

Thinking of leaving

If you are thinking of leaving work because of your caring responsibilities, consider whether or not you really want to, and if not, what alternative there could be.

Your options

First, think about the things you will be giving up, and whether you really want to lose them.

- Will you manage with less money?
- Do you want to give up the independence and social contact you have through your work?
- Will you lose valuable skills if you leave work?
- Can you afford to lose your occupational pension?

Then, think about ways around the problem. Could you:

- Work part-time or job share?
- Work from home?
- Take paid or unpaid leave to think about your long-term options?
- Ask your local Social Services Department for a carers' assessment? (Social Work Department or Department of Health and Social Services in Scotland and Northern Ireland).

Remember that employers value skilled, experienced and committed members of staff, and are keen to keep them. Your employer may be able to help in ways you have not considered. Talk to them about your situation, directly or through your personnel/HR officer or union or staff association representative.

If you ask for help from your local Social Services Department (Social Work Department or Department of Health and Social Services in Scotland and Northern Ireland), remember that they are required to assess your own needs as well as the needs of the person you care for. 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
- Tell you about local or national organisations or groups who can help.

Remember, making alternative care arrangements so that you can work can create conflict 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.

If you decide that you have to leave work, find out about options other than resigning, for example a career break, voluntary redundancy or early retirement.