the difference between emergency leave and carer's leave?**

Carer's leave is an additional set of unpaid leave that can be taken for planned procedures or appointments. Emergency leave is for when something happens to a loved one and you need to miss work with immediate effect. Taking one type of leave does not affect your ability to take the other type of leave.

## Employers for Carers

You may find that your employer wants to support you and other colleagues who are working carers but lack the knowledge or resources to be able to help. Ask them to contact Carers Wales. We have free information and advice available as well as our scheme Employers for Carers.



that their skills and experience can be retained within the business.

Efc's mission is to show the benefits of retaining carers in the workforce by adopting practices that better support carers.

They provide employers and line managers with the tools they need to enable employees to manage their work commitments alongside their caring responsibilities.

Employers for Carers (Efc) is a subscription membership that offers guidance to employers on how to implement carer-positive work practice. The objective is to give employers a toolkit so they can support employees who are carers so

"I think it's essential to have a Carers Champion in your workplace. In my work I see the huge difference a Carers Champion can have in the GP surgeries I visit. There is someone who is aware of entitlements, roles and responsibilities, someone a carer can go to."

"With carers, you have to realise that not everyone will be able to attend the network, due to caring. Things that work are things that interest people. We recently put on a power of attorney session. One of the things we generally do every month is send out the Employer for Carer details."ails

If you have a supportive employer that would benefit from more information, please visit [employersforcarers.org](http://employersforcarers.org) or contact Efc **at:**  
**020 7378 4956**

## Become a Carer Champion

A Carer Champion is someone who volunteers to help raise awareness of the impact unpaid caring has on employees within their workplace. Champions play a vital role in ensuring that carers are signposted at work to the information, advice and support needed to continue balancing work and care.

If you would like to become a Carer's Champion in your workplace, Carers Wales offers a volunteer scheme designed specifically for you. We can give you information and advice materials, offer training and be there to support you. To become a Carer's Champion, email us at: [volunteer@carerswales.org](mailto:volunteer@carerswales.org)

# Making adjustments at work

## Flexible working

Flexible working can be anything that allows you to vary the amount, timing, or location of your work. For a working carer, this means the potential to create a work schedule that can allow you to undertake elements of your caring role more flexibly.

“Flexitime is the only way I can manage – I work 8 am to 3 pm so I know my son is safe in school and then I work in the evenings. If I didn’t have this arrangement with work, then I couldn’t hold down my job.”



Common forms of flexible working **Annualised hours** include:

### Working from home

This is undertaking your work from your home rather than the office. This can be full-time, part of the week or even part of the day. (Read more about working from home on page 21)

### Changing work location

This is moving to a different office. Normally this would be to somewhere either closer to your home or the home of the person you care for.

### Flexible hours

This is where you agree to do your hours but not within the hours set in your contract.

Often you and your employer will agree on core hours that you must work and then agree that the additional hours are made up outside those hours, but not necessarily at the same time as other employees.

### Condensed hours

This is where you work your agreed number of hours but over fewer days. Commonly, this is working eight and a half hour days, four days a week.

This is when you work an agreed number of hours per year, but you do not need to complete them evenly throughout the year. This is often used by parent carers who need more time off during school holidays.

“I can only continue work because of the flexible hours I keep and the fact that I don't have to work during the school holidays.”

### Flexible breaks

This allows you to take your break at a specific time or at a time of your choosing. This can be used to contact the person you care for to remind them to take medication or to attend meetings virtually while still in the workplace.

“Everyone knows I can't take meetings between 1 pm and 1.30 pm as that is medicine and lunchtime. Having that consistency has helped the person I care for, and I no longer feel pressure to make excuses to duck out of meetings I know I should be attending.”

#### **Q: What additional resources are there for me to find out more?**

Carers UK has created a series of resources about flexible working, including videos and a guide to help you start the conversation with your employer. Watch videos of carers explaining their flexible working experiences by visiting:

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/work-and-career/your-rights-in-work/requesting-flexible-working/>

## Working from home / remote working

Taking the step to work from home can be a little daunting as it can mean changing many of your working practices. However, the enforced working from home caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic has created an opportunity to consider moving to this arrangement with your employer if it suits you.

“It’s been so much better since I’ve been working from home – it really helps with my flexitime as I don’t have the commute and in future, I won’t be so rushed to clean up after my son.”

Working carers have spoken about many of the advantages of working from home. These include:

- **More time:** Not having to commute can save you time each day. This ‘extra’ time can be vital in caring for yourself and improving your work/life balance.
- **More productivity:** Many carers find the ability to manage their caring role from home allows them to work more effectively and with less distraction than before.
- **More opportunities:** Working from home can give you more opportunities. You may be able to take on more senior roles as you can adjust your calendar to suit.. You may even be able to look for work elsewhere as you no longer need to be concerned if you can get back to the person you care for in an emergency.

### Hint/Tip

Talk to your manager about protected times where you are not going to answer phone calls or emails. It can be easy to slip into your home becoming the office so creating agreed-upon boundaries can allow you to close your computer without concern.

### Tip

If you need to be in the same room as the person you care for and you, or they, are not comfortable with being on camera as your manager if you can take voice-only calls.

### Improved communication:

Online working can support carers to communicate better with colleagues. With more control of your caring environment, it can be easier to concentrate and articulate your points without the worries of being out of contact with your loved one.

However, working from home is not suitable for everyone. You may find that it is difficult to manage caring and work within the same household.

Or you may miss being in the office or workplace with your colleagues in person. Discuss the pros and cons with your line manager and see if you can have a trial run to decide whether working from home is right for you.

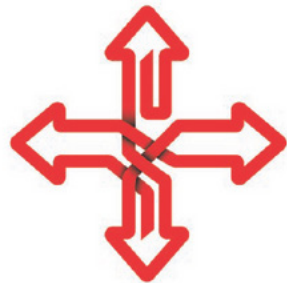
## I work in a role that means I can't work flexibly. What are my options?

Not all jobs allow for working from flexibly. If this applies to you, you have a few options:

- ask your employer if there is a role that you could transfer to that would allow you to work flexibly
- look at additional training to change to a role that allows you to work flexibly
- Try exploring new opportunities with organisations that have been recognised as **Carer Confident**. The Carers UK Carer Confident benchmarking scheme assists employers to build a supportive and inclusive workplace for staff who are, or will become, carers and to make the most of the talents that carers can bring to the workplace.
- Learn more by visiting:

<https://www.employersforcarers.org/carer-confident/>

"I thought working from home Monday and Friday would be right for me. Yet, I found most appointments fell on a Thursday and I had trouble keeping up with some things by missing the Monday morning team meeting. I discussed this with my boss and made the change to being in the office on Monday and working from home on Thursday. This worked much better for me."



# Talking about your caring role

Carers often find it difficult to speak about their caring role. Caring is a very personal subject that requires you to reveal details about you and your loved ones.

As a working carer, you may fear that revealing your challenges outside of work may negatively impact how you are perceived or your work prospects. In creating this guide, carers have spoken about concerns they will not be given opportunities on certain projects if they are considered unreliable due to their home lives. Others were concerned they may miss out on promotion opportunities or simply be treated differently which could alienate them from colleagues.

However, talking about your caring role can be an important step to

getting the support you need in the workplace. It can be very helpful to talk about your concerns. Being listened to can help you process the situation and help you feel less alone.

“I have such an understanding line manager, and it really helps that I am able to talk openly. I know others find it difficult, but I was amazed at just how many people do have a caring responsibility. I find I get huge amounts of support from my Facebook friends too.”



## Hint/Tip

**We run MeTime - Online Support Sessions**, an online wellbeing support programme that runs different activities from crafting and mindfulness to talks about coping with stress and power of attorney. These sessions can help you to relax, meet other carers and learn new skills to help you manage your caring role.

"Finally telling my employer that I was a carer was a relief. My immediate line manager didn't know how to respond but I gained great support from our HR Department. It just felt like a weight off my mind to have finally told someone why it was becoming so hard."

Although it can be difficult to talk about your caring at work, it can be positive to talk to your employer about your caring role. Many carers we spoke with discovered that their employer was willing to work with them to make meaningful changes and, in some cases, even increased the confidence their employer had in them. More employers are learning the benefits of the skills carers develop in their caring role and the benefit this has to them as employers.



### **Q: When should I tell my employer about my caring role?**

If you are struggling and are concerned that you are unable to continue working and caring, you should speak to your employer immediately.

If you are currently comfortable with your work and care balance, making your employer aware of your caring role gives you both time to develop a plan for when you may need help. It also gives you the opportunity to trial different approaches with them that can further improve your work/care balance.

### **Q: Who should I talk to?**

This will depend on your organisation and your relationship with your line manager. If you have a good relationship with your line manager, this is the first person to speak with. They may be able to start planning additional support with you or can support you to approach the right people within your organisation.

You can also approach your HR department. They have a legal responsibility to support your wellbeing and must make note of your situation and start a process of providing legal and contractual support. You can also speak to your carers network or wellbeing champions if you have them in your organisation.

### **Q: How should I prepare?**

Before the meeting, you should write notes on the subjects you want to discuss. Writing down key points can help you feel better prepared and ensure you do not miss anything out.

If you are asking for direct changes from your employer, you should write these down as well. You may also want to bring this guide with you to help discuss what you are looking for.

### **Q: What happens if my employer is not receptive?**

Your employer has some legal duties that they must respond to and, in some cases, give justification for their decision. However, it is also important to remember that communication goes two ways. Be open to suggestions from your employer. They may have ideas you have not previously thought of or specific schemes to give you even more support. You may need to negotiate elements of what you want compared to your employer's need.

“It took me a long time to accept I was a carer and even longer to tell people at work about my situation. In hindsight and going forward I would suggest to anyone that has a caring role tell their manager/HR team”

## **Q: Should I tell my colleagues about my caring role?**

Whether you choose to tell your colleagues is up to you. You are under no obligation to talk to your colleagues about your caring. However, sharing information about your caring role may lead to a more supportive atmosphere and understanding. This can be particularly useful if and when additional support is put in place by your employer that your colleagues may notice. You may also help someone else who is juggling work and care to identify as a carer and seek support.

If you feel like you would like extra support to talk about your caring role and advocate for yourself, Carers Wales holds self-advocacy training multiple times a year. This free training shows you how to communicate your needs and ask for support to gain the best results.

Please visit the working carers hub for the latest news on training:

<https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/work-and-career/carers-in-employment-hub>

**We also have a self-advocacy guide** that can be downloaded for free.

**Please visit:**

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/guides-and-tools/being-heard-a-self-advocacy-guide-for-carers/>



# Other support for you as a working carer

Working carers are the least likely of all carers to see information and advice about their caring role. In this section, we will discuss a range of different ways you may also be able to access additional support.

## Technology and equipment

Technology can play a key role in balancing work and care. There is a range of devices and systems that you can use to help you care remotely. These can include remote reminder systems eg for medication reminders, alarms that can connect to your mobile phone or third-party emergency support and camera feeds inside the home of the person you care for.

You could also benefit from practical support equipment like grab rails, tap turners and non-slip mats that can give the person you care for more independence in their home.

“Mum wears an alarm to call for assistance if necessary. It gives me peace of mind and allows me to concentrate at work.”

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The Carers UK Jointly app makes caring easier, less stressful and more organised by making communication and coordination between those who share the care as easy as a text message.



Looking after someone can be so complicated. Jointly helps me stay on top of things and share information easily with everyone involved in my son's care.



For more information on Jointly please visit: [www.jointlyapp.com/](http://www.jointlyapp.com/)

It is best to discuss your need to use technology to support your caring role with your employer. By doing this you can help them understand your need to have access to this additional technology and approve their use by:

-agreeing places where these technologies can and cannot be used

- showing your employer what the technology does
- evidencing that these are not disruptive.

Carers UK has more information on equipment and technology that may help you. Please visit the Carers UK technology pages:

<https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/technology-and-equipment/>

### Hint/Tip

You can ask for technology and equipment as part of a carer's needs assessment or the person you care for can ask when having a needs assessment. When someone requires additional help to be independent in their home, you should be given an appointment with an occupational therapist. They will evaluate the person's need and recommend what equipment should be added to the home. This can include the widening of doorways, a wet room in their bathroom, or the addition of access ramps.



# Benefits

It is not uncommon for working carers to work part-time or in a lower-paid role to balance their caring responsibility. This may mean you are eligible for some form of additional financial support via benefits. There are several options available depending on your eligibility.

You can also find out more information by downloading our guide to caring – [Looking After Someone: https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/guides-and-tools/looking-after-someone-guide/](https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/guides-and-tools/looking-after-someone-guide/)

## Universal Credit

Universal credit can be received by anyone between 16\* and the State Pension age\*\*. The amount received depends on your circumstances and will be reduced as your earnings increase. What you are eligible to receive and how your earnings will affect how much you can get is highly dependent on your circumstances.

You can find out more information, including a benefits calculator, by visiting: [www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit)

*\*Universal credit is usually only available for someone over 18. However, someone with a caring responsibility can make a claim if they meet the other eligibility criteria.*

*\*\* You can still be eligible to receive universal credit if you jointly apply with your partner and they are still under the state pension age.*

## Tax Credits

If you already receive Child Tax Credit and you are on a low income you may be eligible to apply for Working Tax Credit. Please note if you do not already receive Child Tax Credit you will not be able to make a new claim. For more information, please visit: [www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit](http://www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit)

## Pension Credit

Pension credit gives you extra money to help with your living costs if you're over the State Pension age and on a low income. You can still claim Pension Credit if you continue working beyond the State Pension age and your income falls below the criteria.

This is more common for carers if you have had limited earnings for a significant period of time, or your partner has not been able to earn money due to a disability.

Find out more information, including a benefits calculator, by visiting: [www.gov.uk/pension-credit](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit)



# Carer breaks (respite care)

It is quite common for working carers to think they cannot access carer breaks as there is a belief these are only offered if you earn under a certain amount. This isn't true. All carers are eligible for respite care if the need is there. However, the amount you earn as a carer will affect how much you need to pay towards it.

There are many ways to access respite care. You can choose to access a private company, apply to your council as part of your assessment, or approach charities that offer different levels of respite support.

Find out more about respite and the options available by visiting **our taking a break pages:** <https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing/taking-a-break/>

"In more recent years, we take two weeks off every year and completely relax - my son and ex-partner have always helped out with care - it's just too much for one person to do on their own. We do video calls with them when we're away, but we can relax completely."



# Planning for the future

## Career planning

Planning for your career development can help you to ensure that career options remain open for you in the future.

You may be able to prevent career barriers from developing by openly discussing both your caring responsibilities and your future career goals with your employer. A practical plan that considers future professional accreditation requirements and training will help to ensure that you have the options available to continue in your chosen field of work when the time is right for you.

By making your manager aware of your situation, you may be able to agree new working practices or agree training time within your working day to gain new accreditations or skills.

### Hint/Tip

Look for courses to help build your CV. Attend training and take advantage of any courses that are offered for free. You may have skills gained from your caring role.

#### **Learning For Living is a free online**

course that can help you to recognise these skills. On completion, you receive a badge to present to your current or future employer. To find out more please visit: <https://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/work-and-career/thinking-of-returning-to-work/>

“My early career was completely determined by caring for my son and now it's still affected by my caring responsibilities with having my dad living with me.”

When planning for a career you should consider going through a career planning process:

### Know yourself

Acknowledge what skills you already have, what you need to formalise them and what skills you need to add to get to your preferred destination.

**Is there an opportunity?** – Look at what type of role your skills match and what type of market there is for them. Find out if there are any qualifications you must have to reach your goal.

### Decide what you need to do – Plan

goals to reach your targets and consider your 'next steps' after reaching each target. Look for opportunities to gain experience or build qualifications and skills, for example, taking an Open University course.

### Take action

Take the first step and apply for a course or ask for experience in a certain area of interest. Making the leap starts you on the process.

### Hint/Tip

Did you know there are bursaries and scholarship funds available to carers to study at the Open University? You can find out more by visiting: [www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding)

## Money & pensions

It's important to think about your retirement. As a carer, you might not have a full allocation of National Insurance (NI) contributions because of gaps in your employment due to caring. This could mean you do not get a full State Pension once you reach retirement age. Accessing Pension Credit could be an option for you. If you would like to check your NI record, please visit: [www.gov.uk/check-national-insurance-record](http://www.gov.uk/check-national-insurance-record)

## Pension Credit

If you claim Carer's Credit, rather than receiving a monetary payment, you get a National Insurance contribution credit.

This credit helps to protect your pension rights if you are caring for someone but not paying NI contributions through paid work and if you are unable to claim **Carer's Allowance**.

If you already get Carer's Allowance, you do not need to claim Carer's Credit as your pension is already protected.

For each week that you receive Carer's Allowance, you get a Class 1 NI credit to help protect your record. Over time, this will help to build up your pension.

## Solidify private pensions

Have you worked in multiple places and have several small pots? Consider moving all these pots into one private pension. You may be able to get a better rate by having a larger amount to work with.

This is not the correct decision for everyone as some pensions have better rates or protections than others.

### Hint/Tip

Money Helper UK is a free and impartial place to find out about money including planning for your retirement. Find out more by visiting: [www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en](http://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en)



# Thinking about leaving work?

Many working carers reach a point where they consider reducing their working hours or leaving work entirely due to the pressures of their caring responsibilities. Sometimes, even with support and flexible working options, a change in working conditions is the only option to support your wellbeing.

There are a few options you could consider:

## Career break

A career break is when you leave your role unpaid. Your employer does not have to take you back after but leaves them with the option of rehiring you without paperwork at a later date.

## Sabbatical

A sabbatical is similar to a career break, but you have an agreed date when you will return to work, and your job is contractually kept open for your return. In some companies, people on sabbatical are paid all or part of their wage while on leave.



## Job sharing

Under flexible working law, you can also choose to reduce your working hours. Often this is in the form of job sharing. This is when two people do one job and you split the hours. You will then work on a part-time contract and your pay will be reduced to reflect your new hours.

## Ask for a transfer

This can be to a different place of work or to a lower responsibility role. Sometimes this will involve taking a pay cut.

## Phased retirement

For older working carers, phased retirement can be an option. You slowly reduce your hours, and another employee takes over your role. Often this is a good opportunity to train a new employee to take over your existing role.

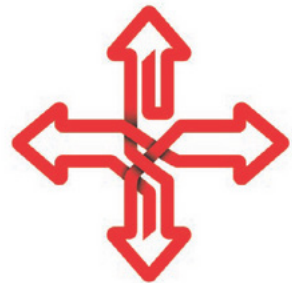
## Voluntary redundancy

If your employer is going through a period of job cuts, you could choose voluntary redundancy. This means the company will give you a redundancy package rather than leaving a role with no additional income.

When deciding whether to give up paid employment you should consider these questions:

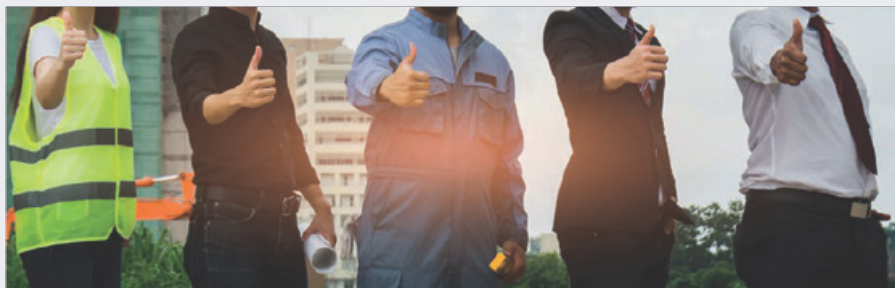
- Have you explored all the options of support on offer from your employer?
- How will you manage finances now, and in the future?
- Do you want to give up the independence, respite and social contact you may have through work?
- Will you lose valuable skills and experience if you leave?
- How will this impact your occupational pension?
- What are the benefits to your wellbeing if not juggling work and care?
- What are the benefits to those around you by working or not working?

The right choice will be highly personal to you and your circumstances. Only you will know what is right for you.



# Top tips for you as a working carer

Balancing work and care isn't easy. Here are 10 top tips from our contributing carers to remember as you navigate juggling work and care:



1. Talk to someone in your workplace who you are comfortable sharing your experiences with.
2. Familiarise yourself with your rights at work and the workplace policies that support carers, dependants, and family.

Understand the flexible working **3.** policy and consider whether that could be an option for you.

4. Look at the wellbeing support that is on offer at work or through external organisations, there might be something for you that you hadn't considered before. Don't be worried about asking for help, both at home and at work.

6. Remember, you are not alone; our research suggests there could be as many as 223,000 working carers in Wales. Carers Wales is here to support you.
7. Have a backup plan in place. Visit **MyBackUp (carersdigital.org)** for a simple tool to help you create a contingency plan that can give you peace of mind if an unforeseen or unplanned event happens and you are not able to continue caring. Explore the options for practical and financial help. Do whatever you can to get a proper break for yourself.
10. Most importantly, look after yourself and take up the support available to you.

# Further Help

## Useful organisations

There is a range of national organisations that can provide help. We have listed some of these below.

Our website contains a wealth of useful information on the financial and practical matters related to caring. Visit [www.carersuk.org/wales](http://www.carersuk.org/wales) and click on “Help and Advice” in the main menu. You can find details of your local carer’s organisation at [www.carersuk.org/local-support](http://www.carersuk.org/local-support).

For information and advice contact the Carers UK Helpline **t:**

0808 808 7777 | **e:** [advice@carersuk.org](mailto:advice@carersuk.org).

Carers Wales:

**t:** 02920 81 1370 | **e:** [info@carerswales.org](mailto:info@carerswales.org)



# Working Rights

## ACAS

ACAS provides information, advice, training, conciliation and other services for employers and employees to help prevent or resolve workplace problems.

Helpline: **t:** 0300 123 1100 (text relay service 18001 0300 123 1100) open Monday to Friday 8am to 8pm and Saturday 9am to 1pm. You can also ask a question online. **w:**

**[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)**

## Advicelink Cymru

Advicelink Cymru is a Welsh Government funded Citizens Advice service designed to help people who are most in need of advice services, particularly those who would not usually seek advice.

People in Wales can access the service number from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm: **t:** 0800 702 2020

## Civil Legal Advice

Civil Legal Advice might be able to give free confidential advice on discrimination if you are eligible for legal aid.

Visit the gov.uk website to see if you are entitled to legal aid.

**w:** **[www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice](http://www.gov.uk/civil-legal-advice)**

## Equality Advisory and Support Service

The Equality Advisory and Support Service advises and assists individuals on issues relating to equality and human rights.

Helpline: **t:** 0808 800 0082 (textphone 0808 800 0084) open Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm and Saturday 10am to 2pm. You can also email using a form on their website: **w:**

**[www.equalityadvisoryservice.com](http://www.equalityadvisoryservice.com)**

## Wales TUC Cymru

Wales TUC Cymru advises and assists with helping to find union representation.

**t:** 029 2034 7010

**e:** **[wtuc@tuc.org.uk](mailto:wtuc@tuc.org.uk)**

**w:** **[tuc.org.uk/wales](http://tuc.org.uk/wales)**

## Unison Trade Union

Unison Membership Union can provide help, assistance, advice, and representation for work-related issues. **t:**

0800 0 857 857 or **t:** 02920 729 413 **e:**

**[CymruWales@unison.co.uk](mailto:CymruWales@unison.co.uk)** **w:**

**[cymru-wales.unison.org.uk](http://cymru-wales.unison.org.uk)**

## Unite Trade Union

Unite memberships union can provide help, assistance, advice, and representation for work-related issues.

**t:** 029 2039 4521

**w:** **[www.unitetheunion.org](http://www.unitetheunion.org)**

# Benefit helplines

## Attendance Allowance

England, Wales & Scotland

t: 0800 731 0122

(textphone: 0800 731 0317)

## Carers Allowance Unit

England, Wales & Scotland t:

0800 731 0297

(textphone: 0800 731 0317)

## Disability Living Allowance

England, Wales & Scotland - If you were born on or before 8 April 1948: t:

0800 731 0122

(textphone: 0800 731 0317)

If you were born after 8 April 1948: t:

0800 121 4600

(textphone: 0800 121 4523)

## Personal Independence Payment

England, Wales & Scotland

New claims t: 0800 917 2222

(textphone: 0800 917 7777)

Enquiry line t: 0800 121 4433

(textphone: 0800 121 4493)

## Tax Credits

England, Wales, Scotland & Northern

Ireland t: 0345

300 3900

(textphone: 0345 300 3909)

## Universal Credit Helpline

England, Wales & Scotland t:

0800 328 9344

(textphone: 0800 328 1344)

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## For Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support and Employment and Support Allowance:

### Jobcentre Plus

England, Wales & Scotland New claims: t:

0800 055 6688

(textphone: 0800 023 4888)

Existing claims: t:

0800 169 0310

(textphone: 0800 169 0314)

### Pension Credit:

t: 0800 99 1234

(textphone: 0800 169 0133)

# Health & Social Care

## Independent Case Examiner

A free complaints review service for people who have made complaints about their claim for benefits

**w:** [www.ind-case-exam.org.uk](http://www.ind-case-exam.org.uk)

**t:** 0800 414 8529

(textphone: 18001 0800414 8529)

## Health Service Ombudsman Wales

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. The government official responsible for dealing with complaints about state services.

**w:** [www.ombudsman.wales](http://www.ombudsman.wales)

**t:** 0300 790 0203

(textphone: 0300 061 4298)

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## Other organisations

### Care Inspectorate Wales

The independent regulator of health and social care in Wales.

**t:** 0300 7900 126

**w:** [careinspectorate.wales](http://careinspectorate.wales)

### Carers Trust Wales

A network of local centres provides advice, information and support to carers.

**t:** 029 2009 0087

**w:** [carers.org/wales](http://carers.org/wales)

### Turn2us

Information and advice on benefits and grants. **t:** 0808

802 2000

**w:** [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk)



Every year in Wales 121,000 people become carers, looking after family or friends who are older, disabled or seriously ill.

**However caring affects you, we're here.**

For expert information and advice about caring, contact the Carers UK Helpline:

T 0808 808 7777, Monday - Friday, 9am - 6pm

E [advice@carersuk.org](mailto:advice@carersuk.org)



Tell us how you found this guide [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZN7JCYS](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ZN7JCYS)



Carers Wales

T 029 2081 1370 E [info@carerswales.org](mailto:info@carerswales.org)

[carerswales.org](http://carerswales.org)



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