



**CARERS
TRUST**

Heart of England

BALANCING WORK AND CARE

A Guide for Working Carers

Am I a Carer?

If you look after someone you love or care about, you may not consider yourself a carer. Caring is something we do as parents, partners, children, siblings, and friends; often without question or the need for a label.

You could be helping with household tasks such as cleaning or cooking, administering medication, organising and transporting someone to medical appointments, providing personal care, or emotional support.

You could do it once a day, a couple of times a week, or all the time. There are no time limits to being a carer. Research in 2022 estimates the number of unpaid carers could be as high as 10.6 million. We estimate that there are 74,000 carers across Coventry and Warwickshire who don't recognise themselves as a carer, or know that support is available to help them in their caring role.

Carers Trust Heart of England delivers the statutory service on behalf of Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council and provide a range of services that help ensure unpaid carers feel valued, respected and supported.



Looking after someone can be positive and rewarding...

but it can also be challenging, tiring and isolating.



“A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, frailty, mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support”

It can have an impact on many aspects of your life, including your relationships, health and well-being. You might not be able to get out and about as often or make time for yourself.

It can also put a strain on your finances and your working role if you are trying to juggle working and caring.

Looking after yourself is important, when you are simply coping day to day and responding to the needs of others, it's easy to forget your own health needs. Finding time to relax and unwind is important both for you, and the person you care for.

Getting a carer's assessment could be the first step to gaining vital support. It's your chance to discuss the help you need as a carer. The assessment is free and is a conversation about how your caring role impacts your life.

We're here to help. Find out how and register [here](#).

Working Carers

Managing work and care can be very challenging, so it's important to find out about your rights.



There are almost **5 million people** in the UK combining caring for a loved one with paid work. That's **1 in 7** of all workers.

1 in 4 working carers have considered giving up their job entirely ([Carers UK](#)).



Caring can often be overlooked in the workplace - many carers struggle to communicate their caring role to their employer because they worry about losing their jobs or being treated differently.

Carers often feel that they have no one to talk to about their caring role in the workplace and are reluctant to say anything in fear of a negative response. As a result, many carers see no other choice but to either reduce their work hours or to quit their job entirely.

We are working with employers to highlight this issue and create more confidential space for carers to get support. You can read more about how we are working with employers to support working carers to stay in employment and improve their wellbeing here: [Carer Friendly Employers](#).



Your rights at work

Your rights at work come from two sources:

- the law gives you **statutory rights** which everyone has;
- your contract of employment gives you **contractual rights** which can be more generous than statutory rights.

It is always worth checking your contract of employment, staff handbook, HR policies or letter of appointment to see if you have any contractual rights on top of your statutory rights.

Carer's leave

The Carer's Leave Act came into effect in April 2024 and gives employees the right to **one week's unpaid leave** per year if providing or arranging care for someone with a long-term care need. This includes if you are caring for someone with a physical or mental illness or injury, a disability, or care needs because of their old age. The person you are caring for may be a family member or someone else who relies on you for care and you do not have to provide evidence of your caring role to be entitled to this.

The right to take carer's leave is available from the first day of your employment and applies to full-time and part-time employees. It can be taken flexibly (in half or full days) for planned and foreseen caring commitments, such as taking someone to a medical appointment, supporting someone with personal care, arranging visits with health professionals or organising care for the future. If the situation is urgent, employees have the legal right to take a reasonable amount of time off work to deal with an emergency involving a dependant (see below).

You can read more about the Carer's Leave Act [here](#).

Flexible working

All employees based in England, Wales and Scotland have a right to request a flexible working arrangement from the first day of employment. You can also make two requests over a 12-month period. This new right became law from 6 April 2024. Flexible working requests should be made in writing with details of the revised working pattern you are seeking. It is recommended that you state that it is a statutory request. This should include: the date of the request, the proposed change to your terms and conditions of employment, the time you would like to see the change(s) take effect, and whether you have requested flexible working previously. Employers must agree to a flexible working request unless there is a genuine business reason not to; they must consult the employee before making that decision.

Requesting flexible working

Carers UK developed a number of resources on requesting flexible working which are available on their website. This includes videos where carers talk about what to consider when thinking about flexible working and how to communicate your request well to your employer.

The main things to remember when requesting flexible working are:

- Prepare your case – think about your options and what you would like the outcome to be;
- Be open and honest about your circumstances and what your needs are;
- Outline the benefits to your employer and anticipate any possible concerns they may have - think of some solutions to those concerns;
- Be prepared for give and take.

You can read more about requesting flexible working on the [Carers UK website](#). It includes practical information and tips to help you start the conversation with your employer.

Other rights at work

All employees also have the right to take a 'reasonable' amount of **time off work to deal with an emergency** involving a dependant. This may be your partner, child or parent, or someone living with you as part of your family. The time off is unpaid unless your employer is willing to give paid time off as a contractual right.

Examples of emergency situations:

- a disruption in care arrangements
- illness or an accident
- death of a dependent
- to make longer-term arrangements for a someone who is ill or injured (but not to provide long-term care yourself).

In addition, carers cannot legally be discriminated against. If you are looking after someone who is elderly or disabled, the law - under the Equality Act 2010 - will **protect you against direct discrimination** or harassment because of your caring responsibilities.

If you are thinking about giving up work, consider your options before handing in your notice. A **career break** could mean that you have a job to come back to after spending some time on your caring role.

Employment Law Support

You can also contact **Central England Law Centre** who have a dedicated employment and discrimination team as well as a health and social care team and provide free legal advice to individuals.

Your employer may have a HR/personnel department and there may be a trade union that can also advise you on your rights.



Employment help line:

024 76 252 686

Employment@centralenglandlc.org.uk

Talking about your caring role at work

A key challenge for both employees and managers is that caring is often a **hidden issue** in the workplace. Telling someone at work about your caring situation is not always an easy step. Whether you decide to tell your employer that you are a carer is up to you, however, they may be able to offer **additional support** that you are not aware of or have ideas about how to balance work and caring. They might even be a carer themselves.

Telling your manager **early on** about your caring role means they will be better positioned to support you should you need it. They are likely to be more understanding about taking time off at short notice or attending appointments if they know the reason why. It is much better to have these conversations when you are not stressed about the person you care for.

You could also speak to your **colleagues, human resources** or a **union representative**. Colleagues can be very supportive, and it may help as a first step to discuss your situation with someone you trust and feel comfortable with. You might 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.



Prepare for the conversation



- Before the meeting think about **what you are willing to share** with your employer. You do not need to talk about the condition of the person you care for but you can if you feel comfortable.
- Think through **possible options for support** that would help you in your caring role. For example, these might include flexible working or other small adjustments such as permission to make personal phone calls or texts or having a car parking space close to the office.
- **Write down** the things you want to talk about so you don't forget to raise them in the meeting.
- Try to have a **flexible mindset** when discussing this with your manager. Try to think of solutions which meet business needs too, and minimise impact on your organisation and team. For example, with flexible working arrangements you could offer to cover when the help is needed most in the workplace, and with leave arrangements, you could give advance notice of leave requests where you can.
- Be open to trying things on a **temporary or trial basis** to allow adjustments on both sides.
- Write down what you both agree. **Keep this as a record** that you can refer back to.



Carer Passports

Some organisations offer **Carer Passport Schemes**. A carer passport is a written record that identifies you as a carer and a straightforward way to document the flexibility and support available.

Carer Passports help create a **supportive working culture**, and a safe environment for carers to discuss their circumstances, They also allow employers a chance to **communicate** existing workplace support to carers and encourages managers to apply policies more consistently across the organisation.

Even if your organisation does not offer carer passports, you can still use the **Carer Passport Log Template** to help you think about your caring role and start the conversation with your employer. It includes questions to think about before you speak to your manager, tips for having the conversation, and space for notes. There are also resources for your employer available to download for free on the **Carer Passports website**.



“

The Passport has made a difficult conversation with managers easier; it has allowed me to be honest and start to talk about what I need as a carer and employee.

- Working Carer

”

Looking after yourself

It is easy to neglect your own needs when caring for someone else. However, it is important that you look after yourself too, so you can keep going as a carer, and remember your needs are just as important as those of your loved one.

Making time for yourself can be difficult at times but taking a break, even if it is for a short time, can make all the difference. Finding time to catch up with friends or family or to simply rest can massively improve how you feel.

Have a look at [the video series](#) by Carers UK about carers' breaks and why they are so important. Here is what some of our carers said about taking breaks:

“My idea of a break is to be able not to do anything. Sometimes I just sit on the sofa for 3 hours and watch Netflix and it's wonderful.”

“We all need time to ourselves to keep well and healthy. I like to go for walks and do yoga when my husband goes to the day centre. It keeps me sane. My advice is don't be afraid to ask for help. If you don't look after yourself, how can you look after someone else?”

“At the beginning I definitely felt guilty for taking a break. I think you just need to realise, you're doing it not just for yourself, but also for the person you care for. You cannot be their carer if you are ill. You need to look after yourself as well.”

Taking a break

There are many different ways to take a break. You might need an hour each week, a day here and there, a week or two for a holiday, or a combination of all of these. You could consider:

- asking family and friends to help out on a paid or unpaid basis.
- employing someone directly.
- using local voluntary or community services, such as befriending or community transport.
- using a care agency,
- using services provided by your local council following a care needs assessment, such as a day centre, homecare or a short break service.
- arranging time in a care home for the person you care for so you can have a break.
- using the Carers Trust Heart of England's Carers Response Emergency Support Service (CRESS) who can offer FREE planned cover for carers to take a short break. [Register with us to find out more.](#)

You will have to pay for some of the above, depending on your income or the income of the person you are caring for.

For more information on carers breaks and the different options available to you have a look at this [Carers UK Factsheet](#).

How we can help

Carer's Assessments

A carer's assessment is for carers who are looking after another adult over 18 years old who is disabled, ill or elderly. It is an opportunity to talk about the impact caring has on your life and what support or services you may need. It is a time for you to think about your own physical, mental and emotional needs, as well as whether you are able or willing to carry on caring. As a carer, you will be entitled to an assessment regardless of the amount or type of care you provide.

During a carer's assessment we will be able to:

- support you with your health and wellbeing,
- advise or signpost for support to make sure you are receiving the correct benefits and funding,
- identify training to help you with your care role (for example manual handling or dementia training),
- advise how we can help you with your care role in an emergency situation - for example, if you fall ill.

CRESS (Carers Response Emergency Support Service)

Our CRESS team are able to offer FREE emergency and planned cover to help support carers to ensure that their health and wellbeing needs are met. The service is FREE and available at short notice to carers who need emergency cover which could prevent a crisis occurring and relief for carers who want to ensure that they maintain relationships and have a life outside of caring.

The CRESS service:

- offers peace of mind that the person you care for will be looked after if you are not able to,
- can support you to look after your health and wellbeing, by enabling you to attend hospital and GP appointments knowing the person you care for will be looked after.

Training for carers

Our FREE carer training service is designed to give you the confidence and key skills to help you in your caring role.

Most of us have probably heard the saying “most accidents take place in the home” and unfortunately that is true. The chances of tripping or falling increase dramatically as you get older and less mobile.

Our qualified team can undertake house assessments and can give you free professional advice on keeping the person you care for safe.

Carer Friendly Employer Program

The Carer Friendly Employer Program is designed to support employers throughout your journey towards building a positive and inclusive workplace for all staff who are, or who will become carers.

Without the right support, 1 in 6 carers give up work or reduce working hours to care, but many will be your most skilled and experienced staff.

On completion of the Program, the employer will receive our Carer Friendly employer logo and will receive a certificate acknowledging their commitment to employees.

To find out more about the program and how your employer can sign up email: Comms@carerstrusthofe.org.uk



Support groups

We also run support groups and workshops for carers, both virtually and in person in different areas of Coventry and Warwickshire.

Some examples include:

- Working carers support group
- Yoga and relaxation sessions
- Social groups including a walking group
- Care and Share (Mental Health Support Group)
- Mindfulness workshops
- Creative workshops

Carers Energy Support Service

We can help you access energy-related advice and support, so managing energy costs doesn't feel like such a big worry.

Carers Energy Support Service in Coventry can support you with:

- Controlling your household energy usage
- Taking meter readings to monitor your cost
- Accessing eligible discounts
- Switching energy supplier and tariff
- Advice on ways to keep your home safe and warm.

Go CV+



The **Go CV** card is a FREE scheme for Coventry residents, allowing you to benefit from offers and discounts on events, activities and attractions as well as savings from local businesses. All carers registered with the Carers Trust Heart of England are entitled to a **Go CV+ Card** which enables even greater discounts. You can read more about the scheme [here](#).

**WHEN
THEY NEED**

**A FRIEND
SUPPORT
ADVICE
STRENGTH
A BREAK
HELP
ACTION
RECOGNITION
IMPACT
CHANGE**

**WE'RE
THE ONE
CARERS
TRUST**

Heart of England

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