Welsh Policy Forum - Policy Commission on Welsh Carers

Evidence submitted from Carers Wales

About Carers Wales

Carers Wales is part of Carers UK a membership charity of carers – we work across the United Kingdom to represent and support the 6.5 million people in the UK who provide unpaid care for ill, older or disabled family members or friends.

Carers UK and is charity of carers, run by carers, for carers. Across the UK we have 35,000 members and a reach of many more. We provide information and advice about caring alongside practical and emotional support for carers.

Carers Wales, as part of Carers UK campaigns to make life better for carers in Wales. We work to influence policy makers, employers and service providers, to help them improve carers' lives.

Carers UK and major businesses have set up Employers for Carers offering help to employers to retain the 1 in 9 employees who are caring for a family member.

Carers Wales is currently carrying out a scoping exercise with employers for Welsh Government on developing a similar scheme in Wales

The Facts in Wales

- 370,230 people in Wales are currently caring unpaid and this figure continues to rise. This shows a 9% increase in the number of carers since the last census in 2011 and by 2037 it is estimated that there will be a further rise of 40% meaning that there will be over half a million carers in Wales.
- Every year in Wales over 123,140 adults become carers and almost the same number will cease to become carers.
- 103,594 people in Wales provide over 50 hours of unpaid care every week.
- The carer provided by Wales' unpaid carers is worth an estimated £8.1 billion a year. The Health and Social Services sectors across Wales rely on carers ability and willingness to provide unpaid care and without their support the health and social care system in our country would collapse.
- There are 181,135 carers who are juggling work whilst providing unpaid care.
- 100,260 of these unpaid carers work full time.
- 54,480 of these unpaid carers work part-time.

Introduction

Carers Wales welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this evidence to the Welsh Policy Forum consultation on carers. There is a real opportunity to boost the Welsh and UK economy by changing the way that unpaid carers are supported to remain in the workplace or to enable carers to return to the workplace. There must be the creation of a modern workplace that fits in with the demographic evidence that shows that our society is ageing and people are living longer but with health conditions. These needs will be inevitably met by an increasing number of carers.
From our research, we know that many of these carers will start caring at the peaks of their careers and will be juggling paid work and care. It makes good economic and business sense that employers support carers in their workforce as our ageing and shrinking workforce is driving the need to extend people’s working lives.

Welsh Labour in Westminster and in the National Assembly for Wales have a role to play in helping to shape the support that carers need to remain in or return to the workplace.

Overview

Increasing numbers of people find themselves juggling caring unpaid for disabled, older or seriously ill family or friends with paid work. According to the 2011 Census, 1 in 9 employees in any workplace, an estimated 3 million people, are juggling paid work and care whilst Carers UK’s own research, carried out by You Gov, suggests over 2 million people have given up work at some point to care for loved ones and 3 million have reduced working hours.

Demographic data suggests that the trend of increasing numbers of people providing unpaid care whilst active in the workforce will continue. There will be a projected 9 million carers by 2037. The majority of carers are of working age and the peak age for becoming a carer is 50-64. By 2022 one in three of the working population will be aged 50 or over.

Despite this, employment rights have failed to evolve quickly enough to support carers to stay in or return to work and provide support for the people they care for. Moreover British employment rights lag behind European competitors when it comes to flexible working and care leave and a lack of suitable and affordable social care provision means many carers feel they have little choice but to reduce working hours or give up work altogether.

Carers UK has carried out research in 2013 and 2014 into different models of care leave internationally. Different countries have adopted a variety of models e.g. Belgium has shorter periods of paid leave with longer unpaid leave.

Many employers are recognising the importance of supporting carers in their workforce and the cost of losing highly skilled and experienced employees.

The impact on health, loss of skills, knowledge and experience which result from a break from the workplace and insufficient support to assist individuals to return to work or retrain, can make it difficult for carers when their care journey is over.

Carers UK and Carers Wales believes carers should be supported and enabled to continue working and to return to work if they wish to do so.

The costs of failing to make our modern economy fit for the needs of its modern workforce are not just measured in lost opportunities and income for carers or increased spend on state support. Every worker avoidably lost to an employer represents a cost on that business. The Corporate Leadership Council, for example, estimates that the cumulative costs to an employer of an employee leaving work are equal to the employee’s last salary, while Hay Group suggests it could cost anywhere from 50-150% of their salary. An emphasis on retention and retraining of employees who provide care and aiding flexibility to allow for roles to meet the needs of employees and employers alike is necessary for the country to address the future needs of an ageing population, both inside and outside of the workplace.

Care services need to be recognised as a vital part of economic productivity, a ‘condition for employment’ as essential to employee recruitment and retention as good transport links and a decent housing supply.
As well as addressing these barriers, stimulating a vibrant care market to meet this growing demand can turn the challenges of an ageing population and an ageing workforce into a driver for economic growth. Social care should be seen as an industry with potential for growth and for creation of better paid and higher status jobs.

Carers UK has a unique insight into the support needs of those with caring responsibilities and what policy works for employers and employees through our business forum Employers for Carers.

Administered by Carers UK, Employers for Carers is an employer led membership forum of employers seeking to support carers in their workforce. Its membership includes over 120 organisations from the private, public and third sectors including financial services, utilities retail and manufacturing, the police, local and national Government, education and health.

Employers for Carers provides advice and support for employers, promotes the business benefits of supporting carers in the workplace and seeks to influence public and employment policy and practice to create a more supportive culture for carers in work. Reviewing and refreshing rights, obligations and employment practices is necessary to ensure we have a modern economy fit for carers which allows them to care and work.

**Key Recommendations**

- Introduce a statutory right to 5-10 days paid care leave from work and start a debate on longer term leave.
- Introduce day one right to request flexible working.
- The earnings disregard for carers should be higher (currently £116 per week) and as a minimum should rise with the national minimum wage every year.
- Encourage employers to support their staff to balance work and caring responsibilities.
- Encourage employers to providing carer awareness, health and wellbeing programmes and create carer policies to build carer friendly workplaces.
- Encourage better identification of carers in the workplace.
- Ensure that carers in the workplace receive information about their rights and signpost carers to sources of advice and information.
- Skills training and retraining should be facilitated on a lifelong basis by employers and the Governments in Wales and Westminster.
- The Department of Work and Pensions should consider providing additional support for working age carers including tailored back to work support and specialist careers advice.
- Incentives for employers through national insurance to promote apprenticeships and employment of carers returning to work.
- Support for sharing of best practice amongst employers through established networks and institutions and signposting.
- Improve access to paid for care.
- Ensure sufficient funding of social care to support carers and those in need of care to enter and remain in the workforce.
- Widespread public sector commitment to promoting carer-friendly employment.
- Stronger occupational health and work-based well-being and work support for people juggling work and care.
- The care market should be seen as an area of potential economic growth – both enabling people to continue to do paid work alongside caring but also as an area of innovation and growth itself.
Employment Rights which Support People to Combine Care and Work

Already 1 in 9 employees in the workforce across the UK have an unpaid caring role.\textsuperscript{xiv} Around 123,140 adults in Wales begin a new caring role each year and around the same number find their caring responsibilities come to an end, creating a constant need for information on accessing support and awareness of flexibility in the workplace.

New caring responsibilities often come about suddenly or a caring role can grow gradually becoming increasingly challenging to juggle with work. However employment rights are not flexible enough to support employees to remain in work in such circumstances or, indeed, for those who have existing caring commitments.

At present employees have the right to request flexible working after they have been continuously employed by the same employer after 26 weeks and have a right to a ‘reasonable’ amount of time off work to deal with an emergency or unforeseen matter involving a dependant, which is unpaid unless there is a contractual right to paid leave.

Existing rights are inadequate to support people in work who provide care. Of respondents to Carers UK’s State of Caring 2016 survey\textsuperscript{xv} working carers told us they often struggle to get time off to coordinate with care services or attend medical appointments. 70% had to use their annual leave to care whilst 23% had reduced their working hours. The impact of caring on an individual is substantial. Over two thirds (69%) of those who responded to the survey highlighted the stress of juggling work and care whilst half (49%) said they had given up work to cover care commitments.

Carers Wales and Carers UK supports a new statutory right to at least 5 days paid care leave and in addition welcomes a debate about a longer period of leave.

With an ageing workforce a lack of flexibility presents additional barriers to people finding or remaining in work. Analysis by Age UK and Carers UK found that men and women over the age of 50 who provide 10 hours or more of care per week are more likely to leave paid employment than seek to reduce their hours\textsuperscript{xvi}. The knock on effects of people leaving their jobs to care, in terms of public expenditure cost in England (through carers’ benefits and lost tax revenues), has been estimated at £1.3bn per annum\textsuperscript{xvii}. Building on this, analysis from Age UK\textsuperscript{xviii}, has showed a cost of £5.3 billion a year to the economy in terms of lost earnings and tax revenue and additional benefit payments.

If this trend continues in coming decades with increasing numbers of older workers unable to combine care and work, the cost implications in terms of lost productivity and the exchequer will only worsen.

Reforming employment rights to flexible working so that they apply from day one would also assist carers with existing care commitments returning to work or seeking new roles. It would also help those who find themselves with sudden caring responsibilities in the early stages of employment with a new employer; only half (49%) of employers offer flexible leave or other work arrangements\textsuperscript{xix}.

Increased flexibility and support when it is needed would ensure that combining care and work responsibilities is more manageable, would improve mental and physical health for carers and would be cost effective for businesses. The cost to UK businesses of employee turnover, absenteeism and stress due to providing unpaid care may be in excess of £3.5 billion every year\textsuperscript{xx}. T

The UK lags behind other countries in terms of care leave rights; Germany, Canada, Japan, Australia, France, Italy, the United States, Belgium, Poland, Ireland, Taiwan and the Netherlands all provide a right to paid care leave. Carers UK has long made the case for the United Kingdom to follow suit\textsuperscript{xvi} and recent
reports, including the Cridland review of the state pension age and from the Communities and Local Government Select Committee have recommended investigating implementing carers leave.

**Workplace support, back to work support, progression and training**

**Workplace practice to support carers**

Whilst employers are increasingly recognising the value of promoting support to employees with caring responsibilities, discussing and disclosing caring responsibilities for older or disabled relatives remains a challenging issue for many carers. Unlike with childcare, different kinds of caring responsibilities often remain difficult to talk about.

7 in 10 working carers responding to our survey said they have felt lonely or isolated in the workplaces as a result of their caring role. This underlines that in addition to stronger employment rights, a carer friendly workplace culture also needs to be fostered with greater awareness and understanding from managers on how to support those in the workplace with caring responsibilities. As the evidence base for the last Government’s Fuller Working Lives paper notes “only a third of employers (34%) have a formal, written policy or an informal, verbal policy in place to support carers in their workplace.” This is low given the number of carers and our ageing society. We would hope that it continues to grow. There is a wide array of support through changed employment practices that employers could deploy. Carer awareness and age diversity training, health and wellbeing programmes and policies to create carer friendly workplaces, where employees can discuss their caring responsibilities without fear of stigma and employers can better understand pressures, can all help to keep a carer supported and capable of remaining in work.

There is a sound business case for employers in adopting these practices. A survey carried out by Employers for Carers found that of businesses which adopted similar policies 93% of businesses saw increased staff morale and loyalty, 92% saw increased staff retention and 88% saw reduced sick leave and absenteeism.

Many employers already have practices which support carers and often the challenge is sharing and demonstrating best practice. It is vital that relevant business organisations and membership forums, including trade unions, are supported to raise awareness of best practice and share expertise amongst HR practitioners about policies which help to support and retain carers in the workplace. Government departments can assist this through the ACAS Code of Practice on Flexible working and through signposting information on gov.uk and other owned channels.

**Support to enter or re-join the labour market**

In addition to improving support for those juggling work and care – more needs to be done to help those looking for work or to return to work after a caring role enter the labour force. This should include a greater emphasis on re-skilling and training, better identification of carers at Job Centres. These programs must be flexible enough to support people out of work for a short period of time or who have been out of the workforce for long stretches. Working-age people who provide care for 20 hours or more each week tend to have lower qualification levels. Overall, 70% of those who cared for 20 hours or more had no or low qualifications compared with around half of low intensity carers (52%) or noncarers (48%).

Work Carers UK carried our as part of a European Social Fund supported programme – Action for Carers and Employment – showed that pre-vocational training for carers was vital to support carers to enter or return to the workforce. A skills based programme for carers could range from pre-vocational training, to skills accreditation whilst caring, to amendments in the benefits system to allow vocational training whilst caring.
Government could also play a role in encouraging employers to offer training and apprenticeships, perhaps incentivised by an offer of a National Insurance holiday for employers who train or take on a carer or former carer.

In his recent report on the state pension age John Cridland singled out carers as a group which needs particular focus and support. In particular he raised the current difficulties of reconciling working longer with caring responsibilities and highlighted that those with caring responsibilities or other significant barriers to employment will have to live longer in poverty if the State Pension age increases.

Maintaining the talents of people over the age of 50 in workplaces is good practice not just for employers, who benefit from experienced workers but also individuals, for whom remaining in work until retirement can make their later life more affordable. It is also important that as wide a range of occupations is made accessible to carers as possible. Evidence from a major study, the Carers, Employment and Services Report Series by the University of Leeds and Carers UK, including an analysis of the Census, showed how carers of both genders, but particularly women, are likely to be in ‘elementary occupations’ – process plant and machine operative jobs, or sales, customer services or personal services.

Carers who are self-employed

There is some evidence to suggest that carers are more likely to be self-employed than non-carers. Those who are self-employed say that the advantages are being able to “flex” work far more around caring responsibilities. The introduction of new rules around self-employment within Universal Credit make it far less likely that self-employment and in particular “micro self-employment” will be a viable route for carers in the future to keep a foothold in paid work alongside caring. This needs further consideration of the behavioural impacts of the new rules on carers.

Health and Social Care Services Fit for the Modern Economy

Whilst carers who provide care do so willingly, providing support worth £8.1 billion a year to Wales, this does not mean they can forgo support themselves. Where the correct NHS an social care services are not in place to support and supplement the care unpaid carers provide, carers inevitably will be less able to juggle work and care and stay in employment. Information about how to get support is crucial for carers who need to know their rights and entitlements as well as knowing what help may be available for those they care for.

Health and social care services must work with greater co-ordination in order to support carers and the people they care for and where it appears that a carer may need support they are signposted at the outset to sources of information.

There needs to be easily accessible, adequate, and affordable good quality social care available which helps to prevent carers leaving work by reaching a breaking point. It will also help prevent deterioration of health and social isolation.

Without adequate and affordable social care services those with caring responsibilities will continue to be under-represented in the labour market. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 in Wales has given important new rights for carers in Wales including the right to an assessment and support through a carer’s needs assessment by local councils. These assessments should be offered to people who have a need in their own right to support them with their caring role and have regard to whether the carer works, wishes to work or wants to take part in education, training or leisure activities.
Carers Wales through the Track the Act programme has been monitoring how local councils in Wales are delivering their new duties towards carers as set out in the Act and from our Track the Act briefing 2 which covers the first year of the Act’s implementation we have seen little evidence that it has improved the lives of carers.

The demands of juggling work and care can lead to burnout for some carers, where they simply cannot continue doing both. 47% of carers in Wales have said that they have given up work completely to care. Having to work at the same time as providing care can also have a significant impact on carers health. Carers in paid work reported that they have suffered mental ill health 68% and 50% have said that their physical health has worsened.

Back up and support for working carers to look after their own health whilst caring must be improved with greater flexibility offered by the NHS and care services and more done to identify and support working carers.

Role of innovation and technology in changing work practices and supporting care

A modern economy needs to take advantage of innovations in the digital and communications spheres. For carers, technology represents a means to support individual wellbeing and employment prospects. It also offers employers the ability to offer more flexible working practices. A range of technologies have the potential to change care in the home and community, reducing physical time and the psychological worry of providing care. Assistive technology can give both carers and the people they care for greater independence and reassurance. Carers UK research in 2013 showed that almost three quarters (72%) of carers using technology said that it had given them greater peace of mind and over 10% said that using health and care technologies had either helped them to get a job or stay in work alongside caring.

Despite this, we are only now starting to realise the opportunities for practical and online technology to help families to co-ordinate a better work-life-care balance, access peer-to-peer support and save time. Connectivity and the ability to work remotely can enable people to combine their job with providing unpaid care. Technology enabled support networks can provide important peer to peer emotional and practical support at work.

Employers can also help by promoting health and care technologies that can support their employees with caring such as: smartphone apps which tell you that a care worker has arrived on time, co-ordination tools for them to organise care with their families, or alarms and monitors at home which give peace of mind at work. A future government should invest in technology which can support health and care and encourage employers to utilise health and care technology in the workplace. Efforts should also be made to promote a market in health and care technologies supporting the needs of consumers and families in how they live and work.

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1 Census 2011
2 Analysis conducted for Carers UK by Michael Hirst (2014) Transitions in and out of unpaid care
3 Census 2011
4 Carers UK The Value of unpaid Care
5 Census 2011
6 Census 2011
7 Census 2011