

Seeking support

If you are juggling work and care there are various ways you can get help. There are things you can do to cope with the pressures of work and care. As a working carer you are likely to need a range of support both in and out of the workplace, and often different levels of support at different times.

Telling people at work

There are some things to consider when deciding whether to tell people at work about your caring responsibilities. You are under no obligation to do so but you may find that it is easier if you do tell certain people at work who you can trust.

Should I tell my employer?

It is up to you whether or not you tell your employer. However, as an employee, you may have some statutory rights (your employer must offer these) and so it may be in your interests to let your employer know. Your employer may also offer additional support to employees with caring responsibilities.

For example, you may be able to use leave arrangements, paid or unpaid, at the discretion of your employer to cover intensive periods of care.

Sometimes the support you need is very simple like access to a telephone or information and advice.

Find out what support and/or policies your employer has before you decide by checking your contract, staff handbook or intranet or speaking to your:

- line manager
- human resources (HR)/personnel department
- welfare officer or occupational health advisor
- union or staff association representative
- colleagues.

An understanding and knowledgeable employer or manager can make all the difference to whether or not you feel able to seek support. Remember - find out about the policies your employer has that can support carers and be informed when you approach your manager.

Should I tell other staff?

Colleagues can be very supportive, and it may help simply to discuss your situation with someone you can trust at work.

You may find that other colleagues are also carers, and that together you are more able to talk to your employer about ways in which you could be supported. You might ask your employer to set up a focus group, to find out how, together, you can find better ways of juggling your job and caring. Some organisations have carers' networks which offer information and support to working carers and work with HR to influence policies and practices

Getting practical help with caring

If you want to continue working and looking after someone, at some point you need to arrange alternative care for the times you are not there. Remember, making alternative care arrangements so that you can work can create conflict within families and/or cause feelings of guilt.

What you decide must be right for you as well as for others - you have the right to choose, and that means to choose to give up work, as well as to stay.

Social care

You can ask your Social Services Department (Social Work Department in Scotland or Health and Social Services Trust in Northern Ireland) for a carer's assessment which will look at the help you need to manage your caring role. If you want to work, they must take this into account when they assess the services they can offer.

They may be able to:

- Provide direct support, e.g. home care or a day centre place.
- Provide you with direct payments to buy your own support, you can sometimes use the money to pay family members to help out.
- Tell you about registered and approved private care facilities.
- Help you access telecare equipment for peace of mind such as fall monitors and gas alarms.
- Provide you with gadgets and equipment designed to help disabled people and their carers manage everyday life more easily such as simple aids, like two handled mugs and handrails, or more complex support aids, such as hoists.

You can get more information on carers' assessments and other community care services from Carers UK.

Buying in private care

If you are not able to get help from social services, or are given direct payments (instead of services) to make your own care arrangements, you may be able to buy in care services yourself. To get the help you need, you can either use an agency or recruit the help yourself.

Using an agency

Although using an agency is usually more expensive than recruiting care yourself, it has the advantages of taking care of the paperwork; dealing with an employee's National Insurance and tax; checking references; and providing a back-up if an employee is ill or unsatisfactory.

Social services should be able to tell you about care agencies in your area, or check the listings in your phone directory.

Recruiting help yourself

If you decide to recruit help directly you should be aware of the responsibilities this gives you as an employer. For example, you will need to check out your employee's references carefully; pay statutory sick pay if an employee is ill; pay towards your employee's National Insurance contributions, sort out your employee's income tax; and take out insurance to cover any accidents an employee might have in your home.

You may also be liable to pay compensation if you dismiss an employee unfairly or make them redundant. For more information about buying in care services, go to www.ncil.org.uk (National Centre for Independent Living).

Telecare and telehealth

Telecare and telehealth are technology solutions that can help relieve stress, and provide support, peace of mind, independence and dignity to carers and the people they care for.

An innovative range of non-intrusive telecare sensors, such as fall, smoke, flood and movement detectors, bed/chair occupancy sensors, temperature extreme sensors and medication reminders, work with a home unit to offer a comprehensive way of managing the risks to a person's health and home environment, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It also includes environmental control solutions which can be programmed to open and close windows, curtains and doors and operate domestic appliances, if the person being cared for has limited mobility and dexterity.

If you want to find out more, there are a variety of providers and solutions available. Your local authority and NHS may fund telecare and telehealth solutions, or they can be bought privately.

Look at our Technology and caring section for more information.

Support for you

Carers UK is the national membership charity for unpaid carers. Every day, about 6,000 people become carers, looking after family or friends who are older, disabled or seriously ill.

Today there are 6.5 million carers in the UK and for the past 50 years we have been driven by carers, raising their voices together to call for change and seek recognition and support. Carers UK is both a supportive community and a movement for change.

Our mission is to make life better for carers.

- We give expert advice, information and support
- We connect carers so no-one has to care alone
- We campaign together for lasting change
- We innovate to find new ways to reach and support carers

Adviceline



0808 808 7777

You can talk to our adviceline five days a week, no matter where you are in the UK or how complex your query is. We do benefits checks and advise on financial and practical matters related to caring.

We provide information and advice on:

- Benefits and tax credits
- Carers employment rights
- Carers' assessments
- The services available for carers
- How to complain effectively and challenge decisions

Our listening service is also there for you to talk through your caring situation with a trained volunteer who understands what you are going through.

Online forum

You can also connect with other carers via the Carers UK online forum. Click [here](#) to find out more.

Other sources of support:

- **Turn2us** is a charity that helps people access money available to them - through welfare benefits, grants and other help.
- **Counselling directory** is a large counselling support network which helps people find a counsellor close to them and appropriate for their needs. It is a free, confidential service.