

Balancing Caring Responsibilities with Work and Learning

This article is for adult learners who have caring responsibilities alongside their job and training. It recognises the challenges carers face and highlights the support and help that may be available.

What are caring responsibilities?

A carer is someone who provides unpaid support to another person who couldn't manage without help. This might include caring for: - A parent or older relative - A sibling - A partner or spouse - A child with additional needs

Caring can involve practical help (shopping, cooking, transport), emotional support, personal care, managing medication, or coordinating appointments. Many carers don't label themselves as carers—they're simply doing what needs to be done.

Being a student and a carer

Balancing work, learning, and caring can be demanding. You may experience: - Tiredness or burnout - Difficulty meeting deadlines or attending training - Worry, stress, or guilt - Feeling isolated or that others don't understand your situation

These pressures are real, and they don't reflect a lack of commitment or ability. Many capable, motivated apprentices are also carers.

Looking after yourself

While caring for others, it's easy to put your own needs last. However, your wellbeing matters too.

Helpful steps include: - **Acknowledging your role** – recognising yourself as a carer can help you access support - **Talking to someone** – a tutor, line manager, HR, or apprenticeship coordinator - **Setting realistic expectations** – you can't do everything perfectly - **Taking breaks where possible** – even small moments of rest matter

Looking after yourself is not selfish—it helps you sustain both your caring role and your learning.

Support at work and in training

You may be entitled to support or adjustments, such as: - Flexible working or training arrangements - Adjusted deadlines where appropriate - Remote or hybrid learning options - Time off for emergencies or appointments

If you feel able, speaking to your employer or training provider can open up practical solutions. You're not expected to manage alone.

Financial and practical support

Caring responsibilities can have a financial impact. Support may be available, including: - **Carer's Allowance** (eligibility applies) - **Flexible working requests** - **Local authority carer support services**

An adviser or support organisation can help you understand what you may be entitled to.

Where to get help (UK)

Information and advice

- **Carers UK** – [carersuk.org](https://www.carersuk.org)
- **Carers Trust** – [carerstrust.org](https://www.carerstrust.org)
- **Citizens Advice** – [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

Health and wellbeing support

- Your **GP** – can offer support and referrals
- **NHS Talking Therapies** – self-referral available in many areas
- **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)** – if offered by your employer

If you're outside the UK, local health services or carer organisations can provide similar support.

Supporting someone who is a carer

If you work or learn alongside someone with caring responsibilities: - Be patient and understanding - Avoid assumptions about availability or commitment - Encourage them to access support if they're struggling

A supportive environment can make a significant difference.

A final word

Being a carer while completing an apprenticeship takes resilience, organisation, and dedication. Support is available, and asking for help is a positive step—not a failing.

If this article reflects your situation, consider reaching out to one of the support options listed above.