

Often I work 7-10 days before I get a day off. finish at 10pm and back on shift at 7.30am the following day. You don't get breaks. You are with the residents all the time.

Residents sat at home all day get frustrated and some get quite violent – with us, their carers!

Care worker's health and their safety is at risk!

In 1/2 hr I have to get a person out of bed, assist washing or showering, help them dress, prepare breakfast, administer medication, wash up and leave the residence tidy – it is unrelenting stress!

I regularly do a sleep-in followed by a day shift. I rarely sleep on a sleep-in as the residents tend to wander in the night – I am exhausted!

We have to provide an adequate level of care within the shortest time possible – impossible rotas, zero hours contracts and unpaid hours – the pressure is unbearable!

What are the health, safety and welfare issues that care workers face?

What legal rights do care workers have to improve their working conditions?

What else should care workers do to protect themselves?

Care workers provide an essential service in our communities. They provide care to individuals in their homes and in care homes. However, the sector is in crisis. Care workers are exhausted, despairing at the lack of resources and staff to do the work, hardly surviving on low wages and desperately trying to carry out their important role. **Care workers are often placed at unacceptable risks of being injured, made ill or much worse.** Some are lone workers in the community and subjected to tremendous stress, violence at work and while they are travelling, understaffing, and 'back breaking' lifting because of a lack of equipment. In some care homes there are insufficient trained staff and resources, as care companies squeeze money out of the system. The way that individuals care needs are funded and assessed, places them and their carer's at risk.

All workers have the right to be safe and healthy at work!

Employers have a general duty under Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure the safety, health and welfare of their employees and under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 to make a suitable and sufficient assessment of risks and to put control measures in place to either eliminate or manage the risks down to a level that avoids harm.

All the risks identified by care workers are preventable or easily controlled. No-one should be at risk of injury or ill health in this sector.

In addition, standards relating to quality of care are regulated by the CQC in England, the Care Inspectorate in Scotland and Care and Social Services Inspectorate in Wales.

Injuries and ill health can mean substantial financial penalties for care workers. They can cause long term disabilities and can result in care workers having to give up work far too early.

'Workers should not be treated as disposable and work should not be spirit-sapping, body-breaking grind.'

<http://www.hazards.org/insecure/makeorbrea.htm>

**Hazards
campaign**

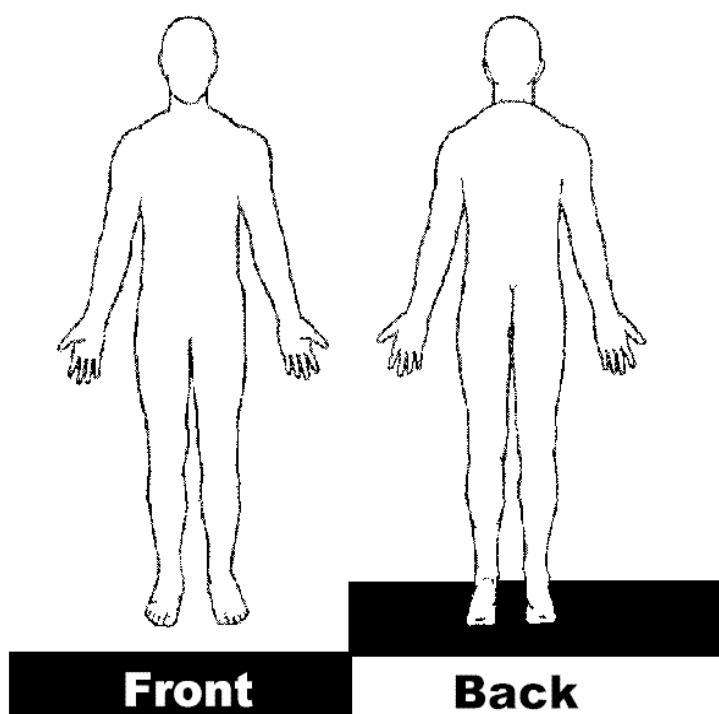
Some of the Hazards Identified by Care Workers

Issue	Potential Hazard	Suggested Solutions
Breaks, holidays, sickness, fatigue	Working more than 6 hours without a break. Not being given holidays or unable to take sickness absence. Exhaustion and stress leading to ill health.	All workers are entitled to take a 20 minute break after 6 hours; many employers provide a longer break. All workers are entitled to paid holiday leave. www.gov.uk/calculate-your-holiday-entitlement Paid sickness absence is at the discretion of your employer but many employers have procedures in place to support workers when they are ill and ensure they do not return to work until they are better, which is important for food safety and clients health. http://www.hazards.org/sickness/ Stress risk assessments carried out using HSE Management Standards http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/standards/
Driving between clients / air pollution	Driving between jobs with insufficient time to do the job if late and risk of driving incidents and injuries. Potential traffic problems and having to drive at unsociable hours. Air pollution exposure to automobile exhaust including diesel fumes and dust. Diesel exhaust is a carcinogen and exposure to fine dust can lead to cancers etc.	Employers have duties to make sure workers are not put at risk by work-related driving activities. All risks should be assessed, controlled and monitored. Travel times, routes and contact times should be reasonable and adjustable. All appointments should be planned thoroughly and risks to workers eliminated and controlled. http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg382.pdf
Lack of personal safety	Incidents of violence, robberies, sexual and racial harassment, and bullying. This can range from threats and verbal abuse to physical assaults and homicides from behaviours initiated by clients, other workers, employers and public. Dog bites from working in client's homes and dogs not being secured.	Zero tolerance on violence Security procedure including alarms and CCTV used to secure film of any client violence. Clear policy on acceptable behaviour displayed for clients and issued to all staff in training and enforced by managers and supervisors. A clear procedure for raising grievances established. Procedure to ensure risk assessment and communication of dogs on premises and procedure to follow if any injuries.
Lone working	Working alone where there is a risk of injury from an individual, from using equipment or working outside normal working hours	Working alone is not in itself against the law, however employers must assess the risks and put in place control measures to ensure the health and safety of its workers and those who are being cared for and lone workers should NOT be put at more risk than other workers. http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/workers/lone.htm
Musculo-skeletal problems	Lifting people can result in awkward postures, excessive reaching and lifting and twisting.	Professionally assessed and designed work space with appropriate equipment designed to reduce excessive lifting, stretching and twisting Training for workers on potential injuries that can occur and how to avoid them.
Prolonged Standing	Workers being expected to stand without a break for long periods. Standing for long periods of time can cause stress and strain to workers' backs and legs and circulatory problems.	Seats available with foot rests if necessary Breaks timetabled – all workers are entitled to take a 20 minute break after 6 hours; many employers provide a longer break.
Safe use of equipment	Lifting and fitting bed rails, lifting using hoists and slings. Supporting clients and residents getting up, dressed, bathing and moving. All can lead to back pain and musculoskeletal problems which can result in disability, injuries and a lack of dignity	Individual needs of clients and residents should be assessed and then the determined equipment use risk assessed. The solution must include safe numbers of workers, training, maintenance and availability of equipment, sufficient time to carry out task.

Insufficient numbers and skilled staff	Not enough staff employed to cover the number of residents and not enough staff employed to provide adequate home care.	CQC who regulate care settings have a lot of guidance and if the organisation is not employing sufficient numbers of suitably qualified, competent, skilled and experienced persons then their registration will be at risk. http://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/regulations-enforcement/regulation-18-staffing#full-regulation
Thermal discomfort, exposure to cigarette smoke	Working in people's homes where temperatures can vary tremendously. Travelling to clients in all weathers. Being exposed to cigarette smoke.	All venues need to risk assessed. All journeys need to be assessed for unsafe weather conditions. PPE supplied if risk assessment specifies outdoor clothing required. Having a procedure and equipment to vent the air prior to care workers attending clients.
Supporting clients and working with bodily fluids, sharps, medicines, infections and diseases	Insufficient waste collections and often having to store waste in ordinary bins until space available Exposure to infections and diseases.	Safe disposal of hazardous waste is the responsibility of the care provider and there has to be official documentation to ensure it has been disposed of correctly. Workers should be properly trained, all risks assessed and where a risk cannot be prevented then PPE may be necessary. There will be an infection prevention and control policy, clear and safe procedures for disposing of different waste including blood and body fluids, sharps and hazardous waste.
Disease, Illness, and Injury Reporting	Injury, illnesses and near misses not recorded or acted on.	All incidents recorded, reviewed to discover any underlying causes, risk assessments reviewed and updated so that health and safety risks are reduced

Please note this list is not exhaustive. Other hazards may exist which should also be risk assessed. HSE website provides detailed information on risk assessment and controlling different risks
<http://www.hse.gov.uk> See also free download document by HSE on Health and Safety in Care Homes
<http://www.hse.gov/pubns/priced/hsg220.pdf>

What else can care workers do to protect themselves? **Body Mapping** is a useful tool to identify health and safety problems being experienced by workers. Workers are invited to mark on a body outline where they are being hurt and how. Then the results are analysed for patterns.
<http://www.hazards.org/diyresearch/getmapping.htm>



Hazard Form

Date	Care home or home of those you care for	Hazard Description	Who could be harmed and how?	What is the likelihood of being harmed? High/Medium/Low

Use this form to raise issues with the management and if necessary copy this form and send it to the Local Authority Environmental Health office.

There are thousands of people who work in the care sector. They will be your friends, or friends of family members or someone in your family. *Talk to them about their rights at work and about why it is important that they join a trade union.*

Care Workers for Change on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/Careworkersforchange/>
If you are a care worker you can join UNISON [online](#), on the phone by calling 0800 171 2194, or by printing and returning a [membership form](#).

Call the [Hazards Campaign](#) for more information on any health, safety or welfare issue on: 0161 636 7558 or email janet@gmhazards.org.uk – Janet Newsham, Greater Manchester Hazards Centre Coordinator