

# Carers and Work

**“Carers look after family, partners or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability. The care they provide is unpaid” – Carers (UK) definition**

## Introduction

Juggling work and looking after someone can be difficult. Having an understanding and knowledgeable employer or manager can help make this easier. It is helpful to have access to information and advice in your workplace. Some companies operate counselling services and have advice packs about flexible working.

Employers are often happy to consider flexible working for employees rather than incurring substantial costs of advertising and re-training.

## Carers right to request flexible working

Carers across the UK are able to benefit from the right to request flexible working and employers have a duty to consider these requests. This right applies to parents of disabled children and carers of adults who have worked for their employer for more than 26 weeks.

The carers of adults with this right are employees who are or expect to be caring for an adult who:

- \* is married to, or the partner or civil partner of the employee; or
- \* is a near relative of the employee; or
- lives at the same address as the employee.

The "near relative" definition includes parents, parent-in-law, adult child, adopted adult child, siblings (including those who are in-laws), uncles, aunts or grandparents and step-relatives.

## What you could ask for

This could mean asking your employer for:

- Flexible starting and finishing times
- Compressed working hours
- Annualised working hours
- Job sharing or part time working
- Home working or tele-working
- Term-time working

To apply, you need to write to your employer asking for the changes you would like and saying why these would help you. You can only make one request a year and changes agreed will mean

a permanent change to your contract of employment. It is therefore important to think carefully about any financial and practical implications before you apply. If your employer refuses you can appeal the decision. Employers can choose to offer flexible working to all employees so it is worth asking about your company's policy

## **Time off in Emergencies**

You have the right to a "reasonable" amount of time off to deal with emergencies involving a dependent. This right also includes some protection from dismissal when you use it. It is at the employer's discretion whether the leave is paid or unpaid. Situations where this leave might be taken include:

- Disruption or breakdown in care arrangements
- If a dependent falls ill or has been assaulted or in an accident including when the victim is hurt or upset rather than physically injured
- To deal with an incident involving a child during school hours
- To make longer term arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured
- To deal with the death of a dependent

## **Parental Leave**

If you have worked for your employer for more than a year and are responsible for a child born on or after 15 December 1999 you are entitled to parental leave. This entails:

- Up to 13 weeks for children under five
- Up to 18 weeks for disabled children ( for who Disability living allowance is received )

You can usually take up to 4 weeks a year. If your child is disabled you can take the leave as a day or multiples of a day or for under fives in weekly blocks. Parental leave is usually unpaid but employers can choose to offer paid leave – so check your company's policies.

## **Career Breaks**

You may be able to use annual leave or unpaid leave to cover intensive periods of care.

If you are thinking of giving up work it is worth asking whether your employer has a career break scheme. A career break would allow you to keep your options open. If agreed you would have a job to return to and be kept in touch with the world of work while you are away.

## **Action for Carers and Employment**

This project provides support to Carers who either are juggling employment with care or wish to go back into some form of paid employment or voluntary work. They also provide information and help for those carers who wish to undertake vocational Training.

The service offered includes:

- Providing independent information, advice and advocacy in relation to employment and training opportunities
- Advice about juggling work and caring responsibilities

- Seeking funding to help access training
- Supporting carers in planning their career choices
- Support in applying for jobs
- Working with employers, trainers careers and employment services to raise awareness of the needs of carers
- Encouraging employers to adopt carer friendly employment practice

For further information contact 01483 565874 or go to [www.carersnet.org.uk](http://www.carersnet.org.uk)

## **Carers Assessments**

A carers assessment is your opportunity to talk about your own needs and things that could make caring easier for you. Carers Assessments are undertaken by Surrey County Council but can look at the support available from a range of organisations. Carers assessments must look at how carers are managing to balance work and caring.

If you are thinking about giving up work, ask for a carers assessment or a reassessment if you have already had one. If your job is seriously at risk because of pressures of caring, the Council will need to look at what help it can provide to enable you to continue working

For more information about Surrey County Council's services or to request a carers assessment, call the Council's "Contact Centre" on 08456 009 009. or go to [www.surreycc.gov.uk](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk)