

# **Caring for the Carers**

## **A UCU guide for members and reps**



## **2. The Picture of Caring**

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## The picture of Caring

### Definition of a Carer

Under the Care Act 2014, a carer is defined as:

*“Carer” means an adult who provides or intends to provide care for another adult (an “adult needing care”).*

Clause 10 (3)

*However, an adult is not to be regarded as a Carer if the adult provides or intends to provide care –*

- a) Under or by virtue of a contract, or*
- b) As voluntary work*

Clause 10 (9)

*But in a case where the local authority considers that the relationship between the adult needing care and the adult providing or intending to provide care is such that it would be appropriate for the latter to be regarded as a Carer, that adult is to be regarded as such (and subsection (9) is therefore to be ignored in that case).*

Clause 10 (10)

### Understanding the nature of Caring

There are approximately 6.5 million people in the UK designated as Carers<sup>1</sup> - many do this unpaid and at least half are in work. An estimated 15 million older people with care needs rely on family and friends for help<sup>2</sup>. Caring can be providing support in the form of accompanying a friend, partner or family member to a medical appointment or the longer term care for a disabled person.

Caring can range from:

- Providing financial assistance
- Supporting a disabled person with day to day care
- Providing help such as bathing, dressing, preparing meals
- Helping with the maintenance of someone’s homes etc.

According to a survey conducted by Carers UK it is estimated that there are currently 315,000 working age Carers in the UK and a TUC survey of union members over the age of 50 found that nearly two-thirds were working and caring for a family member or friend. Undertaking caring duties whilst working can prove problematic if you are not receiving the necessary support. The impact of caring whilst working, can cause **additional stress, poor work performance, increases in sickness absence** and **depression** to name a few, which could lead to disciplinary or capability procedures. Carers UK, in their 2015 State of Caring Report, found that:

<b>65%</b>	reported that the stress of juggling work and care was a factor in leaving work, reducing hours or retiring early
<b>18%</b>	were unable to negotiate suitable working hours
<b>60%</b>	of working Carers are worried about their ability to remain in work over the next year
<b>15%</b>	said that the leave available from work was insufficient to be able to manage caring alongside work
<b>51%</b>	had given up work to care

<sup>1</sup> Carers UK [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

<sup>2</sup> BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-34310729>

13%	have taken a less qualified job or turned down promotion to fit around caring
21%	reduced their working hours
12%	had retired early to care

## Issues faced by Carers

The issues faced by Carers' can have the following impact

### Health

Many Carers themselves may be disabled. Having to manage their own well-being and to ensuring that the cared for person is looked after is not an easy task. Having to find the time to attend medical appointment as well as for those being cared for challenging often resulting in the Carers' own health being neglected. Carers are no different to anyone and can be prone to depression or a mental health issue. See below for tips on managing your well-being whilst being a Carer.

### Networks / relationships

Carers can become isolated especially at work due to caring. 57%<sup>3</sup> of respondents reported that since taking on the role of a Carer, they have become more isolated, being out of touch with friends and colleagues alike.

### Finance

Money worries are high on the list of concerns raised by carers as they weigh up the additional costs of specialist equipment and aids (possibly) required for the cared for person.

Almost 1 in 3 Carers had seen a drop of £20,000 or more a year in their household income as a result of caring

With the increase in living costs, many families are facing lower household incomes despite many being eligible to claim for Carers Allowance. However, due to the low level of payment and other conditions associated with Carers Allowance, the benefit does very little to alleviate the financial pressures being experienced. For further information about Carers Allowance and its application, please visit [www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/overview](http://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/overview).

The Equality Act 2010 gives protection against discrimination based on age, sex, race, disability, religion or belief or sexual orientation – for further protections under the Equality Act 2010, please see **briefing 5 on Equality Legislation in relation to Carers** within this series. The following are issues facing equality groups:

### Black and Minority Ethnic Carers

***2011 Census showed that there were just under 600,000 BAME Carers in England and Wales***

Black Carers sometimes feel that a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity can impact on the type of services and advice they receive. They are also one of the hardest to reach and identify due to factors such as cultural, language barriers and isolation.

### Disabled Carers

Carers UK reported that financial worries were an issue as disabled Carers were “significantly more likely to be in debt than other Carers” due to a combination of their own disability related costs and reduced earnings. Almost 71% of Carers said their financial circumstances were affecting their health.

<sup>3</sup> Carers UK (2014) State of Caring 2014 Survey

### **Bedroom Tax / Spare Room Subsidy:**

On 27<sup>th</sup> January 2016, the Court of Appeal accepted that the bedroom tax unlawfully discriminates against disabled children requiring overnight care, as it does not allow for an additional bedroom for their overnight Carer. The decision will also apply to those who require an additional bedroom for an overnight Carer for an adult in the house which is not either the claimant or the claimant's partner – i.e. an adult child or other relative of the claimant.

### **LGBT Carers**

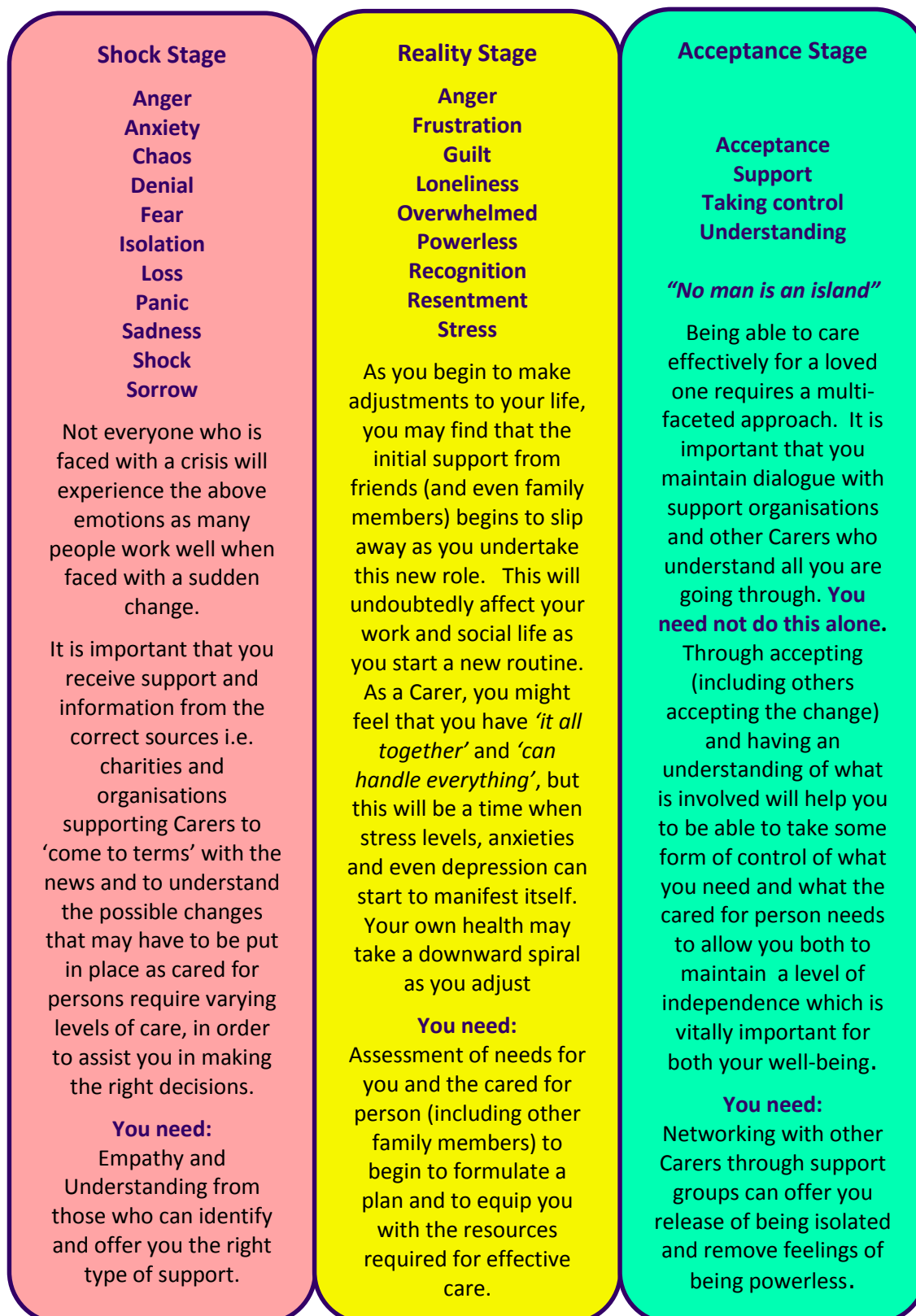
LGBT Carers may feel pressured to come out to their employer and may have concerns about homophobia if they have to disclose. Lesbian, gay and bisexual equality at work – Guidance for UCU members and branches states ***“Coming out is a very personal decision for anyone. It is for the individual concerned to decide when, where, how and to whom they come out. When someone comes out it should be treated confidentially and it is for the individual to decide whether they want others to know”***.

### **Women Carers**

Women are more likely to care during their middle age with 1 in 4 women aged 50-64 having caring responsibilities and are also more likely to be “sandwich Carers” combining eldercare and childcare.

## Stages of Caring

When you receive news that you will be required to care for someone, it is inevitable that you will go through a number of emotions (see below). It is equally important that you are able to recognise these stages as they will undoubtedly have an impact on your ability as a Carer. Being able to identify when you are experiencing these emotions and knowing where to seek help and further advice will allow you to manage not only the well-being of the person to whom you are providing care for but also your own well-being.



## Types of Carers

### Eldercare

Caring for an aging relative and/or friend who cannot manage without help because of sickness, frailty or disability is known as 'eldercare'. Those requiring care may be partners, relatives, friends or neighbours. Eldercare falls into two related areas: providing care and managing care.

Eldercare can range from providing financial assistance, visiting an ill friend or parent or taking them to the doctor, giving emotional support or providing personal care. Carers may or may not live with the person they are caring for, and may share the care with others in the family or with professionals.

Although eldercare usually refers to an older person, chronic health problems common to the older population such as arthritis, heart attacks, dementia and strokes, can frequently occur in mid-life, and mean partners, relatives or friends may suddenly be faced with caring responsibilities. It is not true to say that not all older people and/or friends are frail and are in need of care. The majority are able to live independently but this may only be possible with support from friends and relatives.

### Carers Needs

Since older people may have illnesses that last ten years or more, those providing direct care may feel that they have to give up their jobs if the employer cannot accommodate their needs. This also applies to those who have moved or live a fair distance from the person to whom they are delivering care to. As well as facing the stress and the isolation that may be involved in caring, Carers may come up against financial difficulties at a time when they most need the money.

### Young Carers

Young Carers help to look after a parent, sibling or other relative with conditions such as a disability (parent and or sibling), illness, mental health condition or a drug or alcohol problem. Young Carers often undertake duties such as:

#### Household duties

Includes washing, cooking and cleaning for the family

#### Personal and/or nursing

Administering medication, changing dressings, assisting with mobility

#### Intimate care

Washing, dressing and assisting with toilet requirements

#### Emotional support

Monitoring and meeting the emotional needs of the cared for person

#### Childcare

Helping to care for younger siblings, including escorting to school in addition to other caring tasks such as supervising homework

#### Other

Managing household finances, accompanying the cared for person to medical appointments (hospital / GP's), acting as a translator for non-speaking sensory impaired or those whose first language is not English

Under the Children and Families Act 2014, a young Carer is defined as:

*In this Part “young Carer” means a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (but this is qualified by Section 17ZB (3))*

*Clause 96 (3)*

*A person is not a young Carer if the person provides or intends to provide care –*

*(a) Under or by virtue of a contract, or*

*(b) As voluntary work*

*Section 17ZB (3)*

Young Carers report feelings of worry, fear and heightened anxiety in caring for parents and/or siblings, fear of them dying (especially when they are not around i.e. when they are at school), worrying about their mental health for example if a parent self-harms and the young Carer witnesses the aftermath, or the parent takes an overdose of pills, can be extremely stressful impacting on their own mental health and well-being. Whilst serious examples, this serves to highlight the experience of some young carers.

England	166,363	Numbers of young Carers as reported by The Carers Trust
Scotland	36,821	
Northern Ireland	30,000	
Wales	11,000	

The impact on young Carers can be challenging and at times isolating and extremely stressful depending on the nature of care that is being delivered. Many young Carers often undertake duties that can be physically challenging and thus puts them at risk of injury, especially in cases of single parent families where young carers often have to provide care in the form of lifting or dressing the cared for person, which in two parent families may be undertaken by the other adult.

Changes to the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014, it is hoped, will alleviate young Carers from undertaking unsuitable responsibilities. Other examples of how caring impacts on young people can include:

### **Education**

The impact on education for young Carers can have an adverse effect on those in education. In 2013, The Children’s Society reported that young Carers aged between 16 and 19 are more than likely to be **not** in education, employment or training.

### **Emotional / psychological**

Young Carers are more prone to develop behavioural difficulties due to emotional problems. Living in a constant state of worry and stress of not being able to ‘fix’ the issues.

### **Social**

Feelings of isolation from peer groups or that they are ‘different’. Some young Carers have reported incidents of being bullied. Many have very little time for play, sport or leisure activities – older young Carers may find difficulties transitioning to adulthood and in establishing relationships.

You may find that your students are themselves young Carers who will undoubtedly be going through the same stages as outlined in the ‘Stages of Caring’ above. Many will face financial hardships due to government cuts in finance available for students for example the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) as they would undoubtedly be living in homes with already reduced incomes.



*Learning with care: Experiences of student Carers in the UK – NUS Report (2013)*<sup>4</sup> highlighted the following:

1. Student Carers had experienced varying degrees of support from their institutions, but in all cases there was a lack of coordinated, systematic support
2. More than half of student Carers (56%) had seriously considered leaving their course, compared to 39% of students without caring responsibilities
3. Student Carers who were in receipt of Carer's Allowance did not feel the benefit was adequate, but the fact that full-time students are not eligible for Carer's Allowance was considered unfair and contributing to their financial hardship
4. Two thirds of student Carers (67%) regularly worry about not having enough money to meet their basic living expenses
5. Student Carers indicated lower well-being than students without caring responsibilities across all seven indicators in the survey.
6. 15% of student Carers indicated that they had mental health difficulties, and our qualitative research shows that in some cases this can have a serious effect on their studies.

You can read the full report here

<http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/NEW%20Carers%20research%20report%20WEB.pdf>

Young Carers / Students should be directed to Student Support teams at your college or university for help in managing caring responsibilities whilst studying

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<sup>4</sup> National Union of Students report <http://www.nus.org.uk/Global/Campaigns/Learning%20with%20Care%20-%20NUS%20research%20report.pdf>

