

## Carers and Employment

June 2004

### Background

Numerous surveys have stressed the value of being able to go out to work<sup>1</sup> and many carers would like to return to work if the right support is in place. It is important that those carers who want to work are supported to do so. However, not all carers want to, or are able to, work. It is equally important that those who are unable to work do not feel compelled to do so and have an adequate income if they are caring and not in work.

### Key statistics and action needed

#### Carers in work

- The vast majority of carers (80%) are of working age.<sup>2</sup>
- 3 million carers already combine work and care.
- Carers make up over 12% of the total UK workforce, 1 in every 8 employees.
- Women have a fifty-fifty chance of providing substantial care by the time they are aged 59 – in other words, a strong likelihood that they will become carers during their working lives.<sup>3</sup>
- Every year, over 2 million people become carers, some overnight, some more gradually – so there is a new population of carers in the workforce every day.<sup>4</sup>
- 3 in 5 people will become carers at some point in time.

#### Economic and business case of supporting carers in work

- A recent TUC report<sup>5</sup> argues that in order to achieve full employment and economic growth the Government's Spending Review 2004 should focus on getting into employment the 2 million people currently not in work but who want a job. This includes half a million people with caring and family responsibilities.
- Future work predictions show that the economy will need an extra 2 million people in the next 20 years, only a quarter of whom will be school leavers. Employers need to widen their recruitment pool at the same time that society will see an increase in the need for care.
- The number of carers is set to grow from 6 million to 9 million in the

next 30 years.<sup>6</sup>

- The peak age for caring is between 45 and 64 – when many employees will have gained valuable skills and be employed in senior positions.
- A survey sponsored by BT found that 43% of carers at work experienced tiredness and 50% experienced stress.<sup>7</sup>
- By providing support to carers in the workplace, absenteeism, stress and anxiety can be reduced, and productivity increased.

### **Impact of giving up work**

- According to research by Carers UK, 6 out of 10 carers responding to one survey who were providing substantial amounts of care, had given up paid work to care.<sup>8</sup>
- In the same research, 7 out of 10 carers found themselves financially worse off since becoming a carer.

### **Carers wanting to return to work**

- \* Recent research by Carers UK shows that 1 in 3 carers not currently working wanted to return to work if the right alternative care was available.<sup>9</sup>
- \* Only 46% of assessments of carers who had given up work or reduced hours covered employment in their carer's assessment and only 19% of all carers or working age had employment discussed in their assessment.<sup>10</sup>
- \* Every year 2.3 million carers stop caring, appropriate information would give carers better opportunities for education, training and employment when they end their caring role.
- \* Research by the Equal Opportunities Commission found that nearly one in five carers had left a job or been unable to take a job because of their caring responsibilities.<sup>11</sup>
- \* Research by Caring Costs found that nearly 80% of carers wished to return to work if they could.<sup>12</sup>
- \* Other work by Carers UK found that there were still financial barriers in the benefits and tax system, which prevented carers from returning to work.<sup>13</sup>

### **What Carers UK has been calling for:**

- increased awareness amongst employers about the need to support carers;
- an extension of the right to request flexible working to carers;
- removal of the 21 hour study rule on Carer's Allowance;
- increased awareness of carers' existing rights to time off for emergencies;

- a carer's tax credit to remove some barriers which prevent carers from combining work and care;
- increased support to help carers back to work if they wish to through JobCentre Plus, tailored work programmes, etc.;
- ensuring that future legislation combating age discrimination includes carers and focuses on the benefits of helping carers back to work;
- greater accessibility to life-long learning and training programmes for carers;
- assessments to consider work, training and life-long learning issues
- adequate income if a carer is unable to work, for example a rise in Carer's Allowance.

### Further information on employment visit:

[www.acecarers.org.uk](http://www.acecarers.org.uk)

[www.employersforcarers.org.uk](http://www.employersforcarers.org.uk)

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## References

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- <sup>1</sup> Jan Clark, *Independence Matters: An overview of the performance of social care services for physically and sensory disabled people*, Social Services Inspectorate, 2003
- <sup>2</sup> National Statistic Office, Census 2001
- <sup>3</sup> *It Could be You... ? The Chances of Becoming a carer, Carers UK 2001*
- <sup>4</sup> Mike Hirst, *Caring through time*, Social Policy Research Unit, University of York, 2001
- <sup>5</sup> TUC 2004, Full Employment – the next steps; TUC report on working age inactivity in Britain and the rest of Europe.
- <sup>6</sup> *It Could be You...*
- <sup>7</sup> *Carers and Employment*, Princess Royal Trust for Carers, 1994
- <sup>8</sup> Carers National Association (now Carers UK) (2000) *Caring on the Breadline: The financial implications of caring*
- <sup>9</sup> Carers UK *Missed Opportunities; the impact of new rights for carers*, Carers UK, 2003, London
- <sup>10</sup> Carers UK *Missed Opportunities; the impact of new rights for carers*, Carers UK, 2003, London
- <sup>11</sup> *Supporting Parents and Carers: unlocking the potential* Equal Opportunities Commission & Parents' and Carers' Coalition March 2004.
- <sup>12</sup> *The True Cost of Caring, Caring Costs*, published by Carers National Association, 1996.
- <sup>13</sup> Marilyn Howard *Redressing the balance: inclusion, competitiveness and choice*, Carers UK, 2002

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