

Carers & Employment

Information from Carers Bucks

Carers Bucks is an independent charity supporting family carers in Buckinghamshire. We work with a range of agencies and organisations to provide the best possible service to carers. Our funders include Bucks County Council. We work closely with our sister charity Carers Milton Keynes.

Contact Us

Our offices are open from 9am – 5pm Monday – Thursdays;
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Carers Bucks supporting family carers

There are over 3 million working carers in the UK. Trying to balance what might seem like two jobs can cause a great deal of pressure and stress so it's important that you know where you can get support and what your rights are as a working carer.

Legal Rights for Working Carers

The Work and Families Act 2006 and the Employment Rights Act 1996 give working carers rights to help them manage their work and caring role, including the right to request flexible working.

* Right to request flexible working

Flexible working patterns can help employees manage their work and caring responsibilities. Flexible working can include: compressed or annualised working hours; term-time working; job-sharing; part-time working; homeworking or teleworking.

You have the right to request flexible working if you have 26 weeks continuous employment and:

- * you are a parent of child aged under 17, or a disabled child under 18 (child must receive DLA)
- * you are a carer. Under the Act the definition of carer is that you must be or expect to be caring for a spouse, partner (who you live with), civil partner or relative, or live at the same address as the adult in need of care.

ACAS has produced a booklet *The Right to Apply for Flexible Working* which is available via its web site www.acas.org.uk Copies also available from Carers Bucks (contact details on back page).

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* **Right to time off in emergencies**

Also known as time off for dependants, this legal right gives all employees (not just carers) the right to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off work to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. Whether the time off is paid or not is at the discretion of the employer.

* **Parental Leave**

If you have at least one year's continuous service and are responsible for a child aged under 5 (or under 18 if the child is disabled) you are entitled to 13 weeks (unpaid) leave to look after a child or 18 weeks (unpaid) leave to look after a disabled child. Leave can be taken in blocks of a week (usually up to 4 weeks in a year). You must give at least 21 days notice to your employer to take parental leave.

Protection from Discrimination

In 2008 the European Court of Justice ruled that laws relating to the discrimination of disabled people should also apply to their parents or carers. This right was incorporated in the Equality Act 2010 and is known as 'associative discrimination'. This is direct discrimination against a person because of their association with someone with who has one of the 'protected characteristics' (types) of discrimination which include: age, disability, race religion etc.

Organisational/Contractual Rights

In addition to your statutory rights your employer may offer more support. This will be outlined in your contract and the organisation's policies. For example, you may be able to use leave arrangements, paid or unpaid, at the discretion of your employer to cover intensive periods of care. Check to see if your organisation has a Carers' Policy.

Sometimes the support you need is very simple like access to a private telephone or information and advice, which can be provided by your local Carers' Centre - Carers Bucks (*contact details on back page*).

Support from Social Services

A carer's assessment from Social Services can identify ways in which they can help you. They are required to assess your needs as well as the needs of the person you care for and if you want to work they must take this into account. Contact Bucks County Council on 0845 370 8090 and ask for a carer's assessment.

Thinking of Leaving Work

If you are thinking of leaving work take time to consider if this is really what you want to do. Here are some key things to consider:

- * Will you manage with less money?
- * Do you want to give up the independence and social contact you have through your work?
- * Will you lose valuable skills if you leave?
- * How would leaving work affect your future pension entitlement?

What other options are available to you? Could you:

- * make a request for flexible working? (*see above*)
- * take a career break or sabbatical?
- * ask for extra help from social services? (*see above*)
- * buy in care? (*see our leaflet on Care Agencies*)

Sources of Support and Information

- * Carers Bucks offers advice and information on work and caring. Our Carer Support Workers are also able to support carers at meetings, help draft letters and provide advocacy support. We can work with employers on developing support for carers in their employment. Visit our web site for more detailed information on work and caring. **www.carersbucks.org**
- * ACAS offers free, confidential advice on employment issues via their helpline on 0845 47 47 47 or their web site **www.acas.org.uk**
- * Directgov provides clear and comprehensive information on all aspects of caring and employment, including benefits and pensions **www.direct.gov.uk**
- * Carers UK is the national campaigning charity for carers. Helpline 0808 808 7777; web site **www.carersuk.org**