

# Carers Rights Day: Let's Talk About Flexible Working

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Report released 8 June 2020

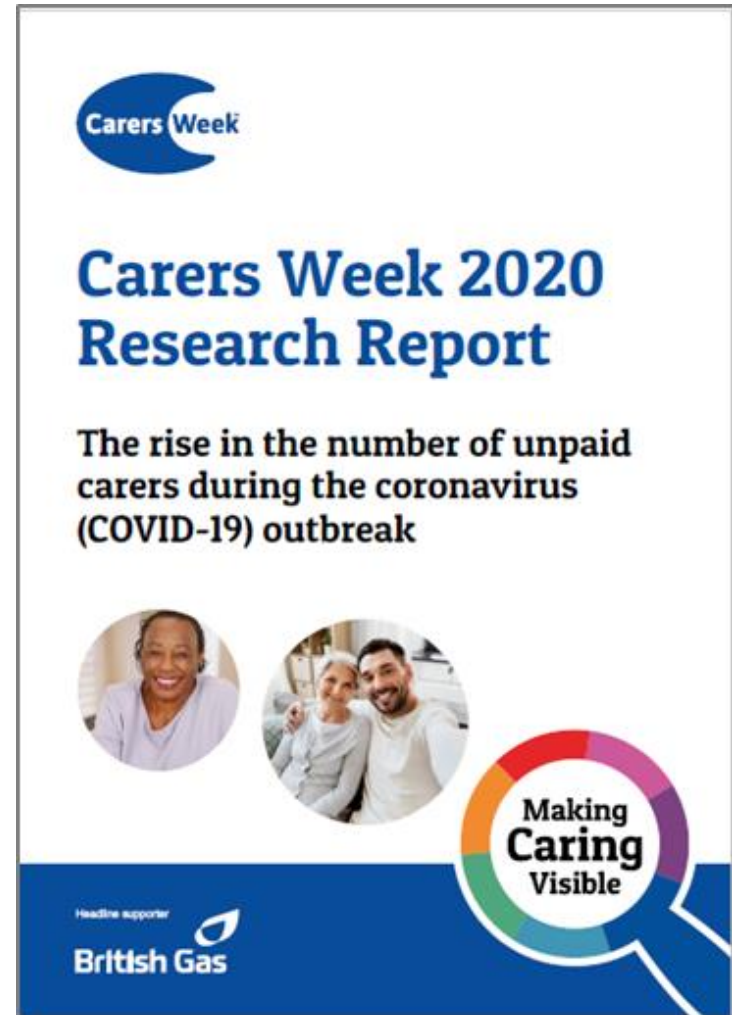
- More people are caring
- The majority are working
- Carers are stressed and exhausted

Up to

**13.6 million**

people could be providing  
unpaid care in the UK today

1 in 4 up from 1 in 6



## Impacts of COVID-19

70% 

of unpaid carers are providing more care due to the coronavirus outbreak

- 69% of carers are providing **more emotional support**
- 81% of carers are spending **more money**
- 55% of carers are **worried about burnout**

## Caring behind closed doors

Forgotten families in the coronavirus outbreak

April 2020



Impacts six months on

81% 

of carers are providing more care since the COVID-19 pandemic

- 78% are caring for someone whose support needs have increased
- 64% have not had a break
- 64% have worse mental health

## Caring behind closed doors: six months on

The continued impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on unpaid carers

October 2020



## Impacts on work

48%  

Almost half of carers said affordable and accessible replacement care or access to quality day and support services would help them to stay in or to return to work

- 11% of carers reported that they had **reduced their hours**
- 9% had **given up work**
- **Services being closed or reduced** was the biggest factor

## Caring behind closed doors: six months on

The continued impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on unpaid carers

October 2020



## Employer response



9 out of 10 employers (90%) said they had put in additional arrangements to support carers' health and wellbeing during the pandemic.

- 75% offered **additional flexible working arrangements**
- 42% offered **additional leave arrangements**
- 49% had **developed or will develop new policies or procedures**

## Supporting working carers in COVID-19: response and reflections

Employer survey report



## Good practice points

“ 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. ”

Here are some key areas of carer support which EfC member organisations, large and smaller, have been providing during COVID-19:

- 1 Keeping in touch** regularly with employees to see how they are, especially in changing circumstances, eg periods of increased remote working and/or caring.
- 2 Visible communications and championing** of caring by senior leaders to raise awareness, highlight support offered and encourage employees to self-identify as carers.
- 3 Extending health and wellbeing** provision for carers, including linking up to specialist sources of support (eg Carers UK) or promoting existing resources more proactively.
- 4 More flexible working** arrangements for carers including informal adjustments around work times, days, patterns, and location.
- 5 Offering enhanced leave** arrangements to carers, including new or additional paid carers leave (or paid special/family leave), emergency leave and longer periods of unpaid leave.
- 6 Giving managers specific guidance** on supporting carers during COVID-19, including initiating a conversation on support needs and implementing workplace support at individual and team level (eg using carers passports, planning for contingencies etc).
- 7 Creating/enhancing virtual carers networks** to enable employees to connect and engage, eg via social media, virtual drop ins, tea and talk sessions and webinars.
- 8 Supporting employees/carers**, including staff networks, to use a **greater range of technologies** to help them communicate with each other and access support.
- 9 Proactive signposting** of employees/carers to external sources of information and support for caring, including to local care and support services and carers organisations.
- 10 Regular review and risk assessments** of policies, practices and circumstances affecting carers in the workforce in light of the evolving situation with COVID-19.

## Recommendations

Our survey of EfC member organisations shows that there is much that is being done by employers during the pandemic. However, it is vital that lessons are learnt from this, that current enhancements of support become established good practice, and that carers are supported in the workplace more widely. This is particularly important now as employees who are juggling work and care are likely to face continuing challenges during the winter – and this research shows that initiatives adopted earlier in the pandemic are the right measures to support carers.

We have a number of recommendations arising from this survey:

- **That employers, if they have not already done so, need to swiftly implement carer-friendly employment practices building on the experience in this report.** This could be essential over winter during the pandemic. We would encourage employers to join Employers for Carers.
- **Employers should continue to use trusted and valued channels and sources of information and advice to keep carers up to date with changes during the pandemic.**
- **Government proposals to introduce statutory Carer's Leave are built on solid foundations which this evidence from employers has also demonstrated are necessary, do-able and desirable.**
- **Government should build the needs of working carers into its care planning for the winter months and through into 2021/22 budgets.** This has never been more important; recent Carers UK research<sup>9</sup> has shown that 81% of carers are providing more care since COVID-19, 38% of whom said this was due to closure or reduction of care services and 40% because the needs of the person they are supporting had increased.
- **National and local government should optimise their communications around carers so that they are clear about what caring can continue in different areas during the pandemic.** This reduces stress and allows caring arrangements to be put in place.
- **Government should consider measures such as continuing furlough for those employees unable to work because of shielding (in Tier 3) or because care services have not returned.**



<sup>9</sup> Carers UK, Caring behind closed doors: six months on (October 2020)

## “Let’s talk about flexible working”

How flexible working could help you – and how to start the conversation with your employer



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The carersUK logo, featuring a red stylized infinity symbol and the text "carersUK" in a bold, sans-serif font.

If you are caring for someone, unpaid, and would like further information on flexible working, please contact our helpline:

**0808 808 7777** Monday-Friday 9am-6pm (hours may vary)

For details please check [carersuk.org/help-and-advice/talk-to-us](https://carersuk.org/help-and-advice/talk-to-us)

Email [work@carersuk.org](mailto:work@carersuk.org)

Visit [carersuk.org/flexibleworking](https://carersuk.org/flexibleworking)





“ Let’s talk about  
**flexible working** ”

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