

Enhancing organisational effectiveness by modernising support for working carers

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Overview of Fellowship:

This Innovation Fellowship (IF) focuses on how organisational effectiveness can be enhanced by modernising support for working carers. Modernising support for working carers is a major and growing issue impeding productivity and organisational effectiveness across all industrial sectors. This project addresses factors relevant to growth, productivity and skills development in the UK. Engaging with businesses alert to the benefits of eliminating unnecessary costs and of modernising workforce management by helping employees remain active and productive when caring for an older, sick or disabled person, the project involves a programme of research and activities designed to extend this approach to a wider and more diverse range of organisations. The research is benefiting from the SC PI's existing, long-standing partnership with [Employers for Carers \(Carers UK\)](#) and the expertise of the SC team of Co-Investigators, complements the Sustainable Care programme's research on [combining work and care](#), and will significantly extend its reach.

Connection to the UK Industrial Strategy:

This research is aligned to the [UK Industrial Strategy](#), which sets out the government's plan to create an economy that boosts productivity and earning power throughout the UK. Ten pillars have been identified, which the Government believes are important to drive forward the Industrial Strategy across the entire economy in the UK. This research has the potential to contribute to **Pillars 2** (Developing Skills), **4** (Supporting Businesses to Start and Grow) and **9** (Driving Growth across the Whole Country) of the strategy:

- **Developing Skills:** This project will address deficiencies in the management / HRM skills vital for productivity improvements, particularly in small to medium sized enterprises and 'lagging' sectors (O'Mahony & Van Ark, 2003 *EU Productivity and Competitiveness: A Sectoral Perspective; Can Europe Resume the Catching-Up Process?* European Commission, Brussels.)². It will promote upskilling of managers and team leaders and enable them to introduce innovative approaches to supporting and managing employees with care responsibilities which can reduce the costs of absence and recruitment and enhance productivity.
- **Supporting Businesses to Start and Grow:** The potential for businesses to start up and grow is highly reliant on their success in attracting, investing in and retaining employees. Working carers often face difficulty combining their carer and employee roles; many quit their jobs, causing disruption to business and excess recruitment/training costs and holding back organisational capacity for business growth. This project will be supporting smaller businesses to design innovative approaches to reducing turnover/absence, promote flexible working, and increase their ability to recruit and expand.
- **Driving Growth across the Whole Country:** Caring is more prevalent in deprived areas, and the need for work-care support more acute in areas with low skills or productivity. Evidence will be gathered on how adopting measures to retain/support working carers helps businesses in under-performing regions address challenges in expanding their business and improving their productivity.

Studies previously involved in:

- **Employer responses to dementia in the workplace in Scotland** (funded by Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland), 2017 – 2018, PI Professor Jill Stavert, Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland, UK.
- **Trees, woodlands and forests as places of mental well-being for people with early-stage dementia** (Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Scottish Government), 2012 – 2017, PhD in Human Geography, University of Dundee, Scotland, UK (graduated 16 November 2017), Supervisors Dr Edward Hall, University of Dundee, Scotland, UK & Professor Thilo Kroll, University College Dublin, Ireland.

To connect to Dr Mandy Cook, or the combining work and care research team:

- Email mandy.cook@sheffield.ac.uk
- Visit the website <http://circle.group.shef.ac.uk/portfolio/combining-work-and-care/>

Sustainable Care: connecting people and systems