

# Carers and Work

The section contains information on:-

**Carers in Work**  
**Getting Back to Work**

## Carers and Work

### Introduction

Carers and Employment is one of the five priority areas in Pembrokeshire's Carers Strategy.

A multi-agency partnership has been set up to raise awareness of the issues that working carers face and develop support systems to enable carers to return to/remain in work. The partnership meets every three months.

### In Work

If you are in work and have suddenly become a carer or your caring responsibilities have increased it is tempting to feel there is no alternative but to give up work. Your initial assessment may be right but before rushing into a decision take time to weigh up the options.

One Carer said: *"in some cases (myself included) the heart rules the head. I gave up work because I felt it was my duty to do so - I didn't really think about the financial implications - I should have"*.

### Practical Tips:

Take your time and explore all the options before making a decision about your work commitments.

Giving up work completely will obviously affect your financial position as well as other issues such as career development, pension rights and the company of colleagues. Furthermore there may come a point in the future when your caring role ends and you have no job to go back to.

Changing from full time to part time may also affect your redundancy rights. As part of the Employment Relations Act 1999 carers have a right to take a 'reasonable amount' of time off work to deal with an emergency involving a dependent. A dependent could be your partner, spouse, child, parent, or someone who lives in the same household e.g. an elderly aunt. This might also include some protection from victimisation or dismissal. Presently, the right does not include a statutory right to pay; this is left to the employers discretion. There is a leaflet entitled 'Family Emergency - Your Right to Time Off'. Taking long term unpaid leave may mean no automatic right to return. If you take unpaid leave for a year or more it could affect maternity and redundancy rights. See the DTI website: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/timeoff.htm>

### **Parental Leave**

If you have one year's service you are now entitled to thirteen weeks parental leave to care for a child; eighteen weeks for a disabled child. Leave can be taken in blocks of one week up to a maximum of four weeks in a year (for each child); or in one day, or multiples of one day if the leave is to care for a disabled child, again to a maximum of four weeks in a year.

### **Flexible Working**

From April 2003, parents of children under 6, or 18 if the child is disabled, have a new right to request flexible working such as changing hours or working from home. This applies to employees who have worked for their employer for 26 weeks.

You may instead like to stay in employment. If so, it is worth identifying what your specific needs are and plan for how they may change.

For instance your needs may include:

- access to days off for emergencies or emergency cover;
- time for hospital or doctors appointments;
- cutting down hours of work;
- working different hours;
- access to a telephone during work hours;
- someone in work to talk to about difficulties;
- working from home occasionally.

Many employers will be sympathetic, some may even have their own policies to support employees who are carers. If your employer has specific concerns or wants more general information, you can encourage them to ring Carers Outreach on 01437 767762.

If you ask for help from the Social Care and Housing Department, remember that they are required to assess your own needs as well as the needs of the person you care for. If you want to work, they must take this into account when they assess the services they can offer.

They may be able to:

- provide direct support e.g. home care or a day centre place
- provide you with direct payments to buy your own support
- tell you about registered and approved private care facilities
- tell you about local or national organisations or groups who can help

### **Practical Tips:**

Be clear about what help or support you will need from your employer before approaching them.

A trade union should also be able to give you advice and support in the workplace

There may be a number of services and benefits available to help. Benefits that may be relevant and worth exploring are:

- Carers Allowance;
- Disability Living Allowance;
- Carers Premium;
- Housing Benefit;
- Income Support;
- Council Tax Benefit;
- Attendance Allowance;
- Working Families Tax Credit.

See the section on Money Matters and Benefits for more information.

If you have a disability and dependent children you may be able to claim an additional personal tax allowance.

You probably will also need to develop your own strategies for coping with stress, guilt and tiredness. See Section I Looking After Yourself for some tips.

**Further Information:**

- Carers UK have two documents about Carers and Work:  
Opportunities for carers:
  - a) 'Work, Learning and Training' for carers and
  - b) 'Supporting Carers at Work - How employers can help' for employers.
- Your Trade Union or the Wales TUC will provide free support and advice for their members. (TUC have a pack called 'Carers Rights - Negotiating for Workers who care at Home').
- Large Solicitors' practices usually have a specialist on employment law.
- Citizen Advice Bureaux
- OPAS (Occupational Pensions Advisory Service) may be able to help with any general questions you may have regarding pensions.

If staying in your current job appears to be impossible you could consider changing jobs or working part time rather than giving up work altogether. Once you give up work it may be more difficult to obtain a new job as well as having lost status and your own identity.

**Getting Back to Work**

Here are some points to think about when considering getting back into work.

Registering as unemployed can provide access to training programmes and back to work schemes even if you are not eligible for unemployment benefit.

You should, as an ex-carer returning to the labour market, be able to gain career guidance and advice from the Employment Service. One example is the Government's New Deal Scheme for the over 50's.

Short courses or evening classes can help keep skills up to date. Carers Training is provided by a variety of agencies in Pembrokeshire eg NCH, Carers Outreach and PAVS. There is an online 'Learning for Living' course specifically for carers which is being offered by Pembrokeshire College in partnership with PAVS. For more information about this, contact Pembrokeshire College on 01437 765247 or PAVS on 01437 769422. Volunteering can also be a way of updating skills and creating links with employers. You may also have learnt skills or developed personal strengths in your caring role, which many employers will recognise as useful - you may even want to try to work in one of the caring professions.

If you are taking an employment break try to keep in contact with your ex-employers. They may operate a retainer scheme whereby ex-employees are kept up to date with changes at work and offered occasional work to keep their skills up to date during such breaks.

Self-employment is an option many carers consider because it is a way of structuring work to fit in with caring and preserving skills. Job Centres can provide information on training and support.

*A self-employed carer said - "I was a self employed driving instructor. Now I do a few hours a week. I make nothing but it keeps the car on the road and my qualification valid".*

## Section 6 - Contact Details

### Benefits Enquiry Line

☎ 0800 882200  
Minicom 0800 243355

### Carers Wales

This is the 'national voice' of carers in Wales.

River House  
Ynysbridge Court  
Gwaelod y Garth  
Cardiff CF15 9SS

☎ (02920) 811370  
e-mail: [info@carerswales.org.uk](mailto:info@carerswales.org.uk)  
website: [www.carerswales.org.uk](http://www.carerswales.org.uk)

### Citizens Advice Bureaux

19 Cartlett  
Haverfordwest  
☎ 0845 1202939

10 Meyrick Street  
Pembroke Dock  
☎ (01646) 683805

### Community Learning Centres

Bloomfield Narberth  
Redstone Road  
Narberth  
Pembrokeshire SA67 7EP  
☎ (01834) 860293

## Section 6

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Fishguard C.L.C  
Ropewalk  
Fishguard  
Pembrokeshire SA65 9BN  
☎ (01348) 872488

Tenby C.L.C  
Greenhill Avenue  
Tenby  
Pembrokeshire SA70 7LB  
☎ (01834) 843297

Haverfordwest C.L.C  
Off Dew Street  
Haverfordwest  
Pembrokeshire SA61 1ST  
☎ (01437) 764869

Milford Haven C.L.C  
St Peter's Road  
Milford Haven  
Pembrokeshire SA73 2BU  
☎ (01646) 693727

Neyland C.L.C  
St Clements Road  
Neyland  
Pembrokeshire SA73 1SH  
☎ (01646) 601219

Pembroke Dock C.L.C  
Meyrick Street  
Pembroke Dock  
Pembrokeshire SA72 6AT  
☎ (01646) 682668

Preseli Crymych C.L.C.  
Ysgol Y Preseli  
Crymych  
Pembrokeshire SA41 3QH  
☎ (01239) 831455

### **Community IT Learning**

Bloomfield Centre,  
Redstone Road,  
Narberth,  
Pembrokeshire SA67 7EP  
☎ (01834) 861712

### **Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services**

36/38 High Street  
Haverfordwest SA61 2DA  
☎ (01437) 769422

### **Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services - Volunteer Bureau**

For advice on voluntary work opportunities. The bureau holds a comprehensive database of volunteering vacancies throughout the county.

36/38 High Street  
Haverfordwest SA61 2DA  
☎ (01437) 769422

**Pembrokeshire Carers Outreach**

**The Princess Royal Trust Pembrokeshire Carers Centre**

Meyler House

St Thomas Green

Haverfordwest SA61 1QP

☎ (01437) 767762

E-mail: [carers.pembs@virgin.net](mailto:carers.pembs@virgin.net)

Web site: [www.pembs-carers.org.uk](http://www.pembs-carers.org.uk)

**Pembrokeshire Crossroads - Caring for Carers**

Pembrokeshire Crossroads is part of a national organisation providing respite care for carers.

Ann Williams, Co-ordinator

Room 50 & 51, Meyler House

Haverfordwest SA61 1QP

☎ (01437) 764639

Fax: 01437 764541

E-mail: [pembrokeshire@crossroads.org.uk](mailto:pembrokeshire@crossroads.org.uk)