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Family carers' experiences of altering work arrangements to provide care: A qualitative case study approach

Dominique Phillips

Research Assistant, UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery & Health Systems

Co authors: Thilo Kroll, Clare Duffy, Gerard Fealy, Gillian Paul,
Linda Dowling-Hetherington, Majella Fahy, Breda Moloney,
Attracta Lafferty (PI)



The
CAREWELL
Project



Background



The Irish
policy
context



Aim



Method



Findings



Implications
for policy

Overview

Development of a workplace programme to promote health and self-care behaviours among working family carers

Dr Attracta Lafferty (PI)



Objective 1

Synthesis of extant evidence on the health and wellbeing of working family carers

Objective 2

Examination of employers' and carers' experiences

Objective 3

Design, develop & co-create a workplace-based health promotion programme



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Changing demographics



Imminent ‘care gap’



Increase in those combining work and care

54.6% of Irish population combine work and care (CSO, 2016)



Aging population



Shift in dependency ratio



More women in the workforce



Delayed retirement



Smaller family sizes



Work impacts of family caring

(Principi et al. 2014)

Reduction in work hours

Taking up occasional work

Missed career opportunities

Early retirement

Withdrawal from labour market (threshold 20 hrs)

Unlikely to return to the same levels of employment



Existing Literature

(Hämmig, 2014)

- ▶ Work-family conflict
- ▶ Increased caregiver burden

But

Employment can be **protective** of the potentially negative effects of caring

- ▶ Respite from caring
- ▶ Maintaining social connectedness
- ▶ Financial wellbeing





Supporting Carers -The Business Case

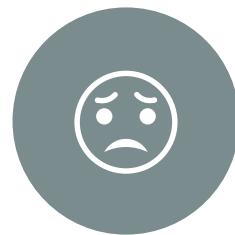
(Carers UK, 2019; Fuller & Raman, 2019)



LOSS OF
PRODUCTIVITY



INCREASED
ABSENTEEISM &
PRESENTEEISM



DECREASED
EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT AND
MORALE



STAFF TURNOVER



MOST EXPERIENCED
AND QUALIFIED STAFF

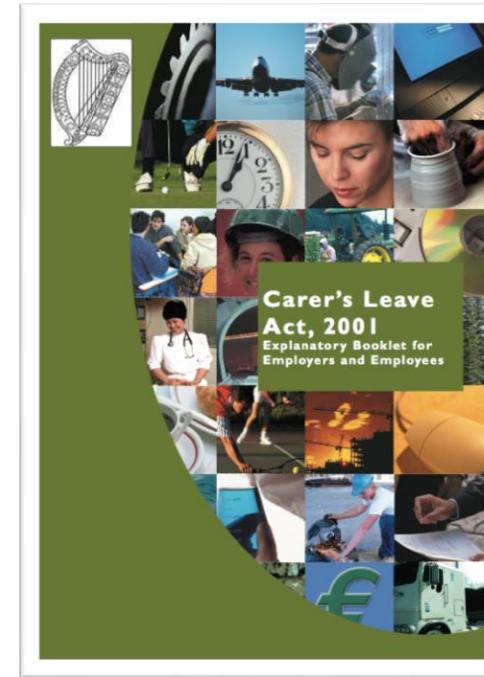
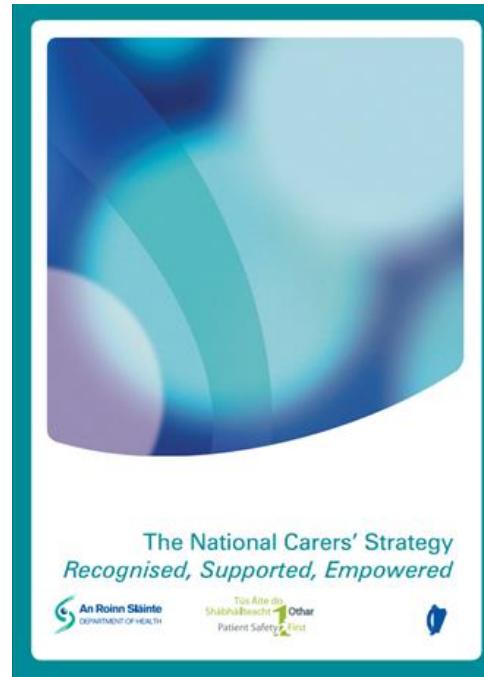


RECRUITMENT AND
TRAINING COSTS



WAR ON TALENT -
ATTRACT AND RETAIN

Objective 4.2:
Enable carers to remain in touch with the labour market to the greatest extent possible.



Irish Policy Context

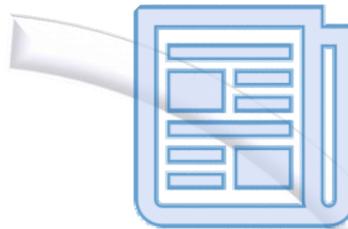
- The National Carers' Strategy (2012)
- State income supports and the Carer's Leave Act (2001)
- EU Directive for work-life balance (2017)



Aim

To explore the experiences of family carers who have had to give up paid work or alter their work arrangements to care for a relative with a disability or chronic illness, or who requires care due to ageing.

Method



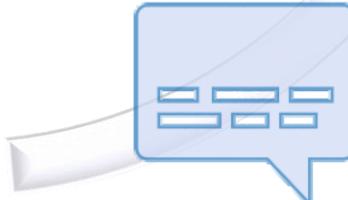
Multi-case study approach
(Yin, 2009)



10 semi-structured,
face-to-face
interviews



Audio recorded and
transcribed
verbatim



Vignettes were
developed to
present each case
(Miles, Huberman
and Saldaña, 2014)



Family Carers Ireland
22 August at 10:56 ·

Researchers with the CAREWELL Project are looking to speak to male family carers who have had to give up paid work due to their caring responsibilities.

If you would be interested in taking part in this research, please see the contact details below.

For further information, please visit carewellproject.com.



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HRB
Health Research Board



Research Project

Are you a male family carer
who has had to give up paid work
because of caring responsibilities
for a relative with frailty, disability
or chronic illness?



If so, we want to hear more about your experiences. We are interested
to learn more about:

- Your reasons for giving up work.
- What were the main challenges of combining work with care?
- Were you supported by your employer to balance work with
your caring responsibilities?
- What would have helped you to continue to stay in paid
work?

If you are interested in taking part in this important research, please
contact us at: CAREWELL@ucd.ie or call 01 716 6697

You can learn more about the CAREWELL project at: www.carewellproject.com



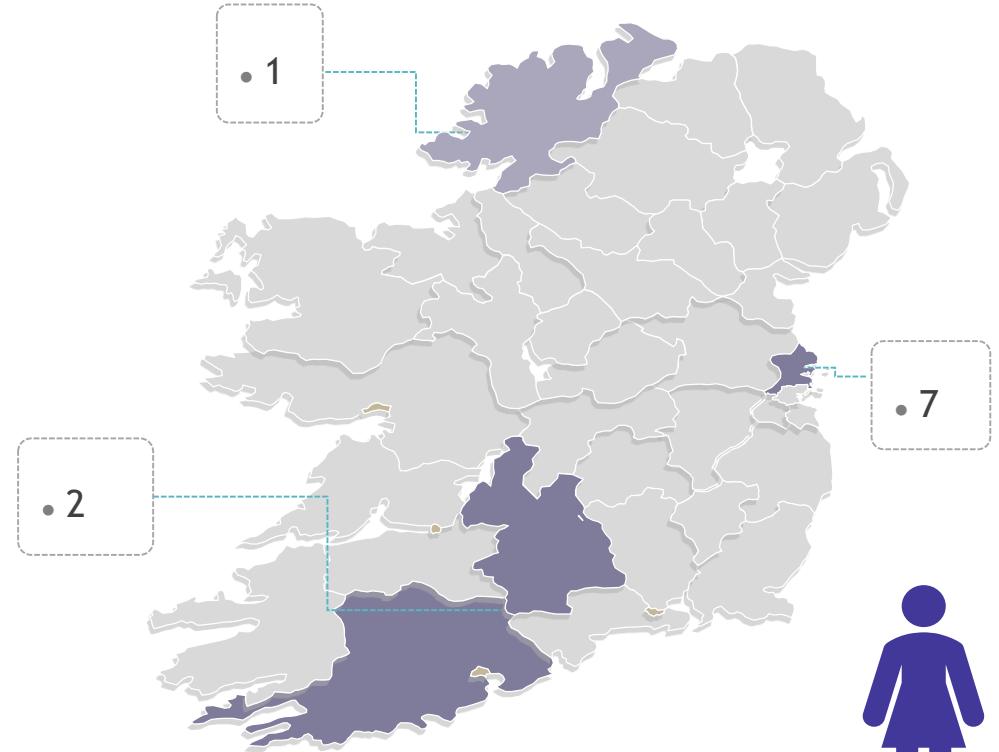


Findings

- Participant demographics
- Work/care arrangements
- Case examples



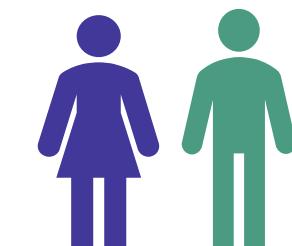
Participant Demographics



Rural
3



Urban
7



Female Male
7 3

38 - 65
years old



Reasons for providing care

- Old age
- Dementia
- MS
- Intellectual disability
- Genetic disorder
- Spinal injury



R/ship to care recipient

- Parental carers (6)
- Adult child carers (2)
- Spousal carers (2)



Number of care recipients

- One care recipient (7)
- Two care recipients (3)



Work/care arrangements



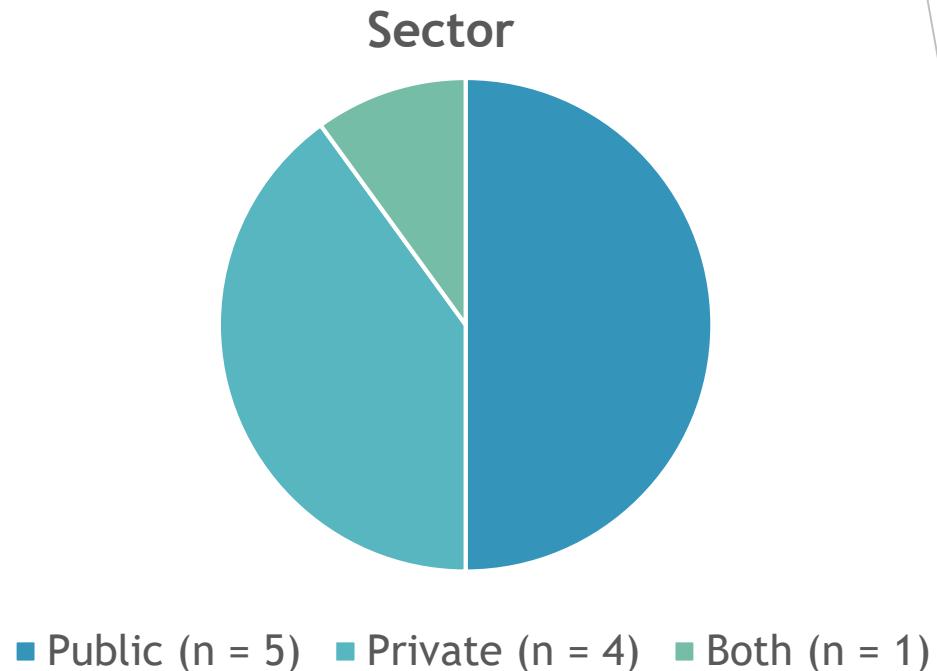
5 participants were
juggling work and care



4 participants caring full
time



1 participant returned to
employment and is no longer
providing care





Work alterations

Early retirement

Voluntary redundancy

Career break

Carer's leave

Use of parental leave

Altered working hours

Stopped accepting opportunities

Moving to a more 'family-friendly' employer



Policy implication: Inadequate services

- Male carer of 2 daughters with a profound ID.
- Balanced work and care for 18 years.
- He had a supportive employer and colleagues.
- When the girls turned 18 and transitioned to adult services there was no service available.
- Felt forced to take early retirement as there was no alternative.
- Continues to worry about future care arrangements.

'When this came on then about not having a service then that really forced my mind on it you know and I felt I had no option but to go [leave employment], so the girls finished school at the end of June 2013 and I retired on the 30th June so, because we knew for definite we had the summer without any help.'

'Do I resent it? I don't, I would have liked it to have been different, I'd have liked to have gone on my own terms but I'm grateful for the fact that I was able to go and look after my family in the way that they needed it'

Male, 62, cares for two adult daughters with profound ID & complex needs



Policy implication: Flexibility & company culture

- Cares for daughter with ID and complex needs.
- Worked in a male dominated field with inflexible working hours.
- Took carers leave for 6 months and was pregnant with 2nd child when she returned.
- Felt forced to take voluntary redundancy as employer was unwilling to accommodate her needs.
- Has 2 additional qualifications, works in a flexible environment but is on a lower salary compared to 10 years ago.

'I was the first woman in that particular department to go on maternity leave not to mind have any other complications and there were other women in that department who were newly married and they were obviously about to start having children and they just said that they didn't want to set a precedent. If they allowed me go part-time everyone would want it.'

This annoyed me on a number of levels like number one, why wouldn't you support highly skilled, dedicated staff to have some flexibility and retain that staff and even if they don't see that, I don't know how they couldn't say that my situation was different given my daughter's diagnosis and all of her medical needs.'

Female, 44, cares for daughter with severe ID



Policy implication: Returning to work after caring

- Cared for both parents while in employment until she reached a breaking point.
- Regrets taking a career break instead of Carers Leave (PRSI contributions etc).
- Has returned to her previous job but has experienced some unforeseen consequences.
- Still adapting to life without her caring roles and is ‘careful’ with her energy which continues to impact her career progression.

‘Basically I went back [to work] and they gave him [replacement] my office and I mean look that’s a message. So I had a huge status drop I was, I think it was very poorly managed. Some of that was unfortunate because there was a change in management.’

‘But, like it was very unfair the way things worked out afterwards and that was not my choice really to leave I only left because I absolutely couldn’t stay so that, that was very unfair actually.’

Female, 51, cared for both parents



Findings across cases



Flexibility is key



The importance of
supportive
management



Fostering family
friendly cultures
within organisations



The ongoing impact
of the recession



The ‘fight for
services’ as a full-
time job



Inadequate home
care/replacement
care



Caring not as
valued as paid
employment



Implications for policy

Cared for person *and* carer at centre of policy design

Shared responsibility between government and employers

Policy matters - Carers leave Act (2001) as a key mechanism

Short term and paid leave options

Investment in services & ‘replacement care’

Tailoring to employees needs

Future Challenges



Organizing policy across levels (government & workplace) and sectors (employment, healthcare, service provision)

The implementation of the EU Directive for work-life balance

Handling employees needs on a case-by-case basis and potential issues

How can we make flexible work arrangements *more* flexible?

- E.g. small/medium sized employers, customer-facing roles, frontline staff



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Any comments or questions?



dominique.phillips@ucd.ie



[@Dominique_Phil](https://twitter.com/Dominique_Phil)



carewell@ucd.ie



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