



# Carer Friendly Employers

Supporting your staff who combine  
caring with paid employment



## Contents

Who is a working carer? .....	3
West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (WMADASS) .....	4
Employees rights .....	5
Carers' rights at work .....	6
Information, advice and support services .....	8
Right to a carer's assessment .....	9
What is the business case for supporting carers? .....	10
Caring and health .....	12
Retention & recruitment .....	13
Productivity, sickness & absence .....	14
Business benefits .....	15
Supporting the UK .....	16
Good practice in supporting carers in the workplace .....	17
Supporting your employees to support carers .....	18
Role of your organisation .....	18
Find out more about support for carers in your area .....	19

## Who is a working carer?

We define a working carer as...

**“a person in full or part-time employment, who also provides unpaid care for a friend or relation who couldn’t cope without their support”.**

We all know someone who is a carer: but they just might not recognise themselves as one. A carer is someone who looks after a relative or friend who is ill, has a physical, sensory or mental impairment, is older and frail or is affected by substance misuse. A carer may be a parent, spouse or partner, son or daughter, another relative or a friend or neighbour. A carer may be providing practical care, emotional support or encouragement or both. Some carers provide support from a distance.

This guide can help you, as an employer, to support carers who work, at whatever level, in your organisation. It will give you information on how their caring role might affect their work and productivity, and what you can do to support them so that they, and you, benefit. It also contains research information on carers, and a business case for supporting employees with caring responsibilities. Being a carer can often be very rewarding, however it can also be physically and emotionally demanding.

Many carers need support to help to maintain their own health and wellbeing in order to carry on with their caring role, and we hope this guide will assist both employee and employer to find the most appropriate support. Very often only a small change, or even just an acknowledgement of their role can make a difference.

## West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (WMADASS)

The Association represents the 14 local authorities which make up this region: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Herefordshire, Sandwell, Shropshire, Solihull, Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent, Telford & Wrekin, Walsall, Warwickshire, Wolverhampton and Worcestershire. It funds a number of initiatives including a regional Carers Leads Network which aims to encourage consistent information and support for carers across the region. Carer Friendly Employers is a scheme supporting employers in the West Midlands to support carers in their workforce. [www.wm-adass.org.uk](http://www.wm-adass.org.uk)

Carers Trust have some very useful advice and resources on their website to help employers be more carer-friendly, including a policy template. <https://professionals.carers.org/>

If an employee needs information, advice and support there are links to local information at the back of this booklet. The blue guide for staff who combine caring with paid employment in this series also contains further useful information.



## Employees rights

Carers can access certain rights at work to make caring and working easier.

### Legislation

- **The Children and Families Act 2014** gives all employees with at least 26 weeks' continuous employment the right to request flexible working-
- **The Employment Relations Act 1999** gives employees the right to take "reasonable" time off to deal with unexpected situations involving a dependant
- **The Equality Act 2010** brings together anti-discrimination acts and regulations including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It states that employers and employees have a responsibility to create and be part of a fair work environment which complies with the law
- **The Care Act 2014** repealed much previous social care legislation. It gives carers the same rights as adults in respect of promoting wellbeing, assessing needs and providing support where necessary.



## Carers' rights at work

### Flexible working

The Children and Families Act 2014 says that employees who have 26 weeks or more service can make one flexible working request per year to their employer. Flexible working can mean reduced hours, flexitime, home working, job shares, compressed, or annualised hours to name a few. Some employers will have a formal procedure, but this is not statutory, and you can also use the standard form [www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview](http://www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview)

Employers are not bound to accept the request but must consider it and if denied must give reasons as to why the request was refused. The employee can then appeal if they feel it is appropriate. The employer has 3 months in which to respond to the request formally.

The legislation is designed to support those who wish to make a long term change in their working. Some carers may wish to request a temporary change due to particular circumstances and this may be able to be dealt with more informally.

### Time off for dependants

The Employment Relations Act 1999 gives employees the right to take a reasonable amount of time off to deal with emergencies involving a dependant. A dependant is defined as someone who depends on an employee for care, so can potentially include a wide range of relationships. There is no limit to the number of times an employee can take time off, however, whether this is unpaid or paid time off is at the employer's discretion. Time off for dependants is for emergency use only, and not for pre-planned occurrences.

## **Parental leave**

Employees will qualify for this if they have worked for the employer for at least one year and have legal parental responsibility for a child under five, or a disabled child under 18 years of age.

Employees can take up to 18 weeks' leave for each child, up until their 18th birthday. A maximum of four weeks can be taken in one year for each qualifying child. Parental leave is unpaid unless contracts say otherwise. Employers may have extended parental leave to include other workers, for example foster carers, grandparents or employees who have been employed for less than a year.

## **Protection from discrimination**

Under the Equality Act 2010, older or disabled people are protected against direct discrimination or harassment. Carers are protected by law as they are classed as being 'associated' with someone who has special protection from discrimination. For instance, in the world of work, it would be direct discrimination to refuse a job offer based on the fact that someone is a carer, or to deny an employee promotion because you feel that the caring role could hinder their work.

For full information on the above rights see the ACAS website<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup><http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1362>

## Information, advice and support services

Carers may need information, advice or support from other sources to help them in their caring role, e.g. information about health and social care services and benefits advice. As an employer you can encourage and support carers in your workplace to access the services available in the local area. Find out more from your local carers' centre or council about how you can share this information with your workforce



## Right to a carer's assessment

All carers have a right to an assessment of their needs either as a result of the Children and Families Act if they care for a child with an illness or impairment, or the Care Act if they care for an adult<sup>2</sup>. This right also applies to carers who haven't yet started to provide care but intend to do so

If the local authority is already working with the cared for person they must also assess the carer(s) – unless of course they don't wish to be assessed. Local authorities can, if they wish, arrange for other organisations to carry out assessments on their behalf, such as the local carers' centre. The purpose of the assessment is to find out if the carer is willing and able to care and if they are what, if any support they need to help them to do so. It should cover all of the aspects of a carer's life which the carer deems important – including a wish to maintain or take up employment and /or training.

There is a set of national eligibility criteria for adult carers who wish to access long term support – this may include the provision of support to the person(s) they care for. However, depending on what outcomes they want to achieve, many carers will find that their needs can be met by advice and information, short term support or by the use of a range of community based activities or services.

So those are the carer's rights, but what about the other side of the story

<sup>2</sup>There are some additional rules which apply in some cases to those in transition from children to adult services, and to carers ( such as grandparents) without parental responsibility for a disabled childbut essentially all carers have the same rights one way or another

## What is the business case for supporting carers?

We realise that any type of enterprise, whether private, public or not-for-profit has outcomes to achieve and targets to meet, and that it is important to look into the business case for supporting carers.

Many organisations have produced reports on the role of working carers and the business benefits to supporting staff. Here we will look at the key facts around supporting carers, and provide links to full research should you wish to know more.



The 2011 census identified 5.8 million people providing unpaid care in England and Wales in 2011, approximately one 10th of the population, 3 million of which are working carers.

*“Most people’s lives will include at least one episode of caring. Already 1 in 9 in your workforce will be caring for someone who is older, disabled or seriously ill. But with the number of carers in the UK set to rise from 6 million to 9 million over the next 30 years, the proportion of carers in your workforce is also likely to increase significantly. Already 90% of working carers are aged 30 plus – employees in their prime employment years. The peak age for caring is also 45-64 when many employees will have gained valuable skills and experience. With fewer young people entering the job market – and in the current economic climate - there has never been a more important time to focus on the benefits of retaining skilled workers rather than incurring the costs of recruiting and retraining new staff. Due to an ageing population the need to provide unpaid care is set to more than double in the next 30 years”* Employers for Carers 2015



## Caring and health

- By 2017, the UK will reach a point where the number of older people needing care, will outweigh the number of potential working-age family members available to provide unpaid support and care.
- There are many 'sandwich' carers – those caring for a young family as well as older relatives.
- Current trends in social funding means that pressures on friends and family will not decrease
- We know anecdotally that caring takes a huge toll on carers, and one report suggests that the risk of psychological distress for carers is 20% - 70% higher than non-carers.
- The 2011 Census also cited evidence of a link between people providing unpaid care and an increased risk of psychological stress.



## Retention & recruitment

- Carers leaving work to care resulted in an unwanted loss of talent. Most carers who left work to care were around the 50- 64 age range meaning employers have invested substantial costs in training and development.
- In one report, 44% of working carers had reduced their hours to manage their caring role.
- 32% had refused a promotion or had remained in a role for which they are less qualified, or one which doesn't stretch them professionally, in order to manage their caring role.
- 2.3 million people have given up work for caring, and nearly 3 million have reduced hours.

Employers report a loss to culture and further lost opportunities to mentor and help develop other employees. Carers state the two most important factors in their decision to leave work are lack of workplace support and external care services.



## Productivity, sickness & absence

- Sickness levels across all organisations affect the bottom line and the culture of an organisation. The cost of absenteeism in public and private sector organisations in the UK has been estimated by the CBI as £14 billion in 2013.
- The combined impact of staff turnover, absence and stress as a result of managing work and caring roles is estimated to cost UK businesses over £3.5 billion.
- 41% of working carers say that their job has been negatively affected by caring, due mostly to tiredness, lateness and stress.
- 60% of carers interviewed by Carers UK said that they were worried about keeping their job in the coming year



## Business benefits

In the Supporting Working Carers: The Benefits to Families, Business and the Economy survey participants were questioned on the business benefits of supporting working carers. Participants were from a range of small and large businesses across all the private, public and not-for-profit sectors.

The participants stated that supporting working carers had either a 'major' or 'some' benefit through:

- Increasing staff morale and loyalty (93%)
- Staff retention (92%)
- Reducing sick leave and absenteeism (88%)
- Improving staff engagement (85%)
- Improving people management (80%)
- Making team working more effective (75%)
- Improving service delivery (72%)
- Increasing productivity (69%)
- Reducing recruitment and training costs (65%)
- Improving the ability to attract (61%)
- Producing cost savings (55%)

## Supporting the UK

- Unpaid carers are making a huge contribution to the economy, conservatively estimated at £87 billion a year
- When carers give up work this results in lost tax and national insurance revenue, and increased welfare payments. It is estimated that tax and national insurance revenue would amount to £750 million - £1.5 billion per year
- It is estimated that £5.3 billion is lost in earnings when carers give up work

Research collated from

**Employers for Carers: Business Case Briefing: (2015)** <https://www.employersforcarers.org/business-case/the-business-benefits>

**Carers UK State of Caring report 2015**  
[www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/state-of-caring-2015](http://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/state-of-caring-2015)

**Supporting Working Carers: The Benefits to Families, Business and the Economy (2013):**  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-working-carers-the-benefits-to-families-business-and-the-economy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-working-carers-the-benefits-to-families-business-and-the-economy)

**Informal Care for Older People Provided by Their Adult Children: Projections of Supply and Demand to 2041 in England (2008):**  
[www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/dp2515.pdf](http://www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/dp2515.pdf)

**2011 Census Analysis: Unpaid care in England and Wales, 2011 and comparison with 2001**  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census-analysis/provision-of-unpaid-care-in-england-and-wales--2011/art-provision-of-unpaid-care.html%0D>

## Good practice in supporting carers in the workplace

Working closely with their employers so that both benefit can help carers to build up resilience and reduce any negative impact caring can have. Work is a really important part of a carer's life, and can often provide the psychological challenge and emotional support we all need. We now know how simple changes at work can help mitigate the impact on employees and increase staff loyalty, productivity and performance in the workplace.

We hope you wish to support working carers in your workplace. There are many things that can be put into place to assist working carers and here we have listed some ideas. Many of these ideas come from businesses which are modelling working carer support, and providing best practice.

- Flexible working practices - such as flexitime, home working, annualised hours, compressed hours, shift swapping, self-rostering, staggered hours, job sharing, term-time working, part time working and flexible holidays
- In-house networking/support groups
- Provision of information about local support such as our guide for staff who combine caring with paid employment
- Employee assistance programmes
- Carer policies - some employers offer Carers' leave usually 5 - 10 days paid leave per year.
- Access to a telephone or use of mobile to make private calls
- Car parking close to the workplace
- 'Carer Aware' training

## Supporting your employees to support carers

Sometimes other employees find it difficult to understand the pressures that being a carer can lead to. Although some carers may be happy to talk about their role to colleagues, others may not. If you can promote understanding of carers throughout the workforce, this will help understanding of any flexibilities which have been agreed with a carer. For example you could promote your Local Authority's Carer Aware course which sets out the carer's role and how this can impact on them.

## Role of your organisation

Essentially, employers who take a proactive approach, and encourage flexibility create a culture of trust and loyalty for carers. We hear anecdotally of many occasions where employers have been supportive, often this means letting employees work flexibly, but it is also about allowing employees to feel supported and not isolated at work. Large employers take a proactive approach to supporting carers and offer a multitude of solutions. Smaller employers may only need to make adjustments based on the specific needs of a carer(s) in their employ – and don't forget managers can be carers too. Carers will appreciate a flexible approach, work can be a safe space where carers can engage and support each other, and create better employee engagement, and progressive workplaces.

**Find out  
more about  
support for  
carers in  
your area**

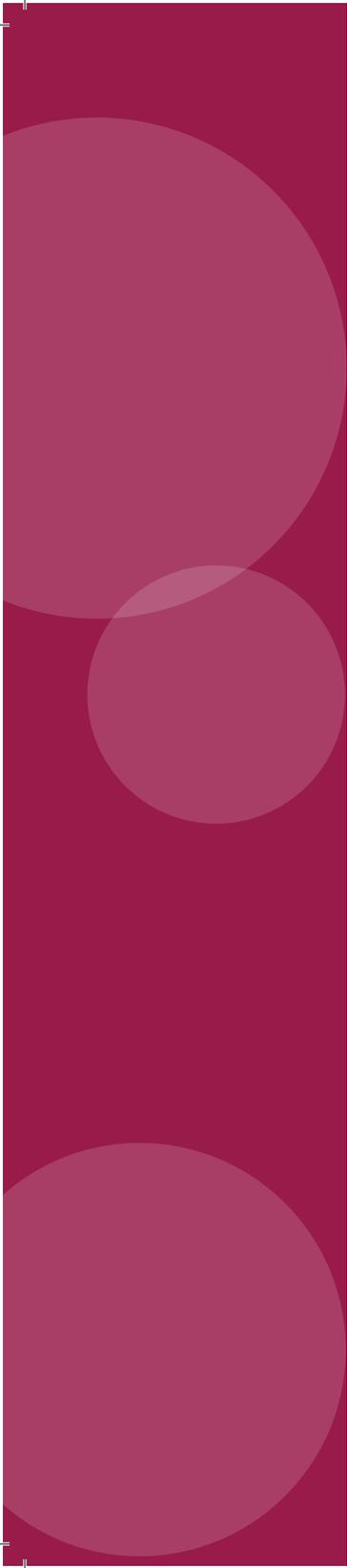
**Caring for an adult in Wolverhampton visit**  
[www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/carers](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/carers)

**Caring for a child with special educational  
needs/ disability in Wolverhampton visit:**  
<http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/send>

**For Health and wellbeing support on the  
Wolverhampton Information Network visit:**  
[www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/WIN](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/WIN)

**Caring for someone who does not live in  
Wolverhampton - Carers Trust website has a  
search facility to help you find local services**  
[www.carers.org/section/help-advice](http://www.carers.org/section/help-advice)



A vertical decorative bar on the left side of the page, featuring a dark red background with three overlapping, semi-transparent circles in a lighter shade of red. The circles are positioned vertically, with the top one partially cut off by the top edge, the middle one fully visible, and the bottom one partially cut off by the bottom edge.

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