



Families – should they do more?

Chair: Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director, Age UK

Speakers:

- Edward Davies, Policy Director, Centre for Social Justice
- Sarah Jackson, CEO, Working Families
- James Kirkup, Director, Social Market Foundation

This session looked at what role families and friends take when it comes to care. As care from family members outweighs state care what is the impact on the family and individuals? More women provide care than men, what impact does this have on careers and pension provision. Should carers leave be thought of in the same way as maternity and paternity leave? Is there enough flexibility for carers in employment? What is the impact on the sandwich generation whose caring responsibilities for children are separated from their caring responsibilities for older relatives?

James Kirkup, Director, Social Market Foundation

- There are 7.6 million people providing unpaid care for friends/family. Of these each does an average of 19.5 hours care each week. You would need 4 million paid carers to cover these caring responsibilities but currently there are 1.2 million carers employed in England.
- No matter how much funding is in place for Adult Social Care there will not be enough state provision to meet the need.
- The reality is that the conversation about care needs to start with an acceptance that families/friends will always have to provide unpaid care.
- Businesses need to have stronger policies regarding carers leave which match those for maternity and paternity leave. It should be a normal for businesses to accommodate those providing unpaid care.

Edward Davies, Policy Director, Centre for Social Justice

- 10% of an individual's health and wellbeing depends on access to health and social care services.
- All we hear about is health and social care services but actually other factors such as work, housing, environment and relationships are far more important to an individual's wellbeing.



- A study in Frome, Somerset looking at reducing instances for A&E attendance found that when isolated people are supported by the community their use of A&E services reduces massively.
- Evidence shows that family/community involvement is the best thing for people in later life.

Sarah Jackson, CEO, Working Families

- In order for people to be able to juggle caring responsibilities and paid employment there needs to be more flexible contracts, more part time roles and a greater understanding of a carers responsibilities from both employers and colleagues.
- When an individual provides more than 5 hours of care per week their work/employment becomes much more difficult. Career progression can be halted as promotions are seen to be turned down or avoided and individuals remain in roles for longer than they would have normally done to avoid additional responsibility in their work life.
- Campaign for more carers leave or Adjustment leave. Adjustment leave is when an individual can step away from work for a period of time and then return to a role that has been left open for them. This type of leave could save the economy a huge amount each year.
- Need to drop the rule that an individual has to work for the same employer for at least 26 weeks before they can request flexible working.

Q1: How do we make sure everyone understands what it means to provide care and what this consists of?

The reality of care needs to be discussed honestly and openly. Care is not just about popping round with shopping, making a cup of tea and cleaning up. The reality is that it's about nursing needs, changing incontinence pads, cleaning up, putting on creams, administering medication and much more. A child giving care to their parent(s) can be embarrassing and awkward so having those open conversations about care from the beginning can help with that. It's also important to point out the positives about care and not seeing it so negatively.

Further reading

[Timewise Flexible Job Index 2018](#)

Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End, Atul Gawande