

**Carers UK**

# **Making caring a protected characteristic**

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## Progress to date

- Gathered evidence from carers – survey and interviews
- Discussed with members
- Held a policy roundtable
- Meetings with experts
- Recommendation included in policy reports and presentations
- Report published 7 August 2024

- Because of the challenges involved in caring, it is **important that carers get the support they need.**
- However, our research found that carers **are often experiencing unfair or unfavourable treatment.**
  - A fifth of carers (19%) said they had been treated unfairly or unfavourably by the general public.
  - 22% of working carers said they had been treated unfairly or unfavourably at work.

**Most comments about unfair or unfavourable treatment related to carers' employment**

*"I was being harassed by my manager for a sick note when my father was dying."*

*"I was overlooked in promotion as the manager said: 'you have so much on with caring already.'"*

**Nearly a quarter (24%) carers in employment said that they had difficulties meeting their employer's requirements**

*“Expectation I can be at work for 8.45 start is difficult when my child has to wait for a special needs bus for school. I can miss meetings scheduled early and know work colleagues frown on this.”*

*“My caring responsibilities meant that I was unable to attend business meetings involving long distance travel. This affected how I was viewed by senior managers, who were well aware of my caring commitments.”*

## Other issues:

- Having requests for changes to be made to support caring (eg flexible hours, or unpaid/paid leave) turned down
- Being treated unfavourably compared to colleagues
- Feeling excluded or bullied at work



## Several carers said they had to give up work because of discrimination

*“I had made a request for reduced hours, however this could not be accommodated, therefore I had no option other than to retire”*

*“Following re-organisation, I was offered redeployment to a role that required very early morning starts and was based a further 5 miles from my home... I could not meet these requirements and they could not be adjusted. I had to take voluntary redundancy.”*

# Giving up work to care

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- Carers UK research estimated that **2.6m people have given up work to care**, and 2m people have reduced their working hours to care
- Carers UK State of Caring 2023 found that **40% of all carers had given up work to care**, and 22% of carers in paid employment had reduced their working hours to care.
- Analysis by Age UK found that an estimated **£5.3bn has been wiped from the economy in lost earnings** due to people who've dropped out of the workforce to take on caring responsibilities.



# What protections do carers currently have from discrimination?

## 9 protected characteristics in the Equality Act:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

**The Act also provides for protection against discrimination by association**

# What are the issues with the current legislation?

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- The law on associative discrimination is complex and not well understood
- The law on associative discrimination is not widely known
- No specific mention of carers
- Many carers are still experiencing discrimination, especially in the workplace

# What might the benefits be in making caring a protected characteristic

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## **Making caring more visible**

- Better understanding from the public
- More people identifying themselves as carers

## **Ensuring fair treatment for carers**

- Employers introducing carer-friendly policies
- Public bodies considering carers when reviewing support services

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**<https://www.carersuk.org/reports/making-caring-the-10th-protected-characteristic-report/>**