

Working Carers - Case Study by a Midwife

I stood nervously outside my manager's office, clutching my envelope containing my resignation from being a midwife, I took a deep breath and knocked. I can't believe it had come to this, I was leaving a job I loved, a profession I have dreamed off because I felt I could no longer cope with work and caring for my son. My son, Jack (name changed) has bipolar and I was his primary carer, I made sure he attended all his appointments and reviews, took his medication, provided emotional support when he was suicidal and helped him clear of his debts when he has spent £1000's on credit cards or collected him from the police station after they had been called by a worried member of the public when he was manic. I was emotionally and physically drained. Constantly worried about my son and worried my performance in work was not as it should be. Worried I'd get into trouble for answering my phone on a shift, but worried if I didn't Jack would become so anxious he'd spiral back into mania.

As I sat down my manager knew something was wrong immediately and as I handed her the letter she asked me what had happened. She sat quietly as I explained how I'd been struggling for months and had no choice but to leave. Telling her what I'd been going through, she was shocked. Not just because of the awful things that had happened but because I had not come to her. On reflection it had never occurred to me to ask for help, I was a mother and surely this was my job? My manager explained that around 20% of the NHS work forces are juggling working and caring and it was not something that I needed to do alone. In fact there was loads of support available for people in my situation. She told me about the working carers passport and explained how this would help me to think about things that would help me balance work and care. She told me about the page on the staff intranet site for working carers and gave me the access code for Employers for Carers Digital Resources. I felt like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

Six months later I am writing this after a shift as a midwife. My son is still ill, and I'm still his primary carer, that will never change. But things at work are different, a little bit easier. Most importantly I know I'm not alone and support is there for me.