

Overcoming barriers: Unpaid care and employment in England

KEY POINTS FROM THE RESEARCH

- An estimated 315,000 unpaid carers aged 16 to 64 in England, predominantly women, have left full-time or part-time employment to provide care.
- A key threshold at which carers in England are at risk of leaving employment occurs when care is provided for 10 or more hours a week, a lower threshold than previously thought.
- The public expenditure costs of carers leaving employment are estimated at £1.3 billion a year, based on the costs of Carers Allowance and lost tax revenues on foregone incomes alone.
- Access to publicly-funded services by working carers is low, with only 4% of carers working full-time, and 6% working part-time, currently offered an assessment or review.
- There is little evidence that councils systematically use services for the cared-for person as a means of supporting carers whose employment is at risk.
- Councils target their support at people providing care for 35 hours a week or more and are therefore not in contact with large numbers of carers whose employment is at risk.
- Despite an increasing emphasis in government policy on 'replacement care', the study has not found any

These findings are from a study concerned with overcoming the barriers faced by unpaid carers to remaining in employment. A key barrier is the problem many carers face in accessing social care for the person they care for. The emphasis of the study is on support for the cared-for person that would enable working carers to remain in employment and the potential economic benefits of providing that support.

The project was a 12-month scoping study undertaken in 2011. It included a literature review, review of practice, consultation with key stakeholders, analysis of ELSA and the 2009/10 Survey of Carers in Households in England, and initial economic analysis.

Further information on the study is included in a paper entitled *When is a carer's employment at risk?* (King and Pickard), which has been submitted to a peer-reviewed journal. See also www2.lse.ac.uk/LSEHealthAndSocialCare/research/NIHRSSCR/pdfs/SSCR_project_outline_carers_employment.pdf.

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scientific papers on the effectiveness of services for the cared-for person ('replacement care') as a means of supporting working carers in England.

- There is a need for further evidence to support the development of policies around 'replacement care' for working carers in England.

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BACKGROUND

Unpaid care and employment is a key policy issue in England. The Government's Carers Strategy, Recognised, Valued and Supported, places high priority on supporting people of working age with caring responsibilities to remain in work, if they wish to do so.

Policy has until recently emphasised the role of employers in providing flexible working conditions, but there is now a new emphasis on 'replacement care' for the cared-for person. The Government's Carers Strategy emphasises developing "social care markets" to meet carers' needs for "replacement care to enable them to continue to work".

Recently revised guidance puts an onus on local authorities to provide services to the cared-for person when a carer's employment is at risk (see box). This is consistent with the Law Commission's report on Adult Social Care, which shows that local authorities are already required to provide services to meet the needs of carers under certain circumstances, one of which is when a carer's employment is at risk.

This study has identified several strands of evidence to support a policy emphasis on social care support for the cared-for person ('replacement care') as a means of supporting carers in employment. However, it has also identified some important gaps in evidence.

EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT A POLICY OF 'REPLACEMENT CARE'

The literature shows that there is a negative relationship between unpaid care and employment in Britain. There has long been uncertainty over the direction of this relationship, but there is now evidence that provision of unpaid care for 20 or more hours a week or on a co-resident basis negatively affects employment. The policy implication is that, since "caring keeps people from working, policy should focus on the provision of formal care" (Heitmueller 2007).

However, the literature review also shows that access to services by people cared for by working carers in England is low. Services are likely to be accessed through Local Authority assessments of carers needs. However, in the *2009/10 Survey of Carers in Households in England*, only 4% of carers working full-time, and 6% working part-time, had been offered

Department of Health guidance to support carers in employment

The new obligatory guidance for local authorities in England on the eligibility criteria for adult social care states that, if a carer's employment is, or will be, at risk, the local authority is likely to be required to provide services. The guidance states that:

- a "critical risk to sustainability of the caring role arises when ... involvement in employment or other responsibilities is, or will be, at risk"
- "the categorising of a risk to the sustainability of a caring role as 'critical' is likely to require a response from the local authority in terms of provision of services to the cared-for person" (Department of Health (2010) *Prioritising Need in the Context of Putting People First: A Whole System Approach to Eligibility for Social Care*, DoH, London (pp. 33–34)).

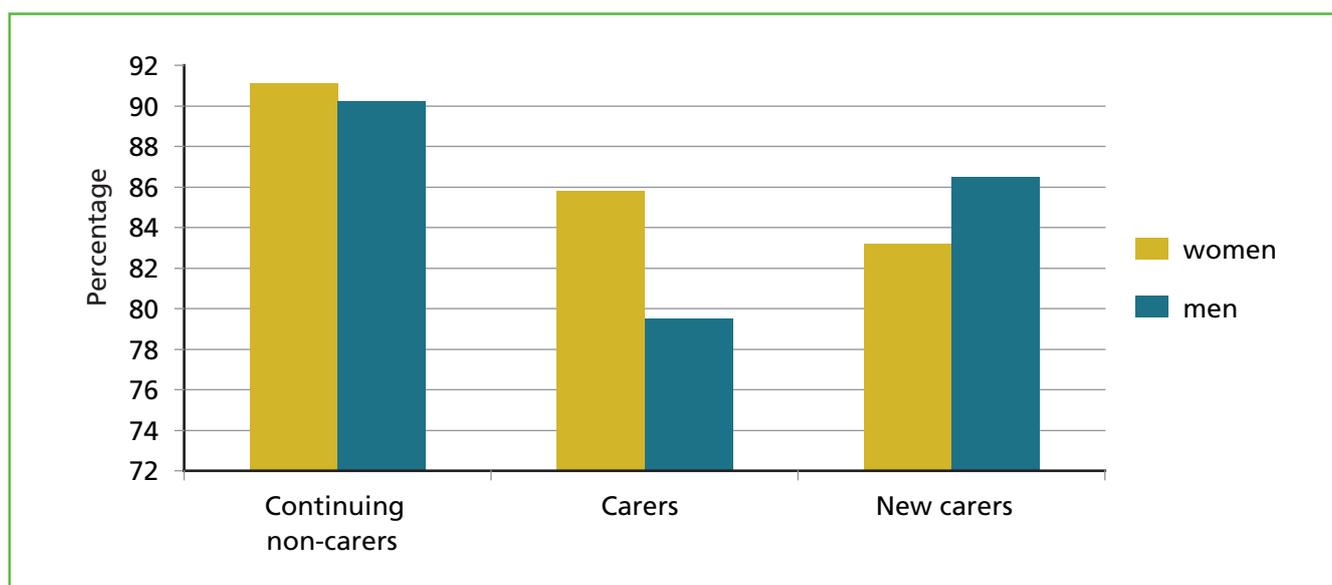
an assessment or review. Moreover, when carers do receive an assessment, most are not asked if they wish to do paid work.

Our review of local authority practice, which draws on the Care Quality Commission's recent Annual Performance Assessments, shows little evidence that councils systematically use services for the cared-for person as a means of supporting carers whose paid work is at risk.

Potentially due to lack of support, many working carers currently leave employment. Based on secondary analysis of the *2009/10 Carers Survey* and 2010 Office for National Statistics (ONS) population estimates, around 315,000 carers aged 16 to 64 in England have left employment to provide unpaid care and remain out of work (120,000 are men and 195,000 are women). These figures relate to the time when the Carers Survey was carried out in 2009/10. Since then, reductions in social care expenditure are likely to have reduced council support for working carers and may have increased the numbers leaving employment.

Moreover, the study finds that the thresholds at which carers leave the labour market in England are lower than previously thought. Earlier studies have shown that care provided for 20 or more hours a week has an impact on employment (Carmichael *et al.* 2010). In our study, we find that a key threshold at which carers aged 50 and over are at risk of losing

Figure 1. Employment rates two years later of 'carers' who provide care for 10 or more hours a week, 'new carers' and 'continuing non-carers', by gender, England, 2002/3–2008/9



Source: ELSA Waves 1–4

Notes: Data are pooled into observations made at Times 1 and 2, with Time 1 including Waves 1–3 and Time 2 including Waves 2–4. Data relate to people who remain under State Pension Age at both Times 1 and 2, and so is confined to women aged 50–57 and men aged 50–62.

their employment can occur when care is provided for 10 or more hours a week.

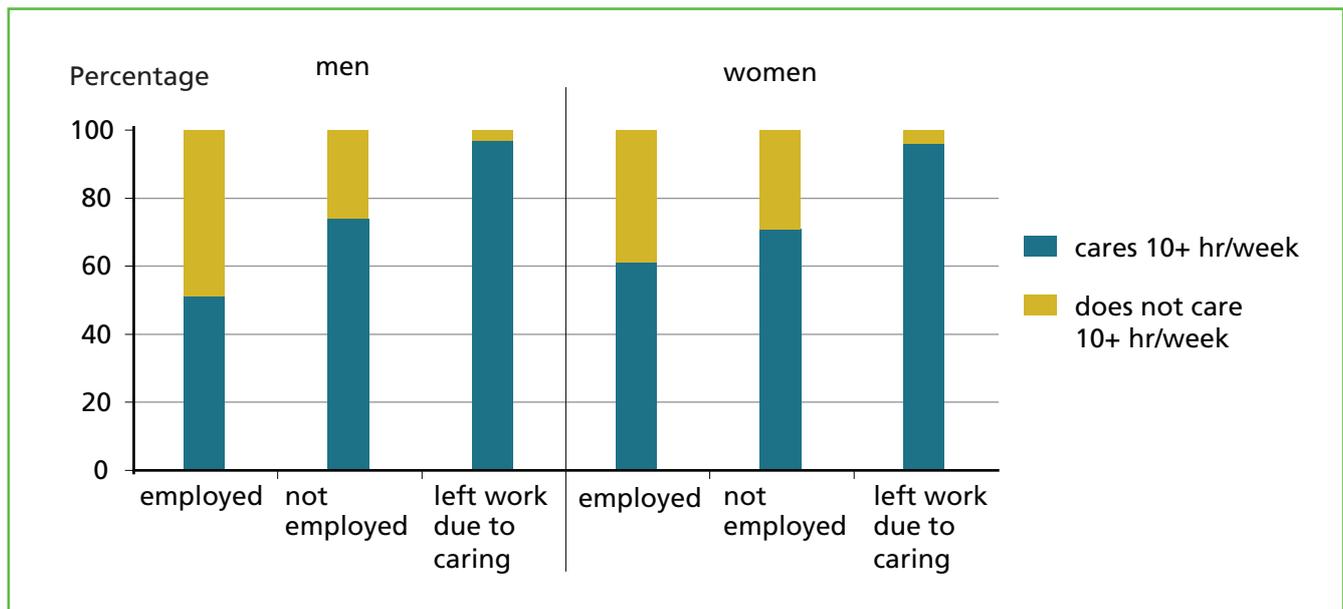
Using the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) our analysis looks at women and men, aged between 50 years and State Pension Age, who are initially employed and examines their employment status two years later. Caring is defined in terms of provision of care for 10 or more hours a week. Respondents are divided into three groups: 'carers' who were caring in the initial period; 'new carers' who did not provide care initially but did so two years later; and 'continuing non-carers' who were not caring initially or two years later. The results show that the employment rates of 'carers' and 'new carers' are lower after two years than those of 'continuing non-carers'. These results are statistically significant for women who are 'new carers' and men who are 'carers' (Figure 1). The differences between women and men carers are likely to be attributable to underlying gender differences in employment patterns.

Our findings also suggest that the lower threshold at which caring affects employment applies to carers more widely. Using the *2009/10 Carers Survey*, the study finds that over 95 per cent of adult men and women,

who have left work due to caring, provide care for 10 or more hours a week (Figure 2). Carers who leave the labour market are significantly more likely to care for 10 or more hours a week than either those in employment or other carers who are out of the labour market.

The public expenditure costs of carers leaving employment are substantial. Analysis of the *2009/10 Carers Survey* shows that over a third of carers who have left employment to care are in households where Carers' Allowance is claimed. This suggests that there are around 115,000 carers who have left work to care and are claiming Carers' Allowance, at a cost of around £0.3 billion a year. Moreover, using methods reported elsewhere (Knapp *et al.* 2007), we estimate that lost tax revenues, based on foregone income and an average percentage of income that goes on tax of 17.8%, would be approximately £1.0 billion a year. This estimate is based on median weekly full-time earnings of £538 for men and £439 for women and part-time earnings of £142 for men and £157 for women (ONS 2010). It also assumes, based on the *2009/10 Carers Survey*, that the full-time employment rate is the same for carers leaving employment as for carers currently in employment (82% of men, 39% of women).

Figure 2. Carers leaving the labour market, in employment and not in employment, by gender and provision of care for main cared-for person for 10 or more hours a week, England, 2009/10



Source: 2009/10 Survey of Carers in Households in England

If there was greater public investment in social care, such as 'replacement care' to support working carers, and fewer carers left the labour market, then public spending on benefits would be lower and revenues from taxation would be higher. £1.3 billion constitutes 9 per cent of current public spending on adult social care in England (currently around £14.5 billion).

GAPS IN EVIDENCE

Despite the increasing policy emphasis on 'replacement care', and the evidence to support it, the scoping study has not found any scientific (published, peer-reviewed) papers on the *effectiveness* of services for the cared-for person as a means of supporting carers in employment in England. There is international literature on this issue, primarily from the US and Europe, but this literature is inconclusive and not necessarily applicable to England, owing to differences in labour market and community care conditions.

An underlying reason for this gap in evidence is that it reflects a gap in practice. As indicated earlier, our findings show that carers are at risk of leaving employment when care is provided for only 10 or more hours a week. However, the *2009/10 Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England* shows that the majority of carers known to councils care

for 35 or more hours a week. Therefore councils are not generally in contact with large numbers of carers whose employment is at risk. This is consistent with the evidence of recent surveys showing unmet need for social care support among employed carers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

A key implication of the study is that there is a need for more evidence to support the development of policies around 'replacement care' for working carers in England. The study therefore suggests the need for further research. A key output of the scoping study is a proposal for a follow-on study that aims to fill gaps in evidence by looking at, first, the effectiveness of formal social care in supporting working carers and, second, the needs of working carers for 'replacement care' and the costs of meeting them.

References

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