Carers and Employment

“Taking on caring should not mean that you must automatically think you have to give up work” (Carers Trust).

 Are you an employee who also provides support for a loved one who has an illness, disability or impairment who could not cope without your support? If so, you have some rights under law to help you juggle these two roles. Your employer may also have policies and procedures that offer flexibility.

Working can be important for well-being and a sense of self worth, it enables social contact which can combat feelings of isolation, helps maintain financial stability and for some it can provide a break from the caring role. Think carefully before you make changes to your normal working arrangements. This can impact on you financially and mean you lose your independence and can cut off social contact and other enjoyable activities.

If you are in a caring role then tell your line manager and the human resources or personnel department. This will help them to understand should your caring role mean you face an instance when you have difficulty coming into work. It may also help you to find flexible solutions to any problems you encounter.

Carers Employment Rights

These will depend on your employment status. If you are on a short term temporary, agency or relief hours contract then you may have less ability to exercise some of these rights.

*Time off for Family and Dependents*

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As an employee you are entitled to time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependent. You are allowed reasonable time off to deal with the emergency. You must inform your employer as soon as you are able to. This time off does not have to be paid but check with your employer’s terms and conditions as some may have enhanced rights and include terms for compassionate leave.

An emergency is an illness or injury that could include a pre-existing condition getting worse. For example it could be someone needing to go to hospital or the need for health professionals to visit at home. You could also take time off if there is unexpected disruption in the normal care arrangements. An emergency is a situation you were not aware of before the event.

*Right to request flexible working*

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Carers who look after a relative can apply to their employer to change their working arrangements. They can ask for flexibility on:

* times of work (start and finish times)
* hours of work (no of hours worked a week)
* place of work (at home or another more local office)

To make a request you have to have worked for your employer for 26 weeks.

The application for flexible working must be made to your employer in writing stating that it is being made under the statutory right to request flexible working and the relationship of the person whom you care for. Check with your manager or human resources to see if your employer has policy with their procedures highlighted.

Any change to a contract will be a permanent one. It could be worth considering applying for a temporary change on a trial basis to see if the change is the right one for you.

The employer has to give serious consideration to your request and formally respond to your letter but if because of business need they cannot support the flexible working arrangement then they can refuse your request.

Struggling to Juggle Caring and Work

If you are struggling to juggle work and caring for a loved one and your request to flexible working has either not resolved the struggle or the request for flexible working was refused, then it may be worth checking your employer’s terms and conditions for information about Career Breaks. It is not a statutory right but some employers do have contractual entitlements to Career Breaks.

If the caring role is impacting on your ability to work and you are thinking of resigning from work then you might want to consider contacting your local authorities Social Services department. They will assess and advise you about support that may be given to you or the person you are caring for to enable you to continue working. Eden Carers can also help you to look at different types of help that might be available to you to make caring easier as well as assessing other needs you may have.

Useful Contact details

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| Support for Carers | Employment Advice |
| Eden Carers | 01768 890280enquiries@edencarers.co.uk[www.edencarers.co.uk](http://www.edencarers.co.uk) | Human Resources or Personnel Department |  |
| Eden Social Services | 01768 812243penrithssd@cumbriacc.gov.uk  | ACAS  | 08457 47 47 47 www.acas.org.uk |
| Carers UK | 0808 808 7777[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org) |  |  |
| Carers Trust | [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org) |  |  |