

# Supporting Working Carers Employers Guide July 2020

## Who are carers?

**3 in 5 of us will care for someone in our lifetime.**

*“A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a family member or friend who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support”*

Many people do not see themselves as carers and that there is support available to them. Statistically, it takes two years for people to recognise themselves in this role.

Anyone can become a carer at any point in their lives. This can be short-term as well as long term.

- 1 in 8 adults (around 6.5 million people) are carers
- Every day another 6,000 people take on a caring responsibility – that equals over 2 million people each year.
- 58% of carers are women and 42% are men.
- 1.3 million people provide over 50 hours of care per week.
- Over 1 million people care for more than one person
- Carers save the economy £132 billion per year, an average of £19,336 per carer

**Due to the Covid-19 pandemic it is estimated 4.5 million become unpaid carers in a matter of weeks**

## Carers in the workplace

- 1 in 7 workers in the UK combine paid work with unpaid care.
- 600 people give up work every day to care for an elderly or disabled relative.
- Each year approximately 120,000 men and 195,000 women of working age leave employment due to their caring roles.
- Many carers feel lonely or isolated in the workplace.
- Many carers feel colleagues and managers do not understand the impact of caring.

## How many of your employees are carers?

Size of Employer	Potential number of carers in the workforce
Micro Employer (1-9 staff)	1
Small Employer (10-49 staff)	1-6
Medium Employer (50-249 staff)	6-21
Large Employer (250+ staff)	21+

## What issues do carers in employment face?

71% feel lonely or isolated in the workplace

21% take demotion to enable fulfilment of a caring role

32% of working carers care for more than 50 hours of the week

43% feel colleagues and managers do not understand the impact of caring

23% receive no support from their employer

Source: *Caring and Isolation in the Workplace*, Carers UK (2015)

## Why support carers?

- The cost of recruiting and replacing outweighs retaining staff
- Unsupported carers are more likely to give up work
- The peak age for caring is 45-64 when many employees are a valuable asset and may be in senior positions
- Average turnover costs are estimated to be £6,000 per employee (Oxford Economics, 2014)
- Adopting a carer friendly approach can improve staff morale for the whole workforce

## The business benefits of supporting carers:

- Increased staff morale and loyalty
- Increased staff retention
- Reduced sick leave and absenteeism
- Improved staff engagement
- Improved people management
- More effective team working
- Improved service delivery

Employers who support their employees to combine work and care have reported business benefits all round: retention, resilience and results!

*Source: Carers UK for Employer for Carers/HM Government Task and Finish Group*

## What can you do to support carers?

- Know who the carers in your workforce are.
- Ensure you have the right information to signpost carers to sources of support both locally and nationally.
- Offer flexible working arrangements where possible.
- Communicate your support for carers throughout the organisation.
- Create an atmosphere that values everyone and respects employees lives outside work.
- Sign up to Hartlepool Carers' Carer Friendly Employer Charter and commit to positive change.

## Steps to improving your support for carers



### Flexible HR Management

Ensuring your employees have a range of working hours options means that carers will be able to more effectively balance their work and caring roles. Options include:

- Flexitime
- Homeworking
- Job sharing
- Part-time working
- Term-time working
- Shift swapping or self-rostering
- Staggered hours
- Compressed hours
- Annual hours

Allowing your employees to engage in this type of flexible HR management has been found to increase both job performance and employee engagement (Bal & De Lange, 2015).

Flexible Working Regulations 2014 under the Employment Rights Act 1996 gives all employees with 26 weeks service or more the right to request flexible working. A guide to dealing with flexible working requests is listed in the resources section at the end of this guide.

## Effective Policies

There are a range of policies your company could consider putting in place to support carers or you could adapt current special leaves policies to ensure carers have been given appropriate consideration within them.

Examples of effective policies:

- **Emergency Leave** – granted when a carer needs to be absent for a short period of time. It is good practise for this to be paid up to 5 days per year (more at discretion of line manager).
- **Carer's Planned Leave** – granted for defined periods of time. Paid for up to 5 days per year, or up to a month if matched with annual leave.
- **Career Breaks** – when a long break from work is required. Job is held open.
- **Cost of Dependent Care** – to enable attendance at training or to perform work duties at a time when caring responsibilities would have prevented this.

**Please note:** All employees have a right to reasonable time off in emergencies. Employees who have at least one year's continuous service also have a right to unpaid Parental Leave of up to 18 weeks to care for a child under 18 years.

## Effective Policies

As shown in the ‘What issues do carers in employment face’ section, support from work colleagues and managers is one of the most important factors in ensuring carers feel valued and understood in the workplace.

Below are some key ideas of how you can go about this within your organisation.

Employee Assistance Programme	Carer Champions	Carer networks/support group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• You may already have existing EAPs such as access to counselling. You could ask around and find out.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carer Champions are senior level managers who can influence policy making and forward positive change for working carers</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Carer networks provide peer support, information and advice. They can be run on a voluntary basis or by employees paid to take on the role</li></ul>

Investing time in workplace support such as carer networks can provide benefits to both individual employees, such as an opportunity for peer support and information gathering, and the organisation as a whole, such as opportunity for in-house training and providing a consultation panel for policy making.

## Workplace Adjustments

Simple solutions can often be the most effective in enabling carers to carry out both their caring and work roles.

For example, a meeting with a line manager might reveal that a carer would be more focussed if they were able to keep their mobile phone switched on whilst at work so that they could be easily contacted in case of emergency. Similarly, agreed times to call a dependant during working hours may increase employee concentration and therefore productivity.

Workplace adjustments for carers are often easily made with little cost to the employer yet yield a significant gain in employee satisfaction.

## How can we support your business?

Hartlepool Carers offers a range of services to support you in becoming a carer friendly organisation.

### *Carers Policy Review*

We can provide you with information to assist with reviewing, writing and 'carer proofing' current policies and practises.

### *Staff Training*

We can provide training to line managers and supervisors to enable them to provide effective support for carers and implement carer friendly policies. We also offer training to all employees to raise awareness of carers and the support available.

### *Carers Network*

We can support your carers network by offering information advice drop-in sessions for carers.

### *Direct Support for your Staff*

Your employees can register with Hartlepool Carers to access a range of support services including; benefits advice, 1:1 emotional support, social activities and our Carers Access Card.

### *Employer Charter*

Commit to making positive changes within your organisation and sign up to our Carer Friendly Employer Charter. Employers signing up to the charter will be invited to be advertised as carer friendly and have a link on our website.

## To find out more about supporting carers in the workforce:

[www.employersforcarers.org.uk](http://www.employersforcarers.org.uk) – An organisation employers can join for support

[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org) – See ‘Juggling Work and Unpaid Care’.

[www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk) – An organisation helping families to achieve work-life balance.

[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk) – See ‘The People Factor – engage your employees for success’ and ‘Code Of Practice - Handling In A Reasonable Manner Requests To Work Flexibly’.

For further information, including staff training, please contact Hartlepool Carers:

01429 283095

Staff@hartlepoolcarers.org.uk

www.hartlepoolcarers.org.uk

## Other local carers centres:

Middlesbrough (Carers Together)	carerstgether@btconnect.com 01642 488977
Durham County Carers Support	admin@dccarers.org 0300 005 1213
Darlington Carers Support	admin@darlingtoncarers.org 0300 030 1215
Sunderland Carers Centre	contactus@sunderlandcarers.co.uk 0191 549 3768