

There is support available to working carers

My name is Amy, I work for the Care and Independence team in NEL CCG, and I'm also a part time carer for my husband, son and mum.

My mum has reduced mobility and strength, owing to 2 hip replacements, mild arthritis and diabetes. She can't walk far or lift anything heavy – she can't walk around the supermarket without frequent breaks or change the bedding on her bed, for example.

My husband has fibromyalgia. He is in constant low-level pain, which sometimes flares up to the point where he cannot sit up or get out of bed or dress himself. He also doesn't drive.

My son was recently diagnosed on the autistic spectrum, and needs support with socialisation, behaviour, and certain key practical skills – luckily for me, his nursery manages a lot of his needs during the day, 3 days a week.

My dad used to manage the caring role for my mum and also helped me with my son – when he died suddenly in 2018 it was a huge emotional loss, but in practical terms it was also devastating. I had to work out a whole new way of managing nursery schedules, supporting my mum, walking the dogs (which my dad did in the week) and getting my husband up and mobile (on his off days) – all around work and while managing my own grief.

I was very lucky. My manager completely understood the issues carers face, being the lead for Carers and Communities. She recognised I was a carer - despite working with them for years, I had not realised this.

I had access to carers leave, on top of bereavement leave and I had access to flexible working as required. I had the option of a phased return to work and I had access to, and was encouraged to discuss, the struggles I was facing as a carer during supervision and seek counselling if needed. More recently, when a number of caring responsibilities blew up at the same time, I was encouraged to speak to the GP and take sick leave and a phased return to work, to ensure my mental health was safeguarded.

If I had not had the support after my father's death, I would have been forced to leave work in order to help my mum during that terrible phase in our lives. Without the more recent support, I suspect that I might soon have been looking at having to leave work.

There is so much support available to working carers both via the CCG and locally. Speak to your manager and identify yourself as a carer, access the online training modules, read the carers policy, contact the Carers Support Service ([01472 242277](tel:01472242277)).

You may not need it now, but if down the line you do need the support, both you and your manager will be prepared.

Amy

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