

Support for Carers

Submission to the House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee
on behalf of Future Care Capital
22nd December 2017

About us

Future Care Capital is a national charity committed to engaging, educating and involving every generation in the development and delivery of unified health and care provision. Beginning life as the National Nursery Examination Board in 1945, the charity has evolved throughout its 70-year history and we continue to have Her Majesty the Queen as our Royal Patron. We have set out an overarching positive vision for the health and care system in 2030. We want to see a new agreement between the state and public which sets out a commitment to support the health and care needs of everyone throughout their life – a new Care Covenant underpinned by Future Care Guarantees.

We recently published *Securing the future: planning health and care for every generation*, a collaborative report in which we invited leaders from the public, private and third sectors to help us explore the future of health and care. To complement the report launch we commissioned a UK-wide poll through Ipsos MORI in September 2017 to gauge public opinion about preparing for and managing future care needs. The poll found that the UK public regard a focus on the 'careforce' as one of the most effective ways to reduce future pressure on the social care system – 76% said that Government increasing the number of health and social care workers would be effective and 71% thought that providing greater support for unpaid carers would be effective.

Given our ageing population, most of us will become a carer at some point in our lives, and our report highlights the need to nurture what we term a 'work-life-care balance' for individuals of all ages. In particular, Carers UK contributed a chapter '*Caring now and in the future*', and drawing upon its extensive research into the nature and impact of caring, makes a compelling case for the need to better support carers to enter or remain in employment. Working with employers as well as civil society, Government has a key role to play in the achievement of this. Our submission outlines some of the steps that could be taken to further this goal.

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1. Does DWP provide adequate support for carers in employment and those seeking employment? What more could the department do?

One in nine workers provides care in addition to undertaking paid work and many of them struggle to obtain a suitable 'work-life-care balance'. Carers UK recently conducted its annual survey - soliciting the views and experiences of over 6,000 people who provide unpaid care. A significant number of them reported having been forced to leave employment, and many more said that they had reduced their working hours, turned down promotions or moved to lower paid, more flexible work, to the detriment of their household finances. More can and should be done to enable carers to remain in employment, and to support carers who wish to re-enter the job market.

Carers often have a need for more flexible working. Over 40% of workers with caring responsibilities report that flexible working is vitally important – something highlighted in the Taylor review of modern working practices, which advocates flexible working more broadly as something that '*opens up work to people with different needs and priorities and at different stages of life*' (Taylor, 2017). The Government could do more to promote the benefits of flexible working - for both employers and employees. In addition, schemes such as the career break returner programme (see: Government Equalities Office and The Rt Hon Anne Milton MP, 2017) have the potential, if focused upon unpaid carers, to provide specific support to those who are eager to return to work. Initiatives should recognise the specific needs of carers and could also build upon the capacity and skills developed by individuals who have been providing unpaid care.

DWP alone cannot tackle this problem working in isolation – action is required across and beyond Government.

2. How can the Department work more proactively with employers to support carers?

Initiatives like Employers for Carers share valuable good practice information with receptive employers, but currently impact less than 1% of the working careforce. We believe there is scope to expand the reach of such work, and the Department is well-placed to take a lead in investing to scale existing approaches and/or support innovation in this respect.

3. What are the main barriers to employment for carers and how can these be reduced?

Of the top three things that carers say would have helped them to remain in work alongside caring, 54% report that more support from care workers coming to the home of the person they care for would have helped. 46% noted that support with household chores would have been beneficial, while 34% mentioned that support with managing or coordinating care would have helped them to remain in work (Carers UK, 2016). There is therefore a clear need for greater practical support and affordable alternatives to unpaid care.

The provision of state funded social care has been significantly reduced in recent years, reducing the availability of alternative care provision for many who wish to balance care and employment. Increased worker involvement and platform tech offers some promise for social challenges such as adult social care. Inspiration is offered by [Buurtzorg](#), a non-profit foundation - it empowers care workers to manage their own workload, focus on quality and take decisions using tech to support this way of working, turning over €280 million. Pioneers include [Care and Share Associates](#), a coop model of social care, and [icare](#), a platform created to develop sustainable strategies for the rollout of the innovative concept of Elderly Care Cooperatives in Europe.

Research by Carers UK also highlights inadequacies in carer's assessments, whereby the support that carers need in order to stay in work is not sufficiently considered – over 30% of working carers felt this way (Carers UK, 2016). There is clear scope for the Government to highlight best practice in respect of carer's assessments, and to ensure that all carers get the support they need to stay in work if they wish to.

4. What role can assistive technology play in supporting carers in employment/seeking employment?

We believe that advances in assistive health and care technologies offer a range of exciting opportunities to deliver better outcomes for individuals in need of care as well as those with caring responsibilities.

Assistive technology can help improve carer's confidence and the quality of the support they provide, help mitigate potential risks when managing individuals with complex needs, provide reassurance to carers and reduce the levels of stress they face – whether in the course of caring or when they are at work. Carer strain is an increasing problem in our society. Many individuals struggle to juggle their work commitments and caring responsibilities, forcing them to put on hold their life ambitions. Assistive technologies have the potential to unlock time and reduce stress so that carers can re-balance their 'work-life-care' commitments.

Bukchon Living Lab, Seoul In South Korea

The Seoul Metropolitan Government is investing substantially in Internet-of-Things (IoT) technologies and hopes to become the world leading digital city by 2020. The village of Bukchon, termed a 'living lab', has been a particular hot-bed for recent IoT pilots through a public private partnership - whereby the Government allows technology companies to test IoT devices such as cameras and wireless sensors within the locality to deliver improved services to residents. Initiatives include one focused on fire prevention and response, where a number of buildings were fitted with wireless sensor devices capable of detecting temperature, humidity, oxygen, carbon dioxide and dust levels – together detecting indications of a fire in real-time; this system provides an automatic alert to Korea's emergency response service when conditions signifying a fire are reported (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2016). Meanwhile, others have capitalised upon the ability to track the whereabouts of vulnerable individuals to enhance their independence whilst affording their carers peace of mind. Building on the success of these projects, The Government plans to roll-out IoT infrastructure to a further 99 locations across the city by 2020. Discussing the Digital 2020 plan, Seoul mayor Park Won-soon said that citizens, through better use of digital technologies would establish most policies related to IoT deployment. "Plus, through a new digital industry, our city will create jobs, which will stimulate the economy, and solve various urban problems", he said (Moore, 2016).

Looking at assistive technology in the round, public opinion seems to be firmly in favour of greater investment in this area. The UK-wide poll we commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct in September 2017 found that 74% of people think that Government investment in technology and home adaptations to assist with care needs will be effective in reducing future pressure on the adult social care system (see Future Care Capital, 2017 for further information). We believe it could also function to stimulate economic development, were a dedicated social care technology fund or challenge established.

6. *Is there a ‘cultural shift’ needed in our attitude towards carers in employment? If so, how far can the Department go in influencing such a shift?*

We believe that a cultural shift is required at all levels – societal, organisational and amongst individuals themselves.

In the broadest sense, a cultural shift is required so that care is approached as an economic driver and opportunity - rather than as an increasingly unaffordable burden. Here, the Department could work with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to influence the positioning of care and how it is recognised. We welcome the inclusion of ‘Healthy Ageing’ as a Grand Challenge within the Government’s recently published Industrial strategy, but more could be done to recognise the potential for economic benefits to be realised through investment in the UK’s careforce. This is reflected in the final report from the Industrial Strategy Commission (2017). It is also an area of work that we will be exploring in more depth during 2018; in particular, we intend to analyse the implications of caring responsibilities for regional economic disparities – now and in the future.

At the level of employers, there are signs that a cultural shift has already begun, but there is more to do. Research has, for example, noted a tendency to think of flexible working as a staff ‘benefit’ rather than as a means to enhance the retention of staff and deliver business benefits (Cannon and Elford, 2017). Whilst some organisations have led the way in offering ‘carer friendly’ working conditions, many do not explicitly recognise the needs of carers and set out their entitlements (for example, through a dedicated Carers Policy), or realise the business benefits that could be brought about by investing in the retention of valuable staff members who are carers.

A shift is also required amongst individuals. In the course of undertaking its work with unpaid carers, Carers UK has found that many do not identify themselves as being ‘a carer’, or notify their employer about unpaid caring responsibilities. That employees have childcare responsibilities is widely accepted, and employers already have established management processes to support child and family-friendly working practices. The principles and associated culture need to be applied to caring responsibilities more broadly. Flexible working, better carers leave and phased return to work options for long-term carers should be the norm - not the exception.

The Department can contribute to achieving such cultural shifts, but action across and beyond Government is also required.

7. *Is there a coherent cross-government strategy for supporting carers in employment/seeking employment?*

We note the lack of a coherent cross-government strategy for supporting carers to remain in or enter employment and believe that this is urgently needed. We are concerned about the growing human and economic costs where carers are unable to achieve a balance between ‘work-life-care’ commitments. To date, the Government’s emphasis has been upon welfare entitlements for individuals, whereas it could take steps to further encourage employers to play a proactive role in supporting the careforce. In addition, the Industrial Strategy needs to address the economic costs

of caring if it is to rebalance the economy and prevent the fastest ageing communities in the country being left behind – that is, to prevent unpaid carers who find themselves unable to remain in or find appropriate work from exerting a ‘drag’ on sub-regional productivity.

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