

What are the challenges of juggling work whilst also caring?

Through a personal story, this comic reveals the difference that adjustments in the workplace make to carers, helping them to remain in employment whilst also improving their finances, health and wellbeing.

The hidden
lives of working
carers and how
workplace support
can make all the
difference



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University of
Sheffield

CIRCLE



NIHR

National Institute for
Health and Care Research



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CARE MATTERS

When work and care collide

Who is an unpaid carer?

Carers are people of any age who provide unpaid care to a relative, friend or neighbour who needs support due to disability, illness or age-related morbidity.



Who becomes a carer?

Women have a 70% chance of becoming a carer, men 60% (Zhang et al, 2019)

Between 2010 and 2020 more than 1.9 million people in employment became unpaid carers. (Petrillo et al, 2022)

The population providing care is dynamic - 12,000 people in the UK become carers every day, of whom 5,300 are employed.



Facts about caring

The value of unpaid care is £184 billion - equal to the annual NHS budget. (Petrillo et al, 2024)

Carers experience a 'triple penalty' in terms of their own finances, relationships and health.

Many carers leave employment earlier than the general population. Every day, 600 people give up paid work to care.



Recommendations for employers

1. Introduce paid Carer's Leave, going further than the statutory 5 days unpaid leave.
2. Offer flexible working arrangements (e.g. start/finish times, home working) as standard.
3. Foster a carer-friendly workplace through workplace awareness and recognition of carers.
4. Train managers and staff on caring responsibilities.
5. Develop clear, accessible workplace policies.
6. Co-design workplace support with working carers.
7. Improve carers' access to mental and physical health support.

Recommendations for policymakers

1. Introduce paid entitlement to Carers' Leave.
2. Raise public and employer awareness and recognition of working carers to reducing stigma and discrimination.
3. Improve support for carers by investing in accessible and appropriate care services (including respite).
4. Reform financial and pension support for carers, including Carer's Allowance and pension protections (like Carer's Credit).
5. Co-produce policy with carers to reflect real needs across diverse circumstances.
6. Specialist training for DWP staff to understand caring.
7. Support for carers who need to take a longer-term break from employment.
8. Make being a carer a protected characteristic.





THE STORY OF GOOD SUPPORT AT WORK



THE STORY OF NO SUPPORT AT WORK



Mum is frail with limited mobility



So I care for her



the council



I was told you'd be able to install handrails...

I really enjoy gardening and hiking with friends



well, when I have time ...

I recently started a new job at a medical call centre



My new boss, Ali

It's interesting work



And I really enjoy helping people...

Mum is elderly and needs a lot of help



It's two today, Nan



Jake is so good with her

I wish I had more time for hiking or gardening



but I never seem to...

I recently started a new job at a medical call centre



my boss Mr. Khan

It's stressful work...

managing multiple priorities

at the same time



But I really enjoy helping people...

In the staff room...



And then the caller started screaming and swearing at me!

How can they be so horrible?

We're just trying to help!



They were probably just stressed, but it's no excuse



thanks
Beth

Why don't you
take a break?

I'll cover for you

But there are so many challenges...



My newborn baby has this rash on her Chest

I only noticed today
but it's spreading

I'm sorry to hear that, when did it first appear?

OK,
thank you

Rashes are Common in babies but I understand it's worrying when they appear

Will she be ok?



You're doing the right thing by calling

We'll make sure
she gets the
right care

Can I ask
a few
more
questions...

Thanks,
you are so
kind...



But there are so many challenges...

I've fallen and can't get up!

Should I tell my manager about my responsibilities as a carer?

Can you get home?
Nan needs help
but I'm at work
and can't leave...

I can't
lose
my job!





We have a carer's network you can join

Plus we offer 5 days paid carer's leave and flexible working

You're an important member of our team, we don't want to lose you!

You're bringing skills to this job from caring

I see a lot of potential in you!



Let me know if there are any other ways we can support you

Thank you! I really appreciate this!

You shouldn't have come in

I only had 2 hours sleep, I was up most of the night with mum

Yes go home we'll let Ali know!

You can do your admin from home!



thanks guys



I'm afraid that's no excuse, it's not fair on your colleagues

We have targets to meet!

Could I maybe work more flexibly, or do admin from home?

All staff have to be in the office at all times

I'm just exhausted and Mum seems to be getting worse

Why don't you just put her in a care home?

I can barely afford to support us three, let alone pay for care

Still, if you can't be here when you're supposed to be, maybe you need to find another job...



She's taking another break?

And she was late again...



Hi, yes I'm Jean's daughter

Can you call back later? I'm at work



And they even offered me paid carer's leave!



I'm so glad you're getting support at work



We've been waiting for an hour already

Don't worry mum, I've got time

How did the appointment go?



6 MONTHS LATER

We'd like to offer you the position of assistant team leader



I know it's hard but it'll get better



thank you...

I'm so glad Beth works for us

How many are you collecting for love?

FOOD BANK



Three please

dentist appointments

Mum unwell

check ups at GP

scans at hospital

JOB SEARCH

Part time ☒

Flexible ☒

0 results found



Take two weeks sick leave, and I'll prescribe antidepressants



My GP signed me off sick for burnout



Do you know when you'll be back?

6 MONTHS LATER



sigh...

We'll have to recruit again...

excuse me...

The new colleague is crying in the bathroom



If only Beth was here...

