Enabling your mother to have her own life in her own home.
Interview with Barbara Rieder, on Family Carer’s Day, 30 October 2018.

A profawo client talks to us about her experience as a carer and daughter, and the challenges that she faces.

Ms Rieder. You look after a member of your family who needs care. Who is that, and how long have you been doing this?
For two years now I’ve been looking after my mother. She’s now 88.

What does that involve for you?
I take care of all the administrative things, like e-banking, dealing with the authorities, doctors’ appointments, and general paperwork for the building she lives in.

Is there anyone else in your family who also looks after your mother?
I have two brothers who sometimes help out, but I do most of the work because I live closest.

How much do you work?
In Swiss terms it’s the equivalent of four days a week: 80%.

When did you realise that you needed external support?
Two years ago, my mother had a brain haemorrhage. After a stay in a care home, she wanted to go home to her own house. Then I realised that, with most everyday things, she needs help 24/7.

In which areas and ways has profawo supported you in caring for your mother?
At the start, profawo provided me with lots of information as regards admission to a home, care at home, financial assistance such as the Disability Living Allowance and much more. I was sent a vast range of documentation, including useful fact sheets. Later on, profawo supported me with all the tasks that come with hiring a carer, from drawing up an employment contract to clarifying wages, social security, a pension, insurance and so on.

At what point does combining your career and your role as a carer become problematic?
It becomes a problem when you have fixed working hours. It’s also difficult to cope with a long commute or changing shifts. Long distances between where you live, where the person you care for lives and where you work can be a real headache.
What have you found most challenging recently in your carer role?
All the admin that I can’t delegate because it makes more sense for the same person to do it all – that’s the most challenging part.

Are there any aspects or situations that you could never have imagined before you started taking care of your mother?
I’d never imagined being in a position where I can’t discuss things that affect the person I’m caring for personally but instead simply have to make decisions at my own discretion because she can’t really get her head around them anymore. Financial matters are a good example.

In your view, what does it take to allow someone who has a career to combine it with looking after a family member?
It would be a relief to have flexible working hours, maybe with your employer, your health insurer or another insurer granting a certain number of reserve hours that you can use to provide care in an emergency. That way, the carer role wouldn’t take up all of your free time.

Why should people who care for a family member use profawo services?
The service profawo provides makes life a lot easier! You benefit from expert advice that helps you to save time. You get help finding information, drawing up contracts and powers of attorney, answering questions about dementia and such like – all the things you have to deal with when you’re caring for a relative. The wealth of experience profawo has is invaluable to a layperson like me.
On top of this, it’s great to have someone to talk to who can offer support in a situation that’s otherwise physically and mentally exhausting.

What advice would you give to working people who care for a family member?
I’d recommend turning to profawo for support and, however busy their schedule seems, taking some time to themselves every now and then to relax and unwind.

Bern, 31 October 2018

Barbara Rider has been looking after her mother for two years. She also works four days a week at a profawo member company.