



HM Government

CARERS UK
the voice of carers



Supporting Working Carers: The Benefits to Families, Business and the Economy

Final Report of the Carers in Employment Task and Finish Group

The Employers for Carers and Department of Health Task and Finish Group was set up in 2012 to explore ways in which carers – people looking after a family member or friend who is sick, ill or disabled – can be supported to combine work and care. It has gathered national evidence from an expert Steering Group and a wider reference group, evidence from Europe and evidence directly from employers and business. This is a summary of its findings and recommendations.

[Executive Summary](#)

The Task and Finish Group believes that the issue of supporting carers to remain in work is not only a problem, but also an economic opportunity. Supporting carers to remain in work can bring considerable benefits to carers themselves, employers and the wider economy. The Group therefore believes that there are a number of concrete, realistic and affordable steps that the Government, local authorities and employers can and should take to support carers to remain in work.

Many carers currently struggle to combine work and care. Analysis by the London School of Economics has estimated that there are currently 315,000 working age carers who have left work and remain out of employment.¹ As the population ages, and the number of carers rises, the effects of losing carers from the workforce will grow.

This is damaging to employers and the wider economy. Employers are losing talented people in whom they have invested significant time and money. The peak age for caring – 45-64 – is also the point at which people are most likely to have developed the skills employers need to succeed. The public expenditure costs of carers feeling unable to continue working have been estimated to be £1.3 billion a year.²

Supporting carers to remain in work could unlock significant economic gains. As well as reversing the losses currently incurred, a survey³ carried out by the Task and Finish Group has demonstrated that employers who have policies in place to support carers see improved service delivery, cost savings and increased productivity.

The growth of the care and support services sector to meet carers' needs and support them to work would also benefit the wider economy. A third of carers say that they have given up work or reduced their hours because services are inadequate or too expensive.⁴ This suggests that there is considerable demand that would be released if the care and support sector better met carers' needs.

We also need to improve the support carers receive from their employers. A quarter of carers responding to Carers UK's 2013 State of Caring Survey said that although their employer was sympathetic, they did not offer support. Only 1 in 5 medium-sized employers responding to a survey carried out by the Task and Finish Group had formal company-wide policies in place.

The Task and Finish Group welcomes the progress that is already happening. Many employers are already providing excellent support for carers. The Government's Care Bill will introduce new duties on local authorities that will enhance carers' rights, and support the development of a diverse, sustainable and high quality market in care and support services.

However, there is more that can and should be done. The Government and employer bodies should work together to champion the case for supporting carers, and provide information that will help employers to understand how they can support carers in their workforce. Government and local authorities also need to work with the care sector to develop a market in care and support services that enables people to combine work and caring.

Conclusions and recommendations

The Task and Finish Group acknowledges that there is already a great deal of work underway to tackle the problems identified here, and it welcomes this contribution from a wide range of organisations to enable people to combine work and care.

Many employers already provide a great deal of support for carers, as is demonstrated by the case studies that were collected by the Task and Finish Group. Employers of all types and sizes also continue to receive valuable support from Employers for Carers and Carers UK to support carers. This includes pioneering good practice in the workplace, providing practical advice and support for other employers, promoting the business benefits of supporting carers, and wider work to influence employment policy and practice to create a carer friendly culture.

1 Pickard, L., *Public expenditure costs of carers leaving employment* (2012) LSE Health & Social Care, London School of Economics and Political Science (<http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/healthandsocialcare/2012/04/25/dr-linda-pickard-public-expenditure-costs-of-carers-leaving-employment/>).

2 Ibid.

3 Carers UK for Employers for Carers/Department of Health Task and Finish Group (2013) *Business Benefits of Supporting Working Carers* <http://www.employersforcarers.org/resources/research/item/809-employers-business-benefits-survey>.

4 Carers UK (2013) *The State of Caring Survey*.

Other organisations, such as Working Families, have also made a major contribution to the agenda around promoting flexible recruitment processes and job design, including by promoting examples of good practice, for instance including flexible work and leave arrangements in recruitment literature. More widely, the voluntary sector plays an invaluable role in supporting carers through the provision of information and signposting to services and return to work programmes.

The Group also welcomes the initiatives that the Government is implementing that will improve support for carers in the workplace. These include the extension of the right to request flexible working to all employees in the Children and Families Bill, and the work being carried out by the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to change the culture around flexible working.

There are a number of wider reforms being implemented by central Government that will help carers to remain in work. The Care Bill will introduce new duties on local authorities to meet carers' eligible needs for support, and to shape high quality, diverse and sustainable care markets. It will also require local authorities to provide information on services available to everybody in their area, regardless of whether they are self funders. The introduction of online quality profiles will help people to decide which services would best meet their needs, while reforms to the funding of adult social care will offer people protection from catastrophic care costs, and give greater support to people with the greatest financial need.

The Group also welcomes the Care Quality Commission's ongoing review of its registration processes, which will be an important means of minimising the barriers to entry to this market for smaller and voluntary organisations. This will be reinforced by the implementation of recommendations from the report, *No Stone Unturned in Pursuit of Growth*, relating to local mechanisms for incentivising investment and supporting growth. Finally, the Government's Plan for Growth also identifies the growth potential of the care and support market.⁵

Recent changes to the architecture of local government should also lead to improved support for carers. Local Enterprise Partnerships will have an important role to play in promoting the care and support sector, and will be supported in many areas by regional assistive technology networks. Many local authorities have also developed local carers' strategies in cooperation with the voluntary sector in order to develop and sustain local support for carers.

These are just a few of the wide variety of activities already going on in this area. The Task and Finish Group recognises that significant progress is being made, but nonetheless believes that more can and should be done.

The Task and Finish Group concludes that:

- All relevant organisations should recognise the value of supporting people to combine work and care.
- All relevant Government departments should recognise, and build on, the strengths of earlier work, including *Recognised, Valued and Supported: Next Steps for the Carers Strategy* (2010), and act cohesively to support people to combine work and care and 'carer proof' relevant policies and practices.
- Employers, business and employer organisations should act to support people to combine work and care and 'carer proof' all relevant policies and practices. Employers – large and small, public and private sector – and their representative bodies should enable people to combine work and care by:
 - ▶ Promoting and enabling flexible attraction policies to recruit carers
 - ▶ Promoting and enabling flexible working to retain carers
 - ▶ Signposting employees to information on care and support services that enable them to combine work and care and diminish the chances of dropping out of the labour market at the onset of caring responsibilities
 - ▶ Promoting the business benefits of supporting carers
- Local authorities should act to support people to combine work and care and 'carer proof' all relevant policies and practices. Relevant representative bodies such as the Local Government Association (LGA) and Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) should provide leadership on carers and employment for their members, and make them aware of the recommendations of this report.

⁵ HM Treasury and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2011) *Plan for Growth*.

- The establishment of Local Enterprise Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Boards is an excellent opportunity to encourage local businesses to support their employees to combine work and care and to promote the business case. The Task and Finish Group welcomes the decision of Health and Wellbeing Boards such as Hertfordshire and Poole to include supporting carers among their priorities, and of Poole's Local Enterprise Partnership to engage the care sector as a partner.

The Task and Finish Group therefore recommends that:

Employment practices:

- 1) The Confederation of British Industry and the British Chambers of Commerce should assist employers to support carers in their workforces by making available information provided by Employers for Carers on the business case for supporting carers and the ways in which employers can help and retain them.
- 2) The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) should raise awareness amongst, and capture expertise from, HR practitioners about supporting carers in the workplace.
- 3) The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills should work to embed good practice around flexible working, including through the ACAS Code of Practice on Flexible Working, and should continue to monitor the impact of flexible working practices through studies such as the Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) and the Work-Life Balance Survey and continue to identify the impact on carers.
- 4) The Department for Work and Pensions should improve provision of information and support to businesses to enable them to support carers in their workforce including through a page on gov.uk signposting to Employers for Carers.
- 5) The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Work and Pensions should support inter-departmental working and continue to work with business on promoting flexible working, which has significant benefits to carers, following the introduction of the universal right to request flexible working arrangements.
- 6) The Department of Health should include a pledge in the Responsibility Deal Health at Work Network on the promotion of the health and wellbeing of unpaid carers as part of its work on the health and wellbeing of vulnerable groups in the workforce.
- 7) The Department of Health should champion membership of Employers for Carers among Government departments.
- 8) Skills for Care should continue to work with employers in England, and in partnership with other Sector Skills Councils, to develop and implement carer focussed workforce support for care sector businesses (including small and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups) to ensure that workforce skills needs in relation to supporting people as employees and carers are addressed on an ongoing basis.

Care and support services:

- 9) The Local Government Association and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services should encourage effective joint working between local authorities and care providers, and the sharing of best practice on how they can work with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), Health and Wellbeing Boards, Chambers of Commerce, local business and other stakeholders in their area to support carers to remain in employment.
- 10) The Department of Health should work with key stakeholders in a number of local authority areas to explore ways in which people can be supported to combine work and care, and the market for care and support services can be stimulated to grow to encompass their needs.
- 11) Government guidance on promoting a diverse range of services and providers should include explicit reference to services that enable carers to work.
- 12) The Treasury should consider how care market growth can be embedded in ongoing and future strategies.
- 13) The Treasury and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills should keep under review the option of potential initiatives to incentivise and accelerate growth in the care and support sector.

The Task and Finish Group understands that the action plan to the national Carers Strategy will be updated later this year. It believes that the actions arising from these recommendations should be included in that action plan with key milestones for delivery where appropriate.