Written Answers

Sarah Wollaston Chair, Health Committee

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what steps the Government is taking to prevent discrimination against former carers.

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what support the Government provides to former carers entering employment or training following the death of the person they are caring for.

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many carers over the age of 50 have become unemployed after the death of the person they were caring for since 2010.

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what assessment he has made of the number of carers over the age of 50 who have obtained full-time work within a period of (a) three and (b) six months following the death of the person they were caring for since 2010.

To ask the Secretary of State for Health, if the Government will bring forward legislative proposals to protect former carers from discrimination.
To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what estimate he has made of the number of carers over the age of 50 who have not obtained full-time work within a period of (a) three and (b) six months following the death of the person they were caring for since 2010.

Norman Lamb The Minister of State, Department of Health

The Government recognises the valuable contribution made by carers, many of whom spend a significant proportion of their life providing support to family members or friends.

We know that former carers need to adjust to life after caring, so it is important that they receive support to cope and are signposted to relevant advice and support, including return to work programmes.

We have also legislated to give all carers new rights under the Care Act, which includes a principle to promote individual well-being. We have ensured that the definition of well-being in the Act includes participation in work, education and training. Local authorities must therefore consider these as relevant considerations when they are conducting an assessment or working on a support plan with a carer.

Any change of circumstances should trigger a review of circumstances. Support and planning should include planning for the end of a caring role, where relevant.

In 2002, the Government established a Task and Finish Group jointly with Employers for Carers in 2012 which looked into the factors affecting carers, including former carers wishing to return to work. We are taking forward its recommendations and have recently launched nine local authority pilots that are exploring ways in which people can be supported to combine work and care.

The Department for Work and Pensions continues to invest in supporting carers to return to work. If someone who was previously a carer and is fit for and looking for work, they would make a claim for Job Seekers Allowance and if eligible, will have access to the full Job Centre Plus offer, a core regime that provides:

- Mandatory interventions and additional flexible interventions. The interventions provide the contact with claimants so that a work coach can offer them help and support to return to work or move closer to the labour market; and

- The model has three elements: a core regime of regular face-to-face meetings, flexible work coach support and access to a menu of support options including work experience, skills provision and job search help, including provision funded through the Flexible Support Fund.

Former carers can continue to get Carer’s Allowance for up to eight weeks after the death of the person they were caring for.

Carers already have a legal right to request flexible working arrangements after 26 weeks of continuous employment. Through the Children and Families Act 2014, this right was extended to all employees from 30 June 2014, helping to normalise flexible working
practices within the workplace.

As with other employees or potential employees, the Equality Act 2010 protects former carers from direct and indirect discrimination in employment on grounds such as age and sex. Given the current protection from discrimination for former carers (along with other people seeking work or already employed), such as on grounds of age, sex or disability, we do not believe that additional measures are needed at the present time.

We do not hold records of former carers over the age of 50 who were unemployed or returned to work after the death of the person they were caring for. However, data from the 2011 Census which encompasses the provision of unpaid care in England and Wales showed that 8.9% of men and 11.1% of women who are caring, were unemployed.

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