

Women's Budget Group

Commission on a Gender-Equal

Economy

Examples of transformative policies and practices - Evidence submission

About Carers UK

Carers UK was set up in 1965 by Mary Webster, a single unmarried woman and quickly gained traction as it was expected that women like her would care, unsupported, with no independent income for older parents needing help.

We are the national membership charity for carers. We work to represent and support the 6.5 million people in the UK who provide unpaid care for ill, older or disabled family members, or friends. We:

- Provide information, advice and support for carers;
- Carry out and promote research to develop policy and practice for carers;
- Work with partners across the private, public and charitable sectors, using our experience and expertise to help them do more to support carers;
- Provide opportunities for carers to support each other, particularly through volunteering and online services.

Summary

Caring is still often thought of as being part and parcel of a woman's life and within families, women are still most likely to be providing care and most likely to be providing more hours of care. Women make up the majority, 58%, of carers and 20% of women aged 45 to 54 are providing unpaid care to someone with a disability or illness or who is older¹.

Caring impacts gender inequality in the economy, in particular women's economic empowerment, by affecting women's employment and making them more likely to live in poverty whilst caring or in later life once their caring role has ended.

According to the 2011 Census there are around 3.2 million women at any given time providing unpaid care for older, disabled or chronically ill friends or relatives. Some studies suggest that the number of women caring could be far higher.²

Whilst men are more likely to be providing over 50 hours care per week at the same time as working full time, women make up the bulk of the workers juggling work and care. Women are more likely to be juggling work and care – 20% of women compared with 13% of men, partly linked to the fact that women are more likely to be working part time.³

Some employers have recognised the impact that caring can have on their staff and have introduced care leave policies which allow staff to take time off from work to fulfil their caring responsibilities. This approach has also been seen in many other countries and has recently been introduced at a European Union level. Carers UK would like to see the UK Government introduce a statutory right to paid care leave of 5-10 days alongside other leave entitlements.

For more details about the wider impact of caring on women's employment and the impact of not providing support for carers on the economy, please see the initial Carers UK submission to the Women's Budget Group Commission on Gender Inequality in the Economy - <https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/carers-uk-wbg-commission-2019>.

¹ Census 2011

² Carers UK (2019) Juggling work and unpaid care and Social Market Foundation (2018) Caring for Carers – supported by Age UK

³ Carers UK and Yougov polling - 2019

1. Which policy or practice, that you know of, has had a transformative impact on gender equality?

Caring falls particularly on women in their 40s and 50s⁴ – often at the peak of their careers and recent research by Carers UK⁵ found that women are far more likely to find their paid work impacted by unpaid caring for disabled or older family or friends than men.

- 6% of women had given up work to care – compared with 4% of men. This equates to: 1.6 women who have given up work to provide unpaid care for a chronically ill, disabled or older relative. Around 1 million men have done so.
- 5% of women had reduced their working hours to care – compared with 3% of men and 9% of women said their work had been negatively affected, compared with 5% of men.

Carers UK firmly believes that working carers deserve better workplace support - in particular paid care leave to allow them to carry on working alongside their caring rather than being forced to leave paid employment. In some contexts this is already happening and a positive impact on gender equality in the workplace and wider economy.

Care leave can take a number of formats; it can be paid or unpaid, matched leave or a standalone allocation, taken in smaller chunks or a longer period of time. But whatever its format, it can help create a carer friendly workplace whereby carers, the majority of whom are women, are supported to stay in work thereby ensuring their own long-term financial wellbeing is maintained and their skills are not lost from the workplace.

⁴ Census 2011

⁵ Based on data from mid-year population estimates from June 2017, ONS – people in the UK aged 18+ and a Carers UK/YouGov 2019 poll

2. What happened as a result of the policy or practice?

Improved recognition of caring in the workplace helps women. Carers UK knows this because women with caring responsibilities tell us again and again that they've had to leave work to care and that this has had a devastating impact on them and their finances. Many of them also talk about how workplace support would have helped them.

*"I had to leave a senior job in the industry at the age of 50 and have found it difficult to find a senior part time job for a woman resulting in my earnings dropping drastically and putting me under financial pressure."*⁶

*"I would *love* to be in paid work, even part time. I gave up a well-paid career to look after my son. This has led to significant financial difficulties. I'd love more support to enable me to work."*⁷

A recent BBC news video also found examples of senior female employees for whom workplace flexibility has been essential to allow them to carry on working alongside caring for family members⁸.

Evidence from Carers UK and Age UK demonstrates that caring impacts people's ability to remain in work in later life, even when they are caring for as few as five hours per week⁹. Of those who gave up work, retired early or reduced working hours in order to care, 16% said that the leave available from work was insufficient to be able to manage caring alongside work and 18% were unable to negotiate suitable working hours.¹⁰

Carers UK polling from earlier this year found that women tended to rate forms of workplace support far higher than men. 46% of women rated a right to paid care leave of between 5 and 10 days as very important compared with 35% of men.¹¹

Increasingly, employers are introducing a period of paid carers leave for example Aviva, Standard Live and Centrica all offer care leave in some format. Centrica has a

⁶ Carers UK (2017) State of Caring 2017

⁷ ibid

⁸ BBC News (18th April 2019) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/business-47938018/the-workers-juggling-careers-and-caring>

⁹ Age UK Carers UK (2016) Walking the tightrope

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ Carers UK/YouGov 2019 poll

longstanding carers' leave policy which has recently been enhanced., In addition to normal leave entitlement, it provides 10 days care leave to all employees followed by a further 10 days matched leave.

Simi Dubb, Director of Diversity and Inclusion at Centrica has said: *"We've already seen the enormous benefit of adopting flexible policies for carers. It can make a huge difference to people if they feel supported at work and we can help minimise the stress that juggling both roles can cause. We want our employees to feel like they can manage to combine work with caring responsibilities wherever possible, which has helped us attract and retain a diverse and skilled workforce."*¹²

Centrica has found that their care leave policy has been highly effective at creating a positive working culture for carers and internal data shows that carers take on average just 3.4 days of matched leave per year. The organisation estimates that they have saved £3.1 million a year by avoiding unplanned absences and improving employee retention¹³.

Many companies see their approach to supporting carers as being part of a wider strategy to support female employees for example, Barclays' Dynamic Working agenda¹⁴ and their work with the Women's Business Council to support older female workers¹⁵.

Workplace rights need to catch up with today's population and society, and care leave is an important part of making this a reality.

¹² Centrica press release – November 2018 <https://www.centrica.com/news/carers-uk-and-centrica-announce-new-partnership-improve-lives-carers>

¹³ Centrica and Carers UK (2019) Supporting carers in the workplace https://www.centrica.com/sites/default/files/centrica_carers_guide.pdf

¹⁴ <https://home.barclays/content/dam/home-barclays/documents/who-we-are/our-strategy/DandI/Male-allies-and-our-journey-towards-gender-parity-accessible.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.womensbusinesscouncil.co.uk/video-lynn-atkin-barclays-uk-highlights-the-importance-of-having-a-multigenerational/>

3. Was the policy or practice implemented at local, regional, national or international level?

As well as being implemented by individual employers within the UK, several other countries have chosen to introduce this concept at a national level.

Some case study examples of care leave outside the UK are outlined below, though this list is not exhaustive and further examples can be found in the Carers UK [‘The case for care leave’](#) report.

Australia

Employees are entitled to ten days per year of paid personal or care leave for when they are ill or need to care for an immediate family or household member who is sick, injured or has an unexpected emergency.¹⁶ If they don’t use this up, then the leave accumulates and they can carry it over to subsequent years. If they have used up their paid leave, then employees can take two days of unpaid carer’s leave per occasion.¹⁷

Belgium

As well as short-term unpaid emergency leave of ten days per year, private sector workers in Belgium are able to take time off of up to twelve months to care for a seriously ill family or household member.¹⁸ It must be taken in blocks of one to three months and it is paid at the same level as parental leave.¹⁹ Palliative care leave is also an entitlement, of one month per loved one in need of care with the possibility of extending this for another month.²⁰ Again, this is paid at the level of parental leave. Employees in the public sector have similar rights.

Japan

¹⁶ Fair Work Ombudsman, Personal, carer’s and compassionate leave (2013)

¹⁷ Fair Work Ombudsman, How much leave does an employee get? (2012)

¹⁸ Or 24 months in the case of lone parents looking after a child under the aged of sixteen; OECD, ‘Policies to Support Family Carers’, in Help Wanted? Providing and Paying for Long-Term Care (2011); Service public fédéral Emploi, Travail et Concertation sociale, Congé pour porter assistance ou soins à un membre du ménage ou de la famille gravement malade (undated)

¹⁹ Merla, L. and Deven, F., ‘Belgium country note’, in International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2013, ed. by P. Moss (2013)

²⁰ Service public fédéral Emploi, Travail et Concertation sociale, Congé pour soins palliatifs (undated)

Japanese workers can take up to 93 days of family care leave per family member needing care. They receive 40% of their wage paid through employment insurance if their employer does not compensate them during their time off to care.²¹ They also have a right to unpaid short-term family care leave of five days per year to take care of a family member in 'care-requiring condition', or ten days per year if there are two or more family members to take care of. Similarly, employees with a sick or injured pre-school aged child are able to take up to five days per year to look after them, or ten days if there are two or more such children.²²

Poland

Employees who provide care for another member of the family (over the age of 14 years) have a right to take short-term leave of up to two weeks per year, with financial compensation at 80% of the average monthly wage over the previous 12 months.²³ All parents are able to take leave of up to 60 days per year to care for a child of up to eight years of age, or 14 years of age if the child is disabled or chronically ill, in case of unforeseen closure of their school, or illness or childbirth of a spouse who usually cares for the child.²⁴ This leave is also paid at 80% of earnings.

Netherlands

In addition to paid emergency leave (typically one day), employees in the Netherlands are entitled to short-term carers' leave of up to twice the hours worked per week, to a maximum of ten days per year. At least 70% of the employee's earnings are paid during this time off. Longer-term reduced hours are also available to employees whose child, partner or parent has a life-threatening illness: up to six times their working hours per week can be taken part-time.²⁵

As part of the Work-Life Balance Directive the **European Union** has recently introduced a cross-EU right to 5 days care leave, with the explicit intention that this will help narrow the employment rate gap between men and women²⁶.

²¹ OECD (2011)

²² Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Introduction to the revised Child Care and Family Care Leave Law(undated)

²³ Carers UK, Combining work and care: A European perspective (2012)

²⁴ Michoń, P. and Kotowska, I.E., 'Poland country note', in International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2013, ed. by P. Moss (2013)

²⁵ den Dulk, L., 'Netherlands country note', in International Review of Leave Policies and Research 2013, ed. by P. Moss (2013)

²⁶ European Commission (9th April 2019) A new start to support work-life balance for parents and carers. Accessible via http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-18-4222_en.htm

4. Could the policy or practice be implemented in other contexts? If so, how? If not, why not?

Carers UK would like to see care leave introduced as a statutory right in the UK alongside other types of leave. The UK Government has pledged to bring forward a consultation on care leave and the right way to do it. We consider that a right to paid care leave of at least 5 – 10 days is progressive, flexible for employers, more flexible for those providing care to care.

But it's also important to note that any workplace can take important steps towards being more carer friendly (for example, setting up an office carers network, training line managers to be more carer-aware) even without a statutory duty. The [Employers for Carers](#) business forum, which Carers UK runs, can support workplaces to do this, in particular through the [Carer Confident](#) benchmarking scheme.

Contact us

To find out more contact:

Rachael Graham, Policy and Public Affairs Officer

T: 020 7378 4930 E: rachael.graham@carersuk.org

Keep up to date with our campaigns and research:

Carers UK

20 Great Dover Street

London SE1 4LX

T: 020 73784 4999

E: info@carersuk.org

CarersUK.org

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