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MILLIONS UNAWARE OF FLEXIBLE WORKING RIGHTS FOR CARERS

The Government has stepped up its action to raise awareness of flexible working rights for carers. New figures indicate that millions of people are unaware that caring for a spouse or relative gives them the right to ask their employer to work flexibly. The figures also show that the majority of adults (82 per cent) aren't aware that all those with caring responsibilities are legally entitled to ask for flexible working.

Harriet Harman, Minister for Women and Equality, said: "This Government recognises the importance of this family care, and those who go out to work as well as care for older relatives. That is why we brought in the right to request flexible working for those who care for older and disabled relatives."

"We do not want people to have to choose between their work or providing important family care, so the question of their ability to work and employers' ability to respond flexibly is a huge one for the future."

Anyone who cares for a spouse, relative, or someone who lives with them, whatever level of support they provide, has the right to ask for flexible working. More than a third of people surveyed had caring responsibilities which could make them eligible to ask.

Imelda Redmond, Chief Executive of Carers UK said: "Millions of families are facing a care crunch, juggling the need to provide care for an older or disabled relative or friend, but at the same time remain in work for longer. Businesses need people to make the most of their skills and experience in the workplace, yet millions of people are at risk of having to leave their jobs because of caring responsibilities and a lack of support. Our work with Employers for Carers has shown that flexible working can help businesses with productivity, recruitment and retention. Flexible working can be a win:win solution for carers and employers, and in most cases is very easy to arrange and manage."

Employers have already demonstrated their acceptance of flexible working, with over 91 per cent of requests from parents and carers being accepted. More information about making a flexible working request can be found by visiting www.direct.gov.uk and clicking on the 'Caring for someone' section.