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Carers@Work

Between Job and Care: Conflict or Opportunity? A Strategy for Securing Sustainable Future Care and Productivity Potentials in an Ageing Society – A European Comparison

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Research Context

Current context:

- 6 million people provide care in the UK:
 - 4.4 million are of working age, 2.5 million combine care and work (Buckner and Yeandle, 2006).
- Snapshot picture- potentially higher from a longitudinal perspective (Arksey 2002; Evandrou & Glaser 2003; Pickard 2004);

The Future:

- Populations are ageing:
 - Longevity is increasing;
 - Fertility is falling.
- ↑ Share of population that is 'older' and number of people in need of care.
- By 2037 the chance of someone aged 30-54 becoming a carer for an older individual will rise by 88% (George, 2001).
- At the same time, EU nations are striving to achieve full employment and individuals are encouraged to work longer.





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The Carers@Work Project

- Two year project funded by the Volkswagen Foundation;
- Four country comparison: Italy, Germany, Poland and the UK;
- Aim to examine the impact of combining work and care, and explore the strategies individuals employ to try and create a balance;
- Key elements:
 - 1) International literature review and secondary data analysis (SHARE and EUROFAMCARE);
 - 2) Analysis of the reconciliation problematic at enterprise level: A review of literature and examples of best practice (case studies), as well as expert interviews;
 - 3) Qualitative interviews with working carers: 60 interviews in each of the four participating countries.





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Our Sample

- According to **EUROCARERS** a **carer** is *‘a person who provides unpaid care to someone with a chronic illness, disability or other long lasting health or care need, outside a professional or formal framework’*.
- The **‘Carers’** in this study are those who cares on an unpaid basis for someone 60 years and older;
 - Caring’ means: physical care, instrumental support, household tasks (ADL and IADL), emotional care, and organisation of care (excluding financial help only);
- A **‘working carer’** is any person who reconciles these caring tasks and paid regular employment (therefore seasonal or occasional employment was not included).





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Our Sample

- 60 interviews in each country;
- Combining the aim of a mixed sample with saturation;
- The desired mixed sample is as follows:

Qualification Level	Couple, both working	Couple, one working	Single, working
High (A Levels and above)	10	10	10
Low (up to GCSEs)	10	10	10





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Progress and some initial findings

UK Sample:

Qualification Level	Couple, both working	Couple, one working	Single, working
High (A Levels and above)	9/10	10/10	8/10
Low (up to GCSEs)	7/10	5(6)*/10	4(3)*/10
Non response	2 (couple, both working; NR re: education)		Total: 46

* One interviewee- caring for husband (hence 'Couple, one earning'), became widowed and a carer for her mother-in-law (hence 'Single').





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Impact of Combining Work and Care

- **Time:**
 - Social life;
 - Family life;
 - Work;
 - Concentration;
 - Conflict;
 - Career progression/ path;
 - Self-employment.
 - Personal guilt.
 - Stress and ill-health.





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Additional stress-factors

- Finding support from...
 - **State:** Bureaucracy, appointment times, information;
 - **Voluntary sector:** Opening hours;
 - **Private:** Issues of quality and cost;
 - **Employers:** lack of formal policies/ line manager not aware or misinterprets formal policies;
 - **Family.**
- Resistance of cared-for person to services and support.





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Strategies to help combine work and care

- **Work:**
 - Workplace policies that provide flexibility (informal/formal): e.g. flexitime, care leave etc;
 - Changes to work: reduce hours, change role, self-employment;
- **Family and friends;**
- **Services:**
 - State;
 - Voluntary;
 - Private.





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Conclusions and Suggestions for Improvement

UK:

- Employers:
 - Line managers who are
 - Aware of the company's policies;
 - Aware of the challenges facing working carers.
- State:
 - A 'one stop shop' for information on services available;
 - Better quality care services;
 - Less bureaucracy and simpler forms;
 - Carers' Allowance: a 'sliding scale' for earnings.

National differences:

- Italy: Migrant care workers in over half of the Italian sample so suggest increases to wages or state support to purchase care.
- Italy, Poland and Germany: Respondents did not suggest improvements from employers in terms of policies, just a sympathetic attitude.





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Thank you!

