

# Supporting carers at work: opportunity and imperative



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# 1. Context and background

After 18 months of the pandemic, and having charted carers' experiences throughout the crisis, Carers UK wanted to focus on their experiences in paid employment and what support they need in order to work. The research sets out the impact of the pandemic on carers' work and how they have managed their working hours.



We explore the extent of flexible working and carer friendly employment measures at work, and where they have struggled to access them.

Finally, we look at the areas of potential and risk – where employers could go further to support carers and help them remain at work and the degree of risk for carers if they don't get certain measures – where they would have to reduce their working hours or give up work altogether.

We look at a number of recommendations for all employers, but also the role of social care and health organisations, local commissioners and Government.

With new positive employment legislation on the horizon, social care and health services under severe pressure and certain areas of the economy with labour in short supply, keeping carers in work for as long as possible is an objective that suits everyone, including carers. This also has benefits for employers, local services, but also the Government and the economy.

## Flexible working, caring and support at work

The pandemic has accelerated the flexible working agenda and the visibility of carers and caring within the workplace. Providing unpaid care and paid employment has rapidly gone up the agenda during the pandemic as employers could see for the first time the challenges in people's homes, living rooms and lives.

As many social care services shut down around them, extra school care for disabled children closed and with some families reducing homecare services in a bid to keep their relative as safe as possible, employers saw the real challenge of juggling work and care. For some, this was even more visible through digital technology in people's homes.

They also saw employees and colleagues applying for furlough because of caring for an older or disabled person. This very important policy introduced by Government early on has protected both carers and employers alike and showed positive understanding of caring within the workplace.

Unpaid caring and work was already the subject of increased attention with our ageing population. A pre-pandemic survey found that 52% of employers thought caring within our ageing society would have an impact on their organisation's people management policies and processes in the next five years.<sup>1</sup>

Caring has shown to have an effect on employment at even low levels of providing care. Providing even five hours of unpaid care per week has an impact.<sup>2</sup> With more people providing care, this means that caring is and will be a more widespread issue for employers to consider.

Women are more likely to work part-time and provide unpaid care. This results in a financial penalty, affecting women more than men and which lasts into retirement.<sup>3</sup> As a combination of all of these factors, carers are also considered to be one of the key groups of people who are 'under-pensioned', with carers reaching retirement age with just 37% of the UK average pension wealth.<sup>4</sup>



Looking at this from the employers' perspective, there are key gains to be had in supporting unpaid carers in the workplace through a variety of different measures. This includes increased wellbeing at work, staff loyalty and cost savings through recruitment and productivity by retaining key staff.<sup>5</sup>

There is clear evidence from employees who are carers that support at work from employers has improved their health and wellbeing in the workplace and that they were less likely consider reducing working hours or giving up altogether.<sup>6</sup>

With labour markets very tight and in short supply in key industries, employers are keenly aware of the need for flexibility. The numbers of school leavers will not meet the skills and jobs gap and retention is critical for employers to maintain productivity. Even pre-pandemic, the Government's Industrial Strategy<sup>7</sup> recognised caring and juggling work and care as key issues for our ageing society and workforce.

1 CIPD Reward Management Report 2018 [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/reward-management-report-2018\\_tcm18-51630.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/reward-management-report-2018_tcm18-51630.pdf)

2 Employers for Carers Walking the Tightrope 2016 <https://www.employersforcarers.org/news/item/1188-caring-in-later-life-significantly-harms-employmentprospects>

3 State of Caring 2021 Survey revealed that Male carers are more likely to be employed full time (25%) than female carers (19%)

4 NOW Pensions The underpensioned report 2020 [https://www.fairpensionsforall.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NP000\\_Underpension\\_report\\_Nov2020-1.pdf](https://www.fairpensionsforall.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/NP000_Underpension_report_Nov2020-1.pdf)

5 Business in the Community Supporting Carers in the Workplace 2019 <https://www.bitc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/bitc-age-toolkit-supportingcarers-may2019.pdf>

6 Supporting Working Carers, how employers and employees can benefit, Chartered Institute for Personnel Development (CIPD) and University of Sheffield, June 2020



## Flexible working and Carer's Leave – current and future rights

In their manifesto, the UK Government committed to introducing Carer's Leave and increasing rights and access to flexible working. After a consultation on Carer's Leave, the UK Government has now responded by committing to legislating for up to a week's unpaid leave per year<sup>8</sup> and is currently consulting on day one rights to flexible working.<sup>9</sup> Both elements hold great potential for carers and for business in achieving the goals of remaining in work, keeping healthy and retaining staff.

Since caring can happen at any time to a person of any gender, any age, and in any job, flexibility becomes essential.

Carers currently have the right to request flexible working if they have been employed for at least 26 weeks and also have the right to take very short term unpaid leave in an emergency.<sup>10</sup> Both of these provisions have been important for carers since they were first introduced. The Equality Act 2014 prevents any discrimination of carers by association with a disabled or older person.



## How many carers are juggling work and care and who are they?

The 2011 Census found there were around 3 million carers juggling paid work and unpaid care.<sup>11</sup> Carers UK carried out research in 2019 using a wider definition incorporating more of the emotional support that often goes unrecognised. This put the number of working carers at an estimated 5 million.<sup>12</sup>

The pandemic increased this number still further, with millions of people becoming carers effectively overnight. Using the same methodology, we saw a rise of 4.5 million carers, 2.8 million of whom were juggling work and care.<sup>13</sup>

Men are more likely to be juggling full-time work and caring, but women care in greater numbers and are more likely to be working part-time.<sup>14</sup> A woman has a 50:50 chance of providing unpaid care by the time they are 46, while a man has the same chance by the time they are 57 – 11 years later.<sup>15</sup> But both are likely to experience caring during prime working years.

The NHS Staff Survey found a staggering one in three of their staff had some kind of unpaid caring responsibility for a friend or family who was disabled, ill or older and needed support.<sup>16</sup> With the age profile of NHS staff and the skilled nature of many jobs, including administrative work, retention of staff who are carers has become a key issue within the NHS People Plan and strategies to deal with staff shortages.

## How recognising and supporting carers supports diversity and inclusion

It is clear from the profile of carers that supporting them in the workplace supports diversity and inclusion across all protected characteristics. For most of the over 240 employers that Carers UK works with through our Employers for Carers forum, caring sits within diversity and inclusion strategies. The same is true for Carer Positive employers in Scotland.

7 BEIS Industrial Strategy 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-the-grand-challenges>

8 BEIS Carers Leave Consultation 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/carers-leave>

9 BEIS Flexible Working Consultation <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-flexible-working-the-default>

10 Carers UK Your Rights in Work 2019 [https://www.carersuk.org/images/Help\\_Advice/work/Your\\_rights\\_in\\_work\\_UK1031\\_JUNE\\_2019.pdf](https://www.carersuk.org/images/Help_Advice/work/Your_rights_in_work_UK1031_JUNE_2019.pdf)

11 Carers UK Stats about Carers 2019 <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/facts-about-carers-2019>

12 Ibid

13 Carers UK Carers Weeks 202 Research Report 2020 [https://www.carersuk.org/images/CarersWeek2020/CW\\_2020\\_Research\\_Report\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.carersuk.org/images/CarersWeek2020/CW_2020_Research_Report_WEB.pdf)

14 58% of carers are female – Carers UK Stats about Carers 2019 <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/facts-about-carers-2019>. State of Caring 2021 revealed that Male carers are more likely to be employed full time (25%) than female carers (19%)

15 Carers UK Will I care: The likelihood of being a carer in adult life 2019 [https://www.carersuk.org/images/News\\_campaigns/CarersRightsDay\\_Nov19\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.carersuk.org/images/News_campaigns/CarersRightsDay_Nov19_FINAL.pdf)

16 Carers UK Research Briefing: NHS Staff Survey 2020 2021 <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/carers-uk-briefing-on-nhs-staff-survey-2020>

## 2. Characteristics of carers in the study and employment status

This analysis looks at the experiences of all working carers, 6% of whom were aged 65 and over.

For comparison with other data sets, 43% of respondents who were aged between 18-64 and providing unpaid care were in any kind of paid employment or furlough.

Our survey found that women are more likely to be working carers; 44% of women report being in employment, compared to 38% of male carers in this age group.



**Table 1** Employment status of working carer respondents (rounded to nearest integer) – working carers, all ages

Employment status	% of all working carers	% of male carers who were working	% of female carers who were working
Working full time	46%	62%	42%
Working part-time	39%	24%	42%
Self employed full time	4%	4%	4%
Self employed part time	11%	10%	11%
Furlough	1%	0%	1%
	100%	100%	100%



Male carers are more likely to be working full-time compared with women, who are more likely to be working part-time. This follows national patterns.

The amount of care being provided had a significant impact on employment for carers aged 18-64:

- Of carers who provide under 35 hours of care per week, nearly three-quarters (73%) are in employment, with close to half (43%) in full time employment.
- Of carers who provide over 35 hours of care per week, only a third (32%) are in employment and only one in eight (13%) are working full time.

## How carers' work situation has changed during the pandemic

Workers have seen huge changes during the pandemic. Only one in four working carers (26%) have **not** seen any change to their working situation.

Only

26%



of working carers have not seen any change to their working situation

**Table 2 How carers' employment situation has changed – % of all working carers**

(carers could select more than one option)

Employment situation with regard to COVID-19 pandemic	All responses
My work situation hasn't changed	26%
I am now working from home full-time	26%
I am now working from home part-time	21%
I am self-employed and I have lost business	7%
I am self-employed and I have gained business	2%
I have had to reduce my working hours	13%
My working hours have been reduced by my employer	2%
I have had to increase my working hours	6%
I have had to leave my job due to concerns about catching Covid-19	1%
I have had to leave my job for another reason	2%
I have lost my job	1%
Other (please specify)	12%

Table 3 below shows that there are substantial differences in experience between full-time workers and part-time workers, with the latter more likely to have reduced their working hours.

Part-time workers are also less likely to be anxious about a return to the office, where there appears to be a trade-off between flexibility and security.

Most significantly, 59% of full-time workers report working from home for part or all of the time, compared to 35% of part-time employees who work from home for part or all of the time.

59%



of full-time workers report working from home for part or all of the time

35%



of part-time workers report working from home for part or all of the time

**Table 3 Thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic, how has your work situation changed?**  
All working carers by full-time and part time-work (carers could select more than one option)

Employment situation with regard to COVID-19 pandemic	Full time	Part time
My work situation hasn't changed	25%	27%
I am now working from home full-time	46%	6%
I am now working from home part-time	13%	29%
I am self-employed and I have lost business	3%	11%
I am self-employed and I have gained business	2%	2%
I have had to reduce my working hours	3%	23%
My working hours have been reduced by my employer	1%	3%
I have had to increase my working hours	8%	4%
I have had to leave my job due to concerns about catching Covid-19	1%	1%
I have had to leave my job for another reason	1%	3%
I have lost my job	1%	1%
Other (please specify)	11%	14%

## The pandemic has had a negative effect on carers' employment, but furlough made an important difference

The pandemic has continued to have a substantial negative effect on the employment prospects of carers, with almost a quarter (23%) having left their job, had reduced hours at work or lost business while self employed.

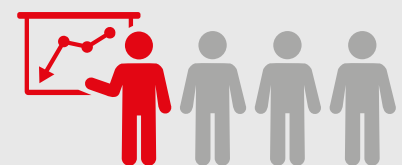
The negative effects on employment reported in the State of Caring 2021 survey echo previous Carers UK research; in April 2020<sup>17</sup> almost a fifth (17%) reported having lost their job or being unable to work due to social distancing rules, and by October 2020<sup>18</sup> 20% had either reduced their hours or left their job due to the impact of caring and COVID-19.

The furlough scheme supported carers, when it was in operation, with one in eight (13%) furloughed in April 2020<sup>19</sup>, falling to 5% in October 2020.<sup>20</sup>

A negligible (1%) number of carers reported being furloughed in the 2021 State of Caring report (August/September 2021) as the scheme drew to a close.



Almost  
a quarter  
**23%**



of working carers have left their job, reduced hours or lost business, if self-employed, due to the pandemic

<sup>17</sup> Carers UK April 2020 Caring Behind Closed Doors [https://www.carersuk.org/images/News\\_and\\_campaigns/Behind\\_Closed\\_Doors\\_2020/Caring\\_behind\\_closed\\_doors\\_April20\\_pages\\_web\\_final.pdf](https://www.carersuk.org/images/News_and_campaigns/Behind_Closed_Doors_2020/Caring_behind_closed_doors_April20_pages_web_final.pdf)

<sup>18</sup>

<sup>19</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Carers UK, October 2020, Caring Behind Closed Doors Six Months on <http://www.carersuk.org/closeddoors2>



# 3. Carers' experience of juggling work and care during COVID-19

In this chapter we look at carers' experiences of juggling work and care.



## Working from home has become common for working carers

Since COVID-19 began, almost half of respondents (47%) report working from home at least part of the time. Almost a quarter of working carers (26%) worked from home full time, with a fifth (21%) working from home part of the time.

## Worry and exhaustion

☞ *It is very hard. I walk a tightrope and do not look down. I need to work for me. I am either working or caring and often overlap so no time for myself at all.*

Working through the pandemic has been extremely challenging for many carers, who have faced exhaustion, anxiety and uncertainty about their ability to juggle work and care.

Earlier in the year in April, carers told us that they were stressed and exhausted juggling work and care. In our *Breaks or breakdown'* report<sup>21</sup> the majority of working carers (55%) said they felt overwhelmed, and three-quarters (75%) said they felt exhausted as a result of their caring role.<sup>22</sup>

The research also found that 71% of working carers said they felt stressed and anxious as a result of caring during the pandemic.

<sup>21</sup> Carers UK, June 2021 Breaks or breakdown: Carers Week 2021 <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/breaks-or-breakdown-carers-week-2021-report>

<sup>22</sup> Carers UK, June 2021 Breaks or breakdown: Carers Week 2021 <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/breaks-or-breakdown-carers-week-2021-report>

# 77%

of working carers feel tired at work because of their caring role



# 72%

of working carers worry about continuing to juggle work and care



**Table 4** All working carers agreeing statements about anxiety, tiredness and returning to the office

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel anxious about caring while I am working	4%	6%	17%	43%	30%
I feel tired at work because of my caring role	3%	4%	15%	42%	35%
Returning to the office will make caring more challenging	3%	6%	38%	23%	30%
I am worrying about continuing to juggle work and care	4%	5%	19%	36%	36%
I have given up opportunities at work because of caring	6%	10%	22%	31%	31%

Nearly half a year later, this new research shows that three-quarters (72%) of working carers say that they worry about continuing to juggle work and caring and that they continue to worry about those they care for when they are at work.

Juggling both work and care can be draining for carers with over three-quarters (77%) also stating that they feel tired at work because of the demands of their caring role.

The return to the office/non-home based work is perceived as more of a challenge for full-time workers, 61% of whom state that it would make caring more challenging, compared with 48% of part-time employees who agree or strongly agree with the statement.



# 53%

of working carers said returning to the office will make caring more challenging, rising to 61% of those working full-time



## Home working – a positive for some, a challenge for others

Working from home has been a positive for some carers and challenge for others. Our new research has found that 52% of carers agree that working flexibly in the pandemic has enabled them to more effectively balance work and care. Others commented that it helped them to protect the person they cared for.

☞ *I changed my job from public facing due to concerns about catching COVID-19 and taking it into those who I provide care for.*

However, 63% of carers also state that work outside the home gives them a break from their caring role.

☞ *Contact with work colleagues is important, I'm looking forward to getting back to the office sometimes and not always working from home which is isolating.*

☞ *Working from an office can act as respite from your caring role.*

It is clear that home working is not the preferred outcome for all working carers, many of whom would rather some return to the office or workplace to alleviate feelings of isolation. Others have commented about the intensity of the caring role when working from home and caring from home.

☞ *I love my work as it gives me a break from caring, however, I am really beginning to struggle working from home full-time. I would love to hot desk two days a week so that I can get out of my house.*

Hybrid models, tailored approaches are the way forward for carers to enable them to juggle work and care and support their health and wellbeing.



# 52%

of working carers agreed that working flexibly had helped them balance work and care better



# 63%

of working carers agreed that work outside the home gave them a break from caring





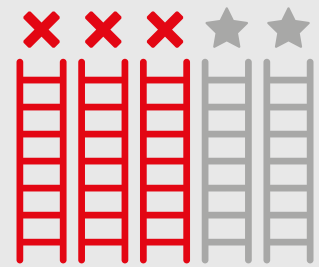
## Employers have made good progress in flexible working, but there's more potential for a tailored approach

Almost half (47%) of carers are now working from home part of the time or all of the time.

However, a third (34%) of working carers state that their employer has become much more understanding about caring and there remain barriers to carers in the workplace; almost two-thirds (62%) of working carers stated that they have given up opportunities at work due to care commitments. There is more work to do in embedding carer-friendly policies in all workplaces across the country.

# 62%

of working carers have given up opportunities at work because of caring



**Table 5** All working carers and % agreeing with statements about flexibility and the role of work

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Working flexibly in the pandemic has enabled me to balance work and care	10%	10%	27%	32%	20%
My employer has become much more understanding about caring	10%	14%	43%	25%	9%
My line manager understands caring well and is supportive	9%	10%	30%	32%	19%
My employer has introduced new measures which really help me juggle work with caring	12%	19%	46%	17%	6%
I've benefited from measures in the workplace to help me juggle work and care	11%	15%	38%	26%	9%
Work gives me a break from my caring role	7%	10%	20%	44%	19%

Full time workers who responded to our survey seem slightly more likely to have an understanding line manager (60%) compared to part-time workers (58%). Both groups are equally likely to feel they have an understanding employer – 54%.

Full-time workers are significantly more likely to state that flexible working during the pandemic has helped them balance care and work (58%), compared to their part-time peers (48%). This could reflect the fact that part-time workers already have an element of flexibility that full time workers did not. 40% of full-time workers also perceive that their employer has become more understanding of caring, compared to 28% of part-time workers.





## 4. What carers need to be able to remain in or return to work

We asked carers what they needed to be able to remain in or return to work, including carers who were furloughed.

Having an understanding employer and then line manager come top of the list for working carers. These two areas, along with flexible working, come top of the list where carers already have this in place.

Some of the options above are not applicable to some carers. For example, not all carers need or use care services. Some care services have returned already.

For some carers, working from home all or part of the time would not be possible e.g. a nurse in acute services or a supermarket delivery driver, and some options won't apply. Table 7 below sets out how these options then affect carers where these options do apply to them.



**Table 7** All working carers and workplace support they need to juggle work and care where those options apply to them

	I have this already at work	I need this at work	If I don't have this I'm at risk of reducing my working hours	If I don't have this I'm at risk of giving up work altogether
Working from home most/all of the time	64%	18%	9%	9%
Working from home some of the time	64%	21%	7%	9%
Flexible hours and days	61%	26%	6%	7%
Reducing my hours of work	57%	24%	10%	10%
Ability to take paid time off: Carer's Leave	28%	56%	7%	8%
Ability to take unpaid leave	49%	37%	6%	8%
Working Carer's Passport	21%	69%	4%	6%
Understanding line manager	66%	27%	2%	4%
Understanding employer	59%	32%	3%	5%
Affordable and accessible alternative care	8%	52%	18%	23%
The care services I used to rely on returning	18%	47%	15%	20%

## Flexibility as a positive preventative measure

As carers report above, there are good levels of employer adoption of some elements of flexible working such as home or hybrid working or flexible hours.

However, carers' responses also show that there is potential for more tailored change. Table 6 below shows where carers say they need various flexibility measures in place in order to juggle work and care, which shows a desire to work differently. The table also shows where there is greater urgency, with carers at risk of reducing hours or giving up work altogether. Not only does this carry costs for the carer in the short and longer term, there can also be significant costs to business and employers in losing key staff.

Flexibility should be seen as a positive preventative measure, which should be proactively developed and offered by employers.



**Table 6** All working carers and workplace support they need to juggle work and care

	I have this already at work	I need this at work	If I don't have this I'm at risk of reducing my working hours	If I don't have this I'm at risk of giving up work altogether	Not applicable
Working from home most/all of the time	39%	11%	6%	6%	38%
Working from home some of the time	38%	12%	4%	5%	41%
Flexible hours and days	50%	21%	5%	6%	19%
Reducing my hours of work	28%	12%	5%	5%	50%
Ability to take paid time off: Carer's Leave	22%	45%	6%	7%	20%
Ability to take unpaid leave	36%	27%	4%	6%	27%
Working Carer's Passport	12%	40%	2%	4%	43%
Understanding line manager	54%	22%	2%	3%	18%
Understanding Employer	50%	27%	2%	4%	17%
Affordable and accessible alternative care	4%	25%	9%	11%	51%
The care services I used to rely on returning	5%	14%	4%	6%	71%

## Carer's Leave – potential for greater adoption and change

A number of carers have access to Carer's Leave. Over a third (36%) have access to unpaid leave, with over one in five (22%) being able to take paid Carer's Leave. The positive level of responses could reflect the fact that Carers UK works with good practice employers.

A pre-pandemic 2020 CIPD report revealed that unpaid care leave was available to 19% of working carers, but only 9% were entitled to take paid care leave.<sup>23</sup> These results show that there is the potential for early adoption of unpaid Carer's Leave ahead of the Government introducing these new rights within the workplace.

We would also encourage employers to go one step further to offer paid Carer's Leave, looking at the growing evidence base behind this policy.

*It's impossible to have any time for myself between work, caring for my father and looking after my children. Paid Carer's Leave would be helpful so I don't keep having to use up my annual leave to provide care.*



of working carers are at risk of reducing their hours or giving up work without paid Carer's Leave



of working carers are at risk of reducing their hours or giving up work without unpaid leave



27%

of working carers felt they needed unpaid leave at work



<sup>23</sup> CIPD Supporting working carers 2020 [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/supporting-working-carers-2\\_tcm18-80339.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/supporting-working-carers-2_tcm18-80339.pdf)



## Carer Passports – clear desire for greater and wider introduction from carers

A Working Carer Passport is a record which identifies a carer in some way and sets out an offer of support, services or other benefits in response.<sup>24</sup> Carers who use them say that they can be very useful tools in managing flexibility, and they do not necessarily involve contractual changes.

One in eight (12%) working carers state that they have a Carer Passport. Importantly, almost half (46%) state that they need one at work. However, 43% of carers are unfamiliar with Carer Passports. Given that this is a good practice measure, this suggests opportunities for greater awareness and adoption by employers. Several employers within our Employers for Carers network have introduced new Working Carer Passports and those with them in place have promoted them heavily during the pandemic as a measure to help manage care.



# 43%



of working carers are unfamiliar with Carer Passports

## Line manager awareness is improving, but some areas of concern

Half of working carers (54%) agree with the statement that they have an understanding line manager, with only a small minority (6%) stating that they are at risk of giving up employment or reducing hours due to a lack of understanding from their line manager.

However, a significant number of carers do not feel supported in the workplace – one in five (19%) of working carers do not feel that their line manager understands caring well. We feel that there is still more that can be done to improve line manager awareness within the workplace, giving them the knowledge and tools to support their colleagues to juggle work and care within organisation or business requirements.

# 19%

of working carers do not have a line manager who is supportive



<sup>24</sup> Defined by Carers Passports: <https://carerspassports.uk/>



## Employer awareness of caring shows progress, but still room for improvement

Employers have shown some progress in ensuring they provide a carer-friendly workplace. One in four (23%) working carers say that their employer has introduced new measures that really help them juggle work with caring responsibilities.

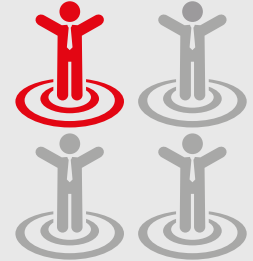
A third (34%) of working carers said that their employer has become much more understanding of their caring role. However, a quarter (24%) disagreed with the statement, meaning that a significant number of employers were not understanding of the carer's role.

☞ *I work in a high-pressure job with long hours – I haven't told my employers about my caring role for fear of being treated differently or pitied. I worked hard to get my job and am in line for a promotion, I recently needed to take time off work for my mental health but couldn't because I was ashamed to tell work I couldn't manage, and thought it would risk my promotion and/or job.*

☞ *Don't think I can return to my previous part-time hours if I have to go back to the office and not work from home. It has made such a difference to my health/stress levels. You can only appreciate how much something has impacted on you when you have stopped doing it, but my employer is eager to get staff back to the office as soon as possible.*

# 23%

of working carers have benefited from new measures in the workplace



# 34%

of working carers agreed their employer was more understanding. However 24% disagreed.



☞ *I had to turn down a full-time job offer that would not allow flexibility to work from home.*

Carers' comments suggest that there is a balance to be struck between the needs of employers and the needs of their employees.



## Social care is a concern – carers risk giving up work through lack of care

The biggest challenge to working carers, by a substantial margin, is the lack of affordable and accessible care.<sup>25</sup> Pre-pandemic, an estimated 600 carers were giving up work every day in order to care. Only 9% of working carers state that they have access to affordable social care whilst in employment. One in five carers (20%) said they needed affordable and accessible care otherwise they were at risk of reducing their hours or giving up work altogether.

A broader concern is that employers and businesses have no control over this external factor. 63% of employers said that social care was core to the wellbeing of their employees.<sup>26</sup> As care services are reduced, it becomes increasingly hard for carers to juggle work and care, whatever flexible measures are introduced by employers.

There has been a distinct and problematic shift in the attitude towards carers giving up work in order to plug the shortage of care. This will have repercussions for business and the economy and most importantly for carers themselves.

In Wales the Social Care Inspectorate said that in the event of a shortage of care workers, carers would have to provide more care.<sup>27</sup> In its impact assessment of hospital discharge measures, the UK Government said that discharging people earlier from hospital back into the community would mean that some carers would choose to reduce their working hours or give up altogether.<sup>28</sup>

## Digital inclusion and access makes a difference

The qualitative data shows that digital inclusion and access to remote working has made a big and positive difference for carers, who now feel able to work at home.

*Due to Covid I am able to work remotely from home, this has definitely improved my health too as I'm not trying to juggle so much of my time and I don't spend 2 hours plus travelling back & forth to work daily. The work/life balance and the addition of caring for my husband has greatly improved. I have more energy and quality time too.*

Equally, digital inclusion is particularly important to carers who are working because they are able to access services at a time that is convenient for them.



41%



of working carers who rely on care services are at risk of reducing hours or giving up care without accessible and affordable care



20%



of working carers will have to reduce working hours or give up if they don't get accessible and affordable care



<sup>25</sup> Carers UK Juggling work and unpaid care: a growing issue 2019 [http://www.carersuk.org/images/News\\_and\\_campaigns/Juggling\\_work\\_and\\_unpaid\\_care\\_report\\_final\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.carersuk.org/images/News_and_campaigns/Juggling_work_and_unpaid_care_report_final_WEB.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Employers for Carers (Efc) September 2020, Supporting working carers in COVID-19: Response and reflections <https://www.employersforcarers.org/resources/research/item/1531-supporting-working-carers-in-covid-19-response-and-reflections>

<sup>27</sup> BBC News Covid: Carer shortage 'biggest worry' for watchdog 2021 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-58259636>

<sup>28</sup> DHSC Health and Care Bill 2021 Impact Assessments for Adult Social Care Provisions 2021 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1017170/social-care-impact-assessments-for-health-and-care-bill.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1017170/social-care-impact-assessments-for-health-and-care-bill.pdf)

## Employers' response to the pandemic – including recovery and return

A survey of 114 employers<sup>29</sup> about their response to COVID-19 has revealed that businesses with pre-existing policies around working flexibility were best placed to weather the disruption caused by the pandemic.

2.8 million workers took on caring responsibilities during the pandemic, prompting employers to enact carer-friendly policies and support employees juggling work and care.

Nine out of ten (90%) of employers surveyed stated that they had put in additional arrangements to support carers' health and wellbeing during the pandemic, with three-quarters (75%) saying that they had offered additional flexible working arrangements for carers. By autumn 2021, 80% of employers said they had seen an increase in flexible working requests, up from 75% in 2020.

Similarly, over 4 in 10 employers (42%) stated that they offered additional leave arrangements for carers, with almost half (49%) either having new organisational plans as a result of the pandemic or planning to develop new working arrangements. By autumn 2021 this had increased to 62% of employers offering additional leave arrangements.<sup>30</sup>

90% of employers in our autumn 2021 survey could offer remote working to some or all of their staff. This was up from 74% in autumn 2020.<sup>31</sup>

Evidently many employers are rising to the challenge; the pandemic has provided opportunities to embed carer-friendly policies in the workplace and ensure that carers are supported to stay in employment and thrive in their roles.

*Employees were encouraged to discuss their personal circumstances with their line manager so that as an organisation we were best placed to serve our customers, while reducing the health risks to our most vulnerable employees and their loved ones.*

*We joined Employers for Carers to provide our employees with further specialist support. We have actively promoted our employee benefits such as our employee assistance programme and an app which provides a remote GP service, mental health support etc. Employees have been able to talk to their line manager or HR at any time if they are experiencing problems or need support.*

*We have encouraged all employees to prioritise their/their families' wellbeing during the pandemic and offered managers guidance in supporting their teams with informal working arrangements whatever the reason.*

*This has always been a bit of a known but ignored group of people – and this has brought it to the front and allows for this to be discussed openly.*

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented – and continues to present – major challenges to both carers and employers, we also recognise that some excellent support and innovative responses have been developed by organisations and managers to deal with the situation.<sup>32</sup>

90%



of Employers for Carers members offered remote working to some or all of their staff

<sup>29</sup> Employers for Carers (Efc) September 2020, Supporting working carers in COVID-19: Response and reflections <https://www.employersforcarers.org/resources/research/item/1531-supporting-working-carers-in-covid-19-response-and-reflections>

<sup>30</sup> Employers for Carers (Efc) September 2020, Supporting working carers in COVID-19: Response and reflections <https://www.employersforcarers.org/resources/research/item/1531-supporting-working-carers-in-covid-19-response-and-reflections>

<sup>31</sup> Employers for Carers (Efc) September 2020, Supporting working carers in COVID-19: Response and reflections

<sup>32</sup> Taken from Employers for Carers (Efc) September 2020, Supporting working carers in COVID-19: Response and reflections <https://www.employersforcarers.org/resources/research/item/1531-supporting-working-carers-in-covid-19-response-and-reflections>

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations – the future of work, care and caring

The future of work is critical to keeping carers in paid employment. Developments in home working, use of digital technology and increased flexibility have improved many carers' lives for the better. But will these measures stay and what would the impact be on carers if they do not remain?



For those who find home working and flexibility better, we want to hold onto these benefits and build on them.

For others who need to be in a non-home-based environment or who have jobs that cannot accommodate working from home, we need to redefine flexibility. For some it will be flexibility around shifts. For others with a changing shift pattern, it might be a fixed and predictable pattern so that they are able to plan care in advance.

The results show that many tried and tested methods are possible to implement with low costs but big outcomes for carers.

Supporting carers at work is not just about managing through the pandemic, but the future of job design, ageing and caring.

The results also show that care has a bigger role to play in the future, as it does in other ageing societies. Care must be seen as part of the social infrastructure that is needed for carers to work and care otherwise carers pay a high personal price and employers pay a productivity price – with higher costs of recruitment, training and potential ill-health amongst their employees as they become exhausted juggling work and care.

This must be factored into all of the Government's plans for the reform of health and social care across all four nations – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.



# Recommendations

## Recommendations for employers

- 1** Carers UK recommends that employers implement the suggested good practice points in our recent publication on supporting working carers.<sup>33</sup>
- 2** Carers UK recommends increased efforts to ensure that carers are identified and supported within the workplace building on the learning developed in the pandemic.
- 3** We would encourage all employers to review their flexible working policies, including flexibility of hours and or location, with a view to how they support carers.
- 4** Line managers should be supported to understand the needs of carers, thereby building capability and capacity into business.
- 5** Where employers find that carers are struggling to access social care support and this is putting their employment at risk they should signpost to Carers UK and other local services.
- 6** We strongly support increased learning and sharing good practice amongst employers and would encourage employers to join Employers for Carers.<sup>34</sup>
- 7** Employers should explicitly include unpaid carers within their equality, diversity and inclusion policies.
- 8** All employers with equalities and diversity monitoring should include unpaid carers, with a simple explanation in any of their equalities data collection so that they are able to recognise and identify carers.
- 9** We would encourage employers without Carer's Leave policies in place to become early adopters of the provision, ahead of new legislation.
- 10** We would encourage employers with unpaid Carer's Leave to go one step further and introduce it as a paid leave.
- 11** We would encourage employers to apply for Carer Confident benchmarking in the UK and Carer Positive in Scotland, in order to evidence, validate and improve on their support for carers.
- 12** We would encourage employers and businesses to go one step further to attain the highest level of Carer Confident – Ambassador<sup>35</sup> – which also links to our Carer Friendly Company Blueprint<sup>36</sup>. This includes promoting carer-friendly employment practices to supply chains and networks. For Scotland, this would mean attaining the Carer Positive Exemplary level<sup>37</sup> which is also included in the wider Scottish Business Pledge.
- 13** We would encourage flexible job design as a key tool in helping to optimise carers' ability to juggle work and care and to re-enter or remain in the labour market. This is particularly important for women, carers with health issues or disabilities and older workers.
- 14** We would encourage the use of the mid-life MOT as a prevention measure to support carers.<sup>38</sup>
- 15** Carer passports are a popular and useful tool in the workplace to be able to record conversations and we would encourage further adoption.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Employers for Carers (EfC) September 2020, Supporting working carers in COVID-19: Response and reflections <https://www.employersforcarers.org/resources/research/item/1531-supporting-working-carers-in-covid-19-response-and-reflections>

<sup>34</sup> Employers for Carers <https://www.employersforcarers.org/>

<sup>35</sup> Employers for Carers Carer Confident levels <https://www.employersforcarers.org/carer-confident/carer-confident-levels>

<sup>36</sup> Carers UK Carer Friendly Company Blueprint 2021 <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/carer-friendly-company-blueprint>

<sup>37</sup> Carer Positive Carer Positive Awards <https://www.carerpositive.org/carer-positive-awards>

<sup>38</sup> Aviva Mid-Life MOT app <https://www.aviva.co.uk/retirement/tools/mid-life-mot-app/>

<sup>39</sup> Carers UK Carer Passport Scheme <https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/campaigns/carer-passport-scheme>

## Recommendations for UK and nation Governments

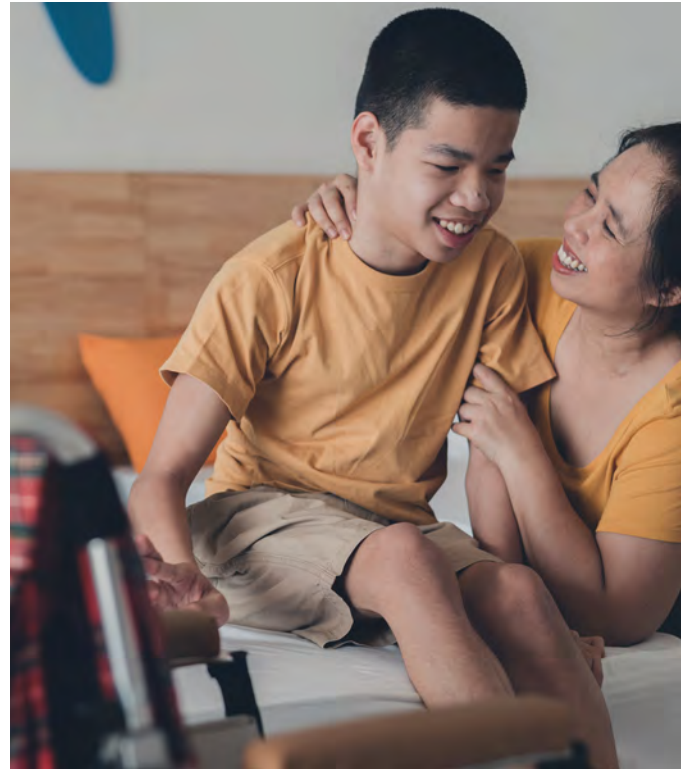
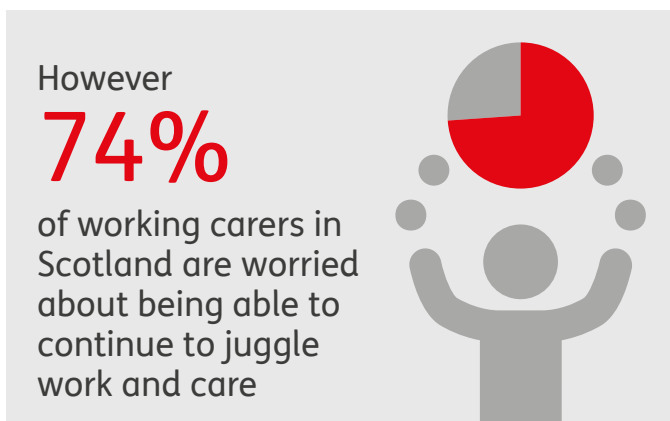
- 16** We would encourage the UK Government to legislate for Carer's Leave and day one rights to flexible working at their earliest opportunity.
- 17** We would encourage UK and nation Governments to carry out labour market modelling to look at the impact and likelihood of providing care, including caring in key sectors, and map this against the social care market and care services availability.
- 18** Social care needs to be seen as an economic necessity that enables some carers and disabled people to be able to work. This must be factored into social care reform, and care market planning and projections in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Risks in the care market will translate into risks for businesses as carers try to juggle work and unpaid care.
- 19** We would encourage UK and nation Governments to lead by example, by seeking to use their procurement power to ensure that suppliers adopt carer-friendly employment practices.
- 20** We would encourage the UK and nation Governments and Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) to lead by example, by offering paid Carer's Leave for employees and recognising the benefits that this brings.
- 21** Pensions work and predictions should continue to factor in caring as a specific element in work life, particularly for women.
- 22** The Department of Work and Pensions should take account of carers' needs with regards to its Restart and Recovery Schemes.
- 23** The UK Government should consider introducing caring as the 10th protected characteristic, to recognise and value carers.

## Recommendations for local government, health bodies and the voluntary sector

- 24** We recommend that carers' employment is considered when assessing or arranging for services at key points in the system such as hospital discharge, identification at within GP practices, social prescribing or through carer's assessments.
- 25** We would encourage greater adoption of digital technology, including AI, to ensure that carers are able to access services remotely at a time convenient to them. Face-to-face appointments or telephone services are still important and necessary, but where technology can be used, this is highly valuable to working carers.
- 26** Information and advice for working carers is critical to ensure that they are able to access support, whether digital, practical or financial, at the right time for them.
- 27** Identification of carers on records that increases efficiency and reduces the need for duplication of effort would improve working carers' lives.

# Scotland

There are an estimated 1.1 million unpaid carers in Scotland. Before the pandemic around 729,000 people provided care, but this grew substantially with almost 400,000<sup>40</sup> taking on care for the first time.



There are an estimated 270,000 carers juggling work and unpaid care in Scotland.<sup>41</sup> During the pandemic this number soared by a further 227,000<sup>42</sup>, as 58% of those who started caring since the outbreak are also juggling paid care work along with their caring responsibilities.

The responses from Scotland show that many carers have been able to benefit from home working (70%) and other measures such as flexible hours (67%) and paid care leave (41%). Almost half (45%) said that these supports during the pandemic had helped them juggle work and care.

However, almost three-quarters of carers said that they are worried about being able to continue to manage both caring and paid work – and that losing such flexibilities where they had them, or not being able to access them in future, could result in giving up work or reducing hours.

Support to care was also critical, with almost half of carers agreeing strongly or very strongly that the availability of reliable and affordable care services (50%) and a return to pre-pandemic levels of support services (46%) were also critical to ensuring that they can continue to work and care.

<sup>40</sup> The number of carers is based on YouGov Polling and ONS 2019 population estimates Census 2011

<sup>41</sup>

<sup>42</sup> This research was based on polling carried out by YouGov plc in May 2020. The number of carers is based on YouGov Polling and ONS 2019 population estimates. More: <https://www.carersuk.org/scotland/news/covid-19-pandemic-392-000-become-unpaid-carers-in-scotland-in-a-matter-of-weeks>



### Additional recommendations: Scotland

In addition to the recommendations made in the main report, all of which apply equally to Scotland:

**In developing a new national care service and embedding human rights, equity and equality in the heart of social care in Scotland, the Scottish Government should:**

- ensure that unpaid carers have rights to remain in or return to employment as part of care planning, with appropriate services commissioned equitably in all areas to make this a reality

**The Scottish Government should lead in valuing care by developing an outcome on care and caring in the national performance framework to embed their importance to Scottish society and economy.**

**Table S1** Employment status of working carer respondents (rounded to nearest integer) – working carers, all ages

Employment status	% of all working carers
Working full-time	47%
Working part-time	43%
Self employed full time	2%
Self employed part time	8%
Furlough	0%

**Table S2** How carers' employment situation has changed – % of all working carers (carers could select more than one option)

Answer Choices	Responses
My work situation hasn't changed	27%
I am now working from home full-time	25%
I am now working from home part-time	19%
I am self-employed and I have lost business	4%
I am self-employed and I have gained business	1%
I have had to reduce my working hours	15%
My working hours have been reduced by my employer	0%
I have had to increase my working hours	6%
I have had to leave my job due to concerns about catching COVID-19	1%
I have had to leave my job for another reason	2%
I have lost my job	2%
Other	19%

**Table S3** Thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic, how has your work situation changed?  
All working carers by full-time and part-time work (carers could select more than one option)

Answer Choices	Full time	Part time
My work situation hasn't changed	20%	32%
I am now working from home full-time	52%	5%
I am now working from home part-time	14%	24%
I am self-employed and I have lost business	0%	8%
I am self-employed and I have gained business	1%	1%
I have had to reduce my working hours	1%	26%
My working hours have been reduced by my employer	0%	0%
I have had to increase my working hours	13%	1%
I have had to leave my job due to concerns about catching COVID-19	0%	1%
I have had to leave my job for another reason	1%	1%
I have lost my job	1%	2%
Other (please specify)	16%	20%

**Table S4** All working carers agreeing with statements about anxiety, tiredness and returning to the office

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel anxious about caring while I am working	5%	4%	13%	50%	28%
I feel tired at work because of my caring role	6%	7%	10%	40%	38%
Returning to the office will make caring more challenging	5%	13%	40%	19%	23%
I am worrying about continuing to juggle work and care	5%	6%	15%	35%	39%
I have given up opportunities at work because of caring	5%	6%	15%	35%	39%

**Table S5** All working carers agreeing with statements about flexibility and the role of work

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Working flexibly in the pandemic has enabled me to balance work and care	10%	15%	26%	30%	20%
My employer has become much more understanding about caring	8%	16%	49%	16%	11%
My line manager understands caring well and is supportive	9%	10%	26%	36%	20%
My employer has introduced new measures which really help me juggle work with caring	12%	18%	45%	15%	10%
I've benefited from measures in the workplace to help me juggle work and care	11%	15%	36%	24%	15%
Work gives me a break from my caring role	5%	10%	16%	49%	20%

**Table S6** Percentage of carers who either have or need measures in order to remain in or return to work (all working carers in Scotland)

	I have this already at work	I need this at work	If I don't have this I'm at risk of reducing my working hours	If I don't have this I'm at risk of giving up work altogether	N/A
Working from home most/all of the time	42%	7%	8%	3%	41%
Working from home some of the time	37%	12%	6%	1%	44%
Flexible hours and days	54%	19%	5%	3%	19%
Reducing my hours of work	32%	14%	8%	3%	43%
Ability to take paid time off: Carer's Leave	32%	38%	6%	4%	20%
Ability to take unpaid leave	49%	23%	3%	1%	24%
Working Carer Passport	7%	39%	1%	1%	53%
Understanding line manager	58%	18%	2%	4%	18%
Understanding employer	56%	21%	4%	4%	15%
Affordable and accessible alternative care	7%	18%	7%	10%	57%
The care services I used to rely on returning	5%	11%	7%	6%	71%

Table S7 below has removed carers where the option is not applicable. It might be because a carer cannot work from home or because they do not need social care in order to work.

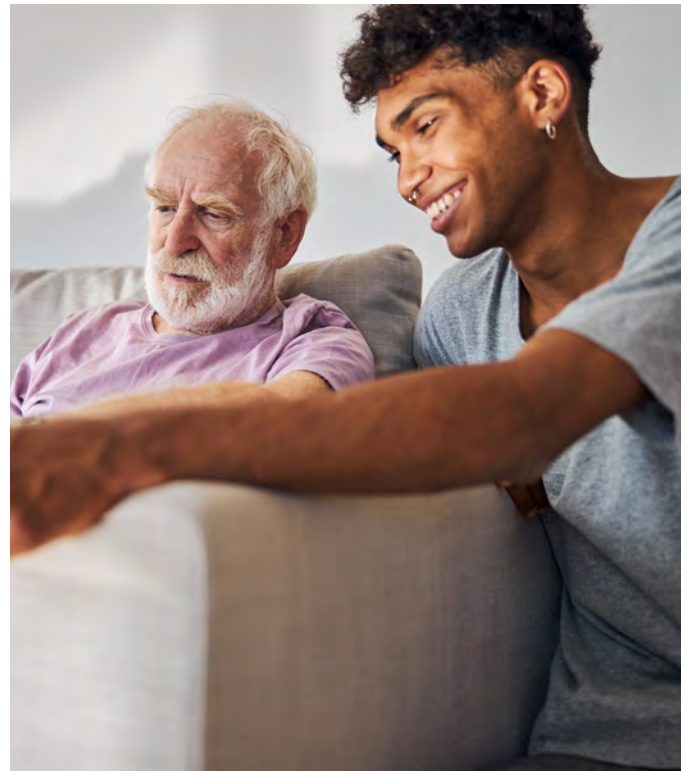
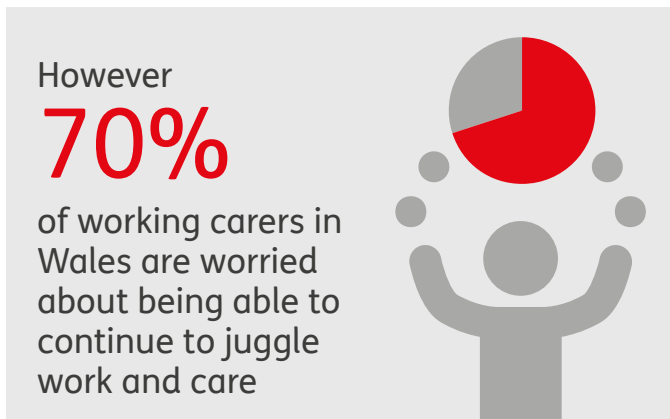
**Table S7** Percentage of working carers who need particular measures to remain in or return to work where this applies to them (all working carers in Scotland)

	I have this already at work	I need this at work	If I don't have this I'm at risk of reducing my working hours	If I don't have this I'm at risk of giving up work altogether
Working from home most/all of the time	70%	12%	14%	4%
Working from home some of the time	65%	22%	12%	1%
Flexible hours and days	67%	23%	7%	4%
Reducing my hours of work	57%	22%	15%	6%
Ability to take paid time off: Carer's Leave	41%	45%	7%	7%
Ability to take unpaid leave	63%	31%	4%	2%
Working Carer Passport	15%	82%	2%	2%
Understanding line manager	68%	25%	3%	5%
Understanding employer	61%	28%	5%	6%
Affordable and accessible alternative care	12%	42%	18%	28%
The care services I used to rely on returning	14%	36%	25%	25%



# Wales

There are an estimated 487,000 carers in Wales. During the pandemic, this grew substantially with almost 200,000<sup>43</sup> taking on care for the first time.



There were an estimated 223,000 carers juggling work and unpaid care in Wales<sup>44</sup> before COVID-19, and this number has increased significantly since the pandemic began.

The responses from Wales show that many carers have been able to benefit from home working (64%) and other measures such as flexible hours (62%) and paid care leave (27%) and, over a third (37%) said that they have benefited from measures in the workplace that help them juggle work and care and over half (54%) say that working flexibly in the pandemic has enabled them to balance work and care.

However, seven in ten carers (70%) carers said that they are worried about being able to continue to manage both caring and paid work – and that losing such flexibilities where they had them, or not being able to

access them in future, could result in giving up work or reducing hours.

Support to care was also critical with four in ten carers agreeing strongly or very strongly that the availability of reliable and affordable care services (42%) and a return to pre-pandemic levels of support services (32%) were also critical to ensuring that they can continue to work and care.

The Welsh Government launched a Strategy for Unpaid Carers in March 2021. The Strategy establishes supporting carers in the workplace as one of four national priorities. A delivery plan for the strategy is due to be finalised by the end of 2021 and is set to place a welcome emphasis on encouraging employers in Wales to be carer confident.

<sup>43</sup> Carers Wales COVID-19 Briefing: Impact on Unpaid Carers in Wales 2020 <https://www.carersuk.org/wales/policy-resources-for-professionals/policy-library/covid-19-briefing-impact-on-unpaid-carers-in-wales>

<sup>44</sup> Carers Wales Policy Briefing; Working Carers 2021 <https://www.carersuk.org/wales/policy-resources-for-professionals/policy-library/working-carers-in-wales-policy-briefing>

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 recognises participation in employment as a source of well-being for carers, and Carers Needs Assessments in Wales are required to consider whether a carer works, or wishes to work in future, with support put in place to enable this if the carer is eligible. Despite this legal requirement to ask about their employment situation, research by Carers Wales in 2019-202 found that only a third (34%) of carers were asked about whether they wished to enter or remain in employment during their Carers Needs Assessment, a substantial decline on the already disappointing figure of 48% who reported the same in 2018-19.<sup>45</sup>

The Welsh Government has a vision to make Wales a “fair work nation”,<sup>46</sup> based upon the recommendations of the Fair Work Commission<sup>47</sup> it established in 2018 which had defined fair work as including the promotion of flexibility at work to create inclusive working environments and a strong voice for employees in the workplace. The Fair Work Commission described “social partnership”, as “integral” to achieving fair work,<sup>48</sup> and the Welsh Government published a draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement Bill in 2021 to strengthen the statutory basis of consultation with stakeholders to improve working conditions. The Bill<sup>49</sup> also proposed duties on public bodies to use socially responsible public procurement to support fair work objectives.

### Additional recommendations: Wales

In addition to the recommendations made in the main report, all of which apply equally to Wales:

- Welsh Government to use their social partnership mechanisms to engage with the public, private and third sectors, including trade unions, to improve awareness and engagement in supporting unpaid carers in employment.
- Welsh Government funding should only be provided to organisations fulfilling, or working towards fulfilling, the definitions and characteristics of fair work. This must include requiring employers to adopt carer-positive practices.
- Welsh Government to scrutinise and monitor adherence to Carers Needs Assessment requirement to consider a carer’s desire enter or maintain employment.

<sup>45</sup> Carers Wales: Track the Act Briefing 4 Monitoring the 3rd year of implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 (2019)

<sup>46</sup> Welsh Government: Draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill (2021)

<sup>47</sup> Fair Work Commission: Fair Work Wales Report of the Fair Work Commission (2019)

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Welsh Government: Draft Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Bill (2021)

**Table W1** Employment status of working carer respondents (rounded to nearest integer) – working carers, all ages

Employment status	% of all working carers
Working full-time	51%
Working part-time	34%
Self employed full time	6%
Self employed part time	9%
Furlough	1%

**Table W2** How carers' employment situation has changed – % of all working carers  
(carers could select more than one option)

Answer Choices	Responses
My work situation hasn't changed	26%
I am now working from home full-time	25%
I am now working from home part-time	26%
I am self-employed and I have lost business	8%
I am self-employed and I have gained business	0%
I have had to reduce my working hours	11%
My working hours have been reduced by my employer	1%
I have had to increase my working hours	5%
I have had to leave my job due to concerns about catching COVID-19	2%
I have had to leave my job for another reason	1%
I have lost my job	1%
Other	10%



**Table W3 Thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic, how has your work situation changed?**

All working carers by full-time and part-time work (carers could select more than one option)

Answer Choices	Full time	Part time
My work situation hasn't changed	24%	20%
I am now working from home full-time	26%	5%
I am now working from home part-time	27%	43%
I am self-employed and I have lost business	8%	14%
I am self-employed and I have gained business	0%	0%
I have had to reduce my working hours	11%	18%
My working hours have been reduced by my employer	1%	3%
I have had to increase my working hours	5%	6%
I have had to leave my job due to concerns about catching COVID-19	2%	1%
I have had to leave my job for another reason	1%	3%
I have lost my job	1%	0%
Other (please specify)	9%	9%

**Table W4 All working carers agreeing with statements about anxiety, tiredness and returning to the office**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel anxious about caring while I am working	8%	7%	14%	40%	31%
I feel tired at work because of my caring role	4%	1%	21%	36%	39%
Returning to the office will make caring more challenging	2%	5%	40%	26%	27%
I am worrying about continuing to juggle work and care	4%	4%	21%	38%	32%
I have given up opportunities at work because of caring	9%	10%	22%	29%	31%

**Table W5 All working carers agreeing with statements about flexibility and the role of work**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Working flexibly in the pandemic has enabled me to balance work and care	9%	12%	25%	35%	19%
My employer has become much more understanding about caring	9%	12%	45%	25%	9%
My line manager understands caring well and is supportive	8%	10%	28%	34%	20%
My employer has introduced new measures which really help me juggle work with caring	12%	25%	43%	18%	2%
I've benefited from measures in the workplace to help me juggle work and care	11%	18%	34%	30%	7%
Work gives me a break from my caring role	9%	9%	18%	48%	17%

**Table W6** All working carers and workplace support they need to juggle work and care

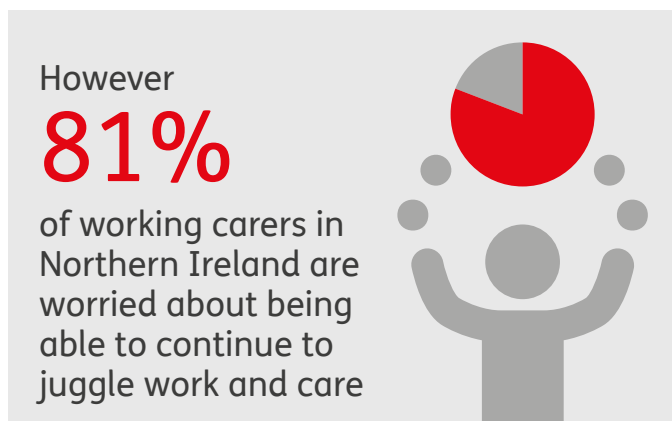
	I have this already at work	I need this at work	If I don't have this I'm at risk of reducing my working hours	If I don't have this I'm at risk of giving up work altogether	N/A
Working from home most/all of the time	42%	10%	4%	10%	35%
Working from home some of the time	39%	15%	4%	6%	36%
Flexible hours and days	53%	20%	4%	7%	16%
Reducing my hours of work	25%	11%	9%	5%	50%
Ability to take paid time off: Carer's Leave	22%	46%	8%	7%	17%
Ability to take unpaid leave	35%	27%	4%	4%	30%
Working Carer Passport	8%	37%	2%	3%	50%
Understanding line manager	53%	25%	2%	2%	18%
Understanding employer	51%	28%	2%	3%	16%
Affordable and accessible alternative care	5%	28%	8%	15%	44%
The care services I used to rely on returning	6%	18%	4%	8%	64%

**Table W7** All working carers and workplace support they need to juggle work and care where those the options apply to them

	I have this already at work	I need this at work	If I don't have this I'm at risk of reducing my working hours	If I don't have this I'm at risk of giving up work altogether
Working from home most/all of the time	64%	16%	6%	15%
Working from home some of the time	61%	24%	6%	9%
Flexible hours and days	62%	24%	5%	9%
Reducing my hours of work	50%	21%	18%	11%
Ability to take paid time off: Carer's Leave	27%	55%	9%	9%
Ability to take unpaid leave	49%	39%	6%	5%
Working Carer Passport	16%	73%	4%	6%
Understanding line manager	65%	30%	3%	3%
Understanding employer	61%	33%	3%	3%
Affordable and accessible alternative care	8%	50%	15%	27%
The care services I used to rely on returning	17%	51%	11%	21%

# Northern Ireland

There are an estimated 310,000 unpaid carers in Northern Ireland. Before the pandemic around 212,000 people provided care but this grew substantially with 98,000 taking on care for the first time.<sup>50</sup>



Before the pandemic there were 124,000 carers juggling work and care in Northern Ireland,<sup>51</sup> and this number has soared over the course of the last year.

The responses from Northern Ireland show that many carers have been able to benefit from flexible hours (54%) and other measures such as home working (45%) and paid care leave (19%). Over a third (37%) said that these supports during the pandemic had helped them juggle work and care.

However, eight in ten (81%) of carers said that they are worried about being able to continue to manage both caring and paid work – and that losing such flexibilities where they had them, or not being able to access them in future, could result in giving up work or reducing hours.

Support to care was also critical, with over half of carers (59%) stating that they need access to reliable and affordable care services, with over a third (35%) stating that they were at risk of reducing their hours or giving up employment all together without it. A majority of carers (53%) also stated that they needed a return to pre-pandemic levels of support services, which are also critical to ensuring that they can continue to work and care.

<sup>50</sup> Carers UK Carers Week 2020 Research Report 2020 [https://www.carersuk.org/images/CarersWeek2020/CW\\_2020\\_Research\\_Report\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.carersuk.org/images/CarersWeek2020/CW_2020_Research_Report_WEB.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> Carers UK Juggling work and unpaid care: A growing issue 2019 <https://www.carersuk.org/northernireland/policy/policy-library/juggling-work-and-unpaid-care>

**Table NI1** Employment status of working carer respondents (rounded to nearest integer) – working carers, all ages

Employment status	% of all working carers
Working full-time	64%
Working part-time	32%
Self employed full time	1%
Self employed part time	4%
Furlough	0%

**Table NI2** How carers' employment situation has changed – % of all working carers  
(carers could select more than one option)

Answer Choices	Responses
Looking after the home/family/dependents full-time	27%
Full-time employee	31%
Part-time employee	15%
Self-employed full-time	0.5%
Self-employed part-time	2%
Looking for paid work/unemployed	0.5%
I am unable to work due to sickness or disability	6%
I am unable to work because of current government guidelines	0%
I am on furlough	0%
I am on part time furlough	0%
Full-time education	0.4%
Part-time education	0.4%
Retired	17%



**Table NI3** Thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic, how has your work situation changed?

All working carers by full-time and part-time work (carers could select more than one option)

Answer Choices	Full time	Part time
My work situation hasn't changed	23%	26%
I am now working from home full-time	48%	8%
I am now working from home part-time	16%	41%
I am self-employed and I have lost business	1%	9%
I am self-employed and I have gained business	0%	1%
I have had to reduce my working hours	1%	26%
My working hours have been reduced by my employer	0%	2%
I have had to increase my working hours	7%	2%
I have had to leave my job due to concerns about catching COVID-19	1%	0%
I have had to leave my job for another reason	1%	2%
I have lost my job	1%	2%
Other (please specify)	6%	7%

**Table NI4** All working carers agreeing with statements about anxiety, tiredness and returning to the office

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I feel anxious about caring while I am working	4%	6%	11%	48%	31%
I feel tired at work because of my caring role	2%	3%	13%	48%	33%
Returning to the office will make caring more challenging	1%	5%	26%	27%	41%
I am worrying about continuing to juggle work and care	2%	2%	15%	37%	44%
I have given up opportunities at work because of caring	4%	9%	22%	34%	31%

**Table NI5** All working carers agreeing with statements about flexibility and the role of work

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Working flexibly in the pandemic has enabled me to balance work and care	9%	12%	25%	35%	19%
My employer has become much more understanding about caring	9%	12%	45%	25%	9%
My line manager understands caring well and is supportive	8%	10%	28%	34%	20%
My employer has introduced new measures which really help me juggle work with caring	12%	25%	43%	18%	2%
I've benefited from measures in the workplace to help me juggle work and care	11%	18%	34%	30%	7%
Work gives me a break from my caring role	9%	9%	18%	48%	17%

**Table NI6****All working carers and workplace support they need to juggle work and care**

	I have this already at work	I need this at work	If I don't have this I'm at risk of reducing my working hours	If I don't have this I'm at risk of giving up work altogether	N/A
Working from home most/all of the time	32%	20%	10%	8%	31%
Working from home some of the time	29%	20%	9%	6%	36%
Flexible hours and days	45%	27%	5%	7%	16%
Reducing my hours of work	28%	16%	5%	5%	46%
Ability to take paid time off: Carer's Leave	17%	53%	9%	9%	13%
Ability to take unpaid leave	34%	32%	5%	5%	24%
Working Carer Passport	7%	50%	3%	4%	37%
Understanding line manager	48%	31%	2%	3%	15%
Understanding employer	34%	43%	4%	6%	13%
Affordable and accessible alternative care	3%	33%	9%	10%	45%
The care services I used to rely on returning	5%	17%	5%	5%	67%

**Table NI7 All working carers and workplace support they need to juggle work and care where those the options apply to them**

	I have this already at work	I need this at work	If I don't have this I'm at risk of reducing my working hours	If I don't have this I'm at risk of giving up work altogether
Working from home most/all of the time	64%	16%	6%	15%
Working from home some of the time	61%	24%	6%	9%
Flexible hours and days	62%	24%	5%	9%
Reducing my hours of work	50%	21%	18%	11%
Ability to take paid time off: Carer's Leave	27%	55%	9%	9%
Ability to take unpaid leave	49%	39%	6%	5%
Working Carer Passport	16%	73%	4%	6%
Understanding line manager	65%	30%	3%	3%
Understanding employer	61%	33%	3%	3%
Affordable and accessible alternative care	8%	50%	15%	27%
The care services I used to rely on returning	17%	51%	11%	21%

# Methodology

The State of Caring 2021 collected over 8,600 respondents, from across the United Kingdom. Of the 8,600 respondents in total, this report examined the 2,065 respondents with current care responsibilities and who were in employment of any kind; including those in full time or part time employment, those working from home, self employed and participating in the furlough scheme.

Of this group,

- 69% live in England, 8% live in Scotland, 13% live in Northern Ireland, and 10% live in Wales.
- 84% identify as female and 14% identify as male.
- 23% consider themselves to have a disability.
- 0.5% are aged 0–24, 4% are aged 25–34, 13% are aged 35–44, 36% are aged 45–54, 41% are aged 55–64, and 6% are over 65
- 4% identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- 5% described their ethnicity as black or minority ethnic.
- 20% also have childcare responsibilities for a non-disabled child under 18.
- 29% have been caring for 15 years or more, 15% for between 10–14 years, 23% for 5–9 years, 31% for 1–4 years, and just 4% have been caring for less than one year.
- 30% care for 90 or more hours every week, while 14% care for 50–89 hours, 32% care for 20–49 hours, and 25% care for 1–19 hours a week.
- Most (73%) care for one person, 21% care for two people, 4% for three people, and 2% care for four or more people.

In addition, this report drew upon previous Carers UK reports including

- Caring Behind Closed Doors (April 2020),
- Caring Behind Closed Doors Six Months On (October 2020).
- Breaks or Breakdown (June 2021),
- Supporting working carers in COVID-19: Response and reflections (September 2020)

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## Carers Rights Day

Carers UK runs Carers Rights Day every year where we are joined by hundreds of organisations raising awareness of caring, helping to identify carers and signpost them to information, advice and support.

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