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Work and informal caregiving: challenges and opportunities

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Work and informal caregiving: challenges and opportunities

Dr Jacqueline Watts & Dr Joyce Cavaye

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Ageing in Europe: Beyond the work-centred life course,
ESA Mid-term conference, Goethe-University Frankfurt
14-16 September 2016

.....
Life-changing Learning
.....

Work and informal caregiving: challenges and opportunities

Work – a concept and set of practices

- Multi-faceted in nature & range of categories
- Importance of work is shaped by class, gender, ethnicity and age (Watts 2015)
- Connection between work as occupation and individual identity (Grint, 2005)
- Can be enjoyable, satisfying & fulfils individual potential (Noon and Blyton, 2007)
- Also a source of inequality and reflection of wider social divisions (Mooney, 2004)
- Now recognised as central to some people's (mainly men!) identity
- Position for women is seen as different (Morris, 1999)

Balancing work and care

- Women's position connected to traditional values that have placed women in the home focusing on caring responsibilities (Evans, 2003).
- Providing care involves men as well as women - a cross-generational commitment
- Balancing care for children and older family members with paid work
- Decisions carers make re work shaped by interplay of factors
- Carers' health, finances, work-related issues and matters related to the care recipient (Aldridge and Hughes, 2016; Brimblecombe et al, 2016)
- Happens in both active and post-caregiving phases

Balancing work and care

- Part-time work is principal means by which many people manage the dual responsibilities of paid work and providing care.
- This is mainly the case for women with childcare commitments (Wattis and James, 2013)
- For many carers option of part-time work may not be feasible
- Work can be 'contained', caregiving often cannot be
- Post-caregiving, re-entering paid workforce may not be realistic for former carers
- Following long period of caregiving, entry to labour market requires up to date knowledge and skills.

Former carers

- Individuals for whom caregiving has come to an end
- 2 million people in UK each year become former carers (Carers UK 2014)
- Increasingly large section of the population
- End of caregiving may be due to death or care home admission
- Former carers had to amend working practices to accommodate caregiving

Former Carers Study

- Exploratory study co-produced with former carers
- Part 1: Systematic literature review (Cavaye & Watts, 2016)
- Part 2: Online web-based questionnaire
- Part 2: In-depth qualitative interviews
- Self-selected sample
- Selection criteria – end of caregiving more than 6 months ago but less than 5 years
- Ethics approval from OU HREC committee

Participant profile

- 90% female and 10% male
- Ages ranged from 37 – 72 years
- 68% caring for a parent
- 19% caring for a partner
- 8% had looked after a sibling
- 3% had looked after a grandparent



Duration of caregiving

Duration in years	%
Less than 1	09
1 - 3	23
3 - 5	08
5 – 10	31
10 – 15	20
15 - 20	03
20 +	06

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Employment Status on becoming and while being a carer

- 65% full-time employment
- 35% part-time employment

- 25% said the being a carer affect their ability to work **a little**
- 71% said the being a carer affect their ability to work **a lot**

- 31% continued working
- 18 % reduced their working hours
- 23% gave up their job
- 14% were retired
- 10% were not in paid employment

I had to take a part-time job so I could be available as carer

My work commitments were flexible and could be worked round to care for mother

Gave up a teaching career as Mum's care needs increased

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Employment Status after the end of caregiving

- 31% full-time work - same job as prior to caregiving
- 14% full time work – but in a different job
- 9% employed part-time work - in the same job
- 14% employed part-time work - but in a different job
- 33% voluntary or unpaid work
- 20% doing voluntary work for the first time

I have increased my voluntary working at a school where I love working with the children and feel valued by the staff

I am now working with people who have a diagnosis of dementia. I feel the experience I gained through caring for mum had a direct bearing on me getting this job

I had a very supportive employer and work that could be done remotely, without this I don't think I could have coped

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Financial impact on former carers

I left work and moved house to look after my Father. My loss of earnings would be about £250,000 gross. I have no pension. I am dependent upon my husband's pension

I lost 6 years pay. I worked only 1 -2 days per week...I put my pension lump sum and as much pension as possible into cash to pay my mortgage so I would not lose my home. Before I left work I had cut down my hours to care and this affected my pension as this was based on my last 2 years salary

I left my job, with a redundancy payment, to look after my wife full time. Stretching the redundancy with the help of carers' allowance for 4 years. Then took a part time job for 6 months, after which we had to move

I gave up a well paid job 4 years ago. Loss of income, loss of pension, now cannot live on the income I have so going back to work at age 60

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New opportunities

- 59% derived satisfaction from caregiving
- 94% had learned something from being a carer
- 79% had gained new knowledge and skills
- 65% continue to use this new knowledge and skills

Happily, I am working with people who have dementia. I feel the experience I gained through caring for mum had a direct bearing on me getting this job

I never liked my job but stayed in it so I could support mum financially... so I have left that job since she died and am pursuing the things I'd rather be doing

I have now found different work. Although still part-time, it is better paid, I can travel with this job and commit to meetings, which I found difficult before

Conclusions

- Importance of work is shaped by class, gender, ethnicity and age
- Opportunities after caregiving - many return to work
- Others take up new jobs and voluntary work
- Role of work in former carers lives depends on number of factors
- Duration of caregiving
- Financial status
- Physical and mental health and wellbeing
- Policy in UK should address the needs of older former carers and support them to re-engage in commodified work

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Dr Jacqueline Watts & Dr Joyce Cavaye
School of Health, Wellbeing & Social Care
The Open University, UK

Jackie.watts@open.ac.uk

joyce.cavaye@open.ac.uk

 @joycecavaye