



Caring for the Carers

A UCU guide for members and reps



1. Introduction

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More and more working people are becoming Carers for friends and family with little help or support so they struggle with combining work and caring duties. An ageing population, underfunding in social care through the government's austerity measures leading to an increase in the rising cost of care, has impacted enormously on the provision of access to and quality of care.

This briefing is designed to help members and branch representatives gain a better understanding of the issues surrounding Carers, their rights at work, and steps to negotiate flexible working. This initiative arose out of the work of UCU Disabled Members' Standing Committee and the following motion which was passed at UCU Annual Congress held in May 2015.

Rights for Carers

Congress notes that progress has been made in family friendly rights which are there to support parents at work. This includes support for disabled children up to 18. Rights for Carers of adults are more precarious with differences in the number of days given and whether these are paid. There are rights under the right to request flexible working, and disability rights in the Equality Act. The Care act 2015 which came in April, sets out other entitlements. It is often difficult to navigate the various rights available for Carers at work.

Congress call upon the NEC to produce a negotiating pack which includes:

- 1. Rights of all workers in relation to caring including the Care Act 2015*
- 2. Rights in relation to supporting a disabled person*
- 3. Negotiating checklist and model agreement*

Social Model of Disability

In recent years, disabled people have used their personal experiences of disability to demonstrate that it is not their condition or impairment which causes the 'problem' but the way society fails to make adjustments for their differences and excludes them from fully taking part in work and social life. This analysis of disability has become known as the '**social model**'. The 'medical model' attributes the causes of disability to individual impairments and sees the disabled person as the problem, believing they should adapt to fit into the world as it is. If this is not possible, then they are shut away in some institution or isolated at home. There is a deep-rooted social and cultural majority consensus based on the medical model, and these attitudes maintain and condone continued exclusion and inequality.

UCU supports and encourages the social model of disability which recognises the vital point that the barriers that currently exclude disabled people are not only the obvious physical obstacles (such as steps for a wheelchair user, or the absence of an induction loop for someone with a hearing impairment), but also the attitude that accompanies the medical model.