

26th November 2020

Carers Rights Day: Working Carers Session

Part 1: Introduction

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Carers Rights Day

Every year, Carers Rights Day (organised by Carers UK) is held to bring organisations across the UK (like Signpost) together to help carers in their local community find out how to get the help and support they're entitled to. It's also a great opportunity to remind the rest of the public, and the government, about the important role of carers. This year's theme is Know Your Rights.

You may have seen some new research published today that reveals how unpaid carers have saved the UK state £530 million every day of the pandemic. We know there are over 4.5 million new unpaid carers since the coronavirus outbreak began and those already caring have been put under even more pressure with services stopping and support from other relatives being reduced due to self-isolation and lockdown. A survey held by Carers UK found that 70% of unpaid carers are providing more care due to Covid-19, than they were previously. So it's never been more important for carers to be informed and know their rights.

[Carers Week 2020 Research report \(June 2020\)](#)
[Unseen and Undervalued \(November 2020\)](#)

Signpost Stockport for Carers

We are an independent local charity who have been supporting carers for more than 30 years. We support all unpaid carers, from the age of 6 upwards. We're proud to be able to offer a wide range of information and services, from counselling to nature walks, to Carers Assessments, to emotional support and benefits advice. We also have a Connecting Carers Card, which is used as a form of carers ID and has emergency contact information on it and also offers you a discount with various local businesses. We also have specific work for carers going through bereavement and a new project for older male carers.

[Register with Signpost](#)
[Read about Signpost's services](#)

Work With Us

This event is being organised as part of Signpost's new three year project to support working carers, called Work With Us.



The project has been funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and through its work we aim to support working carers, carers looking to return to work and also share the experiences of carers who've felt forced to leave work in order to care for their loved one. Importantly, my role will also involve linking up with employers across Stockport to encourage them and support them in ways to become more carer-friendly. This will include line manager training, support to develop carers policies, set up staff carers networks and advise them generally on how they can better support their staff who are carers and why this is so important and much needed.

We've launched a section of our website today with information for working carers, including your rights at work, the support that's available from Signpost and extra resources to help you juggle work and care. There is also information for carers looking to return to work, as well as information for employers. Throughout the project we will be organising opportunities for working carers and people looking to get back into work, to meet up and connect with one another. As a result of the recent survey we have been sharing, we are now looking at how we can expand our existing services to make sure people who are at work also have access in the evenings and at weekends, for instance.

[Visit the webpages for working carers](#)
[Download the Work With Us leaflet](#)



Part 2: Your rights at work

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- There are a number of laws in place to give employees and workers rights, including rights which can assist working carers. There are some legal protections which extend to those who are self-employed too.

Flexible working

- Every employee with 26 weeks service has the right to request a variation to their working hours or location of work via a flexible working application.
- Employer should have a policy and be able to provide an application form. Otherwise put your request in writing and make it clear that it is a formal flexible working request.
- The rules are quite strict regarding timescales so the sooner the conversation starts the better.
- Employers can only refuse a request on specific business grounds and must explain this fully to you.

Emergency Dependents Leave

- All employees, regardless of service, are entitled to a “**reasonable**” amount of emergency dependents leave.
- A dependent is anyone who reasonably depends on you for care such as a child, parent, spouse or partner and others who live in your home such as unrelated children, other relatives or friends.
- It covers unplanned emergency situations such as breakdown in normal care arrangements or an illness / injury of a dependent. This doesn't cover planned situations such as taking a dependant to an appointment.
- Leave is unpaid.

Unpaid parental leave

- Specifically for parents (named on the child's birth or adoption certificate or they have or expect to have [parental responsibility](#)).
- The right is for up to 18 weeks leave until the child's 18th birthday, with a limit of 4 weeks being taken in any one year.
- Examples of when this might be used include: to settle a child into new care arrangements, or simply to spend more time with a child.
- Must have been employed for a year and must give employer 21 days' notice to take leave.

Other options

- Non- Statutory leave - some employers have policies which go beyond the legal rights so always ask/check the staff handbook. Holiday buy back schemes.
- EAP support – some companies offer an Employee Assistance Program which provides employees with access to confidential support services which can provide advice for those with concerns about many areas including personal finances, workplace worries, caring issues etc.

The Equality Act 2010

- If you are caring for an individual with a disability, the Equality Act 2010 provides protection. A disability is a condition which is long term and which has a substantial impact on the persons day to day activities. Substantial means 'more than trivial'.
- Discrimination by association is a situation where an individual is treated unfavourably based on a protected characteristic of someone they are associated with. Examples could include being subjected to disciplinary action for taking time off for a disabled child's appointments, where normally someone taking time off wouldn't have been treated the same. Another could be being dismissed for being unable to work overtime because of having to care for a disabled person. Finally, being teased or bullied about your link to a disabled person could be discrimination. Lack of progression opportunities because of perceived unreliability is potentially another example.
- For advice on any specific issues that you cannot resolve with your employer, you can get free support from ACAS, Citizens Advice and Signpost Stockport for Carers.
- As a link to what Angela will talk about, the key is to maintain open communication with your employer. Seek the help of a colleague if easier, as most managers will want to help and support you, but they will struggle to do so if they don't know your circumstances.

Part 3: Assertiveness

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Feel more confident to speak out at meetings

- Communication is key to a clear understanding for all concerned.
- Request a meeting and if this is done verbally, always follow this up with an email, a conversation 'does not exist' if there are no records or proof that anything was said or took place, it also shows professionalism, assertiveness and confidence.
- Ask that meetings are always minuted, well before the meeting itself and send an agenda of what you wish to cover.
- Take notes with you, to keep you focussed and on track. Speak in a calm and clear voice, use bullet points in your notes to ensure you have asked everything you wanted to or said exactly what you needed to.
- If you are feeling a bit nervous, have a sip of water, clear your throat and take some deep, slow breaths before you start.

- Ask others to write down their questions if they have any and ask them once you have finished speaking, that way, it does not interrupt you and you can stay calm and deliver your points across effectively.
- Go first! Yes, it may sound very daunting but I assure you, it is what I always suggest to my learners and in my coaching sessions, each time you do this, you will boost your confidence and self-esteem.
- Take a friend for support if this helps you.

Deal with difficult people – such as unsupportive line managers

- Policy, process and procedure.
- A policy is a written document of the expectations within the work place, health and safety, safeguarding, maternity leave etc.
- A process is what needs to be followed, a series of actions to ensure you are following the guidance correctly.
- A procedure is exactly how the steps taken, follow according to the guidelines of the procedure itself in a given situation, a grievance, or 'First aid' or a 'Fire drill' for example, who to contact and what written documentation needs to be completed (Accident at work).
- Dealing with difficult people isn't something anyone really likes to have to do but happens in a work and home life environment and can be managed well, if the approach is calm and clear. The first approach should be to the person who is your manager and privately, where you can discuss any issues or concerns you may have and seek a positive solution with their support and input.
- If a line manager is not very supportive, there are others you can approach, this may be their line manager or a general manager, if after escalating the matter to a senior individual has not gained fair support then you can approach ACAS, your union, if you are a member of one or Citizens Advice. Remember, to always put everything in writing as this is a written record of your communications and can also serve as evidence in the future, if needed, accountability and responsibility apply to us all and ensuring you have followed what is expected of you in terms of the law and company policy are crucial.
- Your employer has a duty of care for you and there are several laws to help protect you such as the Equality Act 2010 and Employment Rights Act 1996, one of the most inclusive pieces of employment law legislation, covering a variety of topics such as employment contracts, unfair dismissal, family-friendly leave, and redundancy.

Say no without saying no

- If you have a substantial workload and know that you are not able to take on any more work for that day, yet a manager asks you if you can complete additional work that day, some tactics to use are:
- 'I am not able to do that for you today but can tomorrow'
- 'Due to deadlines, I am not able to take this new work on for today'
- 'The only way I can complete this today is if I change some of today's tasks to tomorrow'

- 'If a colleague is able to help me with this, then I can complete my work and this additional work today'
- 'The work I currently have means there will not be enough time to complete the additional work today'
- 'This work can be completed in the morning but I will not be able to do this today'
- 'I would have had time earlier but due to my workload, it means I will not be able to do that for you today'

Use assertive language

- Instead of 'Can I?' assertive language could be 'I expect'
- Instead of 'How long will it take?' assertive language could be 'I have a time frame which is reasonable and achievable'
- Instead of 'Could I be contacted with the information?' assertive language could be 'As I am entitled to the information, I would like it sent directly to me as soon as you receive it'
- Instead of 'Is there any possibility of a meeting this week?' could be 'I am requesting a meeting with you before the end of the week'

Aggressive may mean some or all of the following behaviour(s):

An aggressive person tries to achieve their goals through dominant behaviour and with no regard for the other person or their feelings. Aggression can be an outburst, over talking, not allowing the other person to speak or finish what they were saying, demanding things are done their way and with no compromise, this is also known as the state of being in 'irrational brain' where they are not thinking clearly or calmly and react, rather than respond.

Assertive can be defined as speaking out clearly, to ensure they are heard and valued with their opinion or input and is carried out with respect for the other person involved and should be in a calm but firm manner, allowing others to respond and yet maintaining that what you have said should be taken into consideration and actioned accordingly, therefore signalling effective communication in a non-threatening manner.

Changing body language for a different impact

- Arms folded: This may display comfort and a person is relaxed, there are many myths about folded arms but one pointer here is: the higher they are folded, the person is projecting either frustration or anger and may be simmering away, ready to burst.
- Eye contact is one of the most obvious signs to how the other person's frame of mind is, intent staring can be felt as intimidating and make others feel uncomfortable whereas lack of eye contact can give a feeling of mistrust, if a person cannot look you in the eye. But please bear in mind, some people get very nervous and try not to make eye contact, if they dip their head down they are potentially feeling unconfident or wary.