



THE WORKPLACE  
WELLBEING CHARTER  
NATIONAL AWARD for ENGLAND™

# SUPPORTING WORKING CARERS

a guide for employers

**This Topic Guide has been commissioned and reviewed by Public Health England (PHE) and developed by Health@Work. The purpose is to provide information to help organisations of all sizes and sectors support those employees who may have caring responsibilities for family or loved ones. The information contained in this guide is not exhaustive and is intended to provide a brief overview of the topic for organisations to consider their current practice. Advice and signposting links towards sources of support for those who wish to develop a carers' support strategy are also included.**

# SUPPORTING WORKING CARERS

At least 1 in 10 of your employees is likely to be juggling work and caring responsibilities. This figure is set to grow as the world is ageing and demand for care is growing.

If carers leave employment this can cost the employer up to 3 x their last salary to replace them and in lost productivity.

There are simple actions you can take to support staff with caring responsibilities – through policies and practices, good line management and more flexible working.

## BUSINESS BENEFITS

Within your workplace, it is likely that someone is a carer.

There are over 5.4 million carers in England – 1 in 10 of the population.

Approximately 10 % of male employees and 14 % of female employees are carers.<sup>1</sup>

Many carers are concentrated in the 45-64 age range and if they leave work can be a considerable loss of experience and talent. The Corporate Leadership Council estimates that the cumulative costs to employers of an employee leaving work are equal to an employee's last salary, while the Hay Group suggests it could cost anywhere from 50-150 % of their salary.<sup>2</sup>

Employee turnover also affects quality of customer service and customer retention, and overall economic output.<sup>3</sup>

1 in every 5 working carers may end up reducing their hours or leaving employment if unsupported.

There is a risk of lost potential in the workplace where skilled workers are operating at a lower skill level to get the flexibility or locally based employment that enables them to care.

# WHO IS A CARER?

**Carers provide assistance, care and support to a family member, partner or friend who has a condition, illness or impairment. This can include both physical and mental health conditions. Care can be long or short term. Not all carers care for long periods of time – some carers may need support to provide specific care within a given period. Many people may not consider themselves carers, but think of themselves first as husbands, wives, partners, daughters, sons, siblings or friends.**

It can be extremely difficult to juggle the demands of caring, paid employment, having an active family life, fulfilling friendships and having personal time to relax. People can feel pulled in many directions; as a result their own health and wellbeing may suffer.

The health of carers often deteriorates as the hours of care provided increases.

Carers providing round the clock care are more than twice as likely to be in poor health as non-carers.

Stress is the key reason carers give up work or reduce working hours. <sup>4, 5</sup>

# WAYS TO SUPPORT CARERS IN THE WORKPLACE

- Establishing clear policies on caring, including:
  - » flexible working policies
  - » leave policies
  - » wider diversity and equal opportunities policies.
- These could be consolidated into a single carers guide for staff and line managers to highlight to relevant policy sections.
- Considering carers in recruitment strategies. Recognising caring responsibility can happen at any age and considering how the organisation can support new starters or new entrants to the job market, who have caring responsibilities.
- Considering training and development for carers who have taken time out to care and are coming back into the workplace.
- Widely promoting and reinforcing these policies and practices, encouraging flexibility and understanding from line managers, for example allowing personal phone calls if they relate to caring responsibilities and creating an environment where staff can talk about caring responsibilities.
- Leading by example by championing support for carers at senior level.
- Encouraging carers to set up their own support group or join an existing network.
- Considering carers needs when organising health promotion activities for example you may wish to allow carers in work time to attend their NHS Health Check.
- Signposting carers to information about where they can get help, for example through noticeboards, intranet system etc. This can be provided:
  - » internally through occupational health or welfare services.
  - » externally through an Employee Assistance programme, signposting carers to organisations and local carer services.

# FLEXIBLE WORKING

You can support carers – and other employees – by having some degree of flexibility around how long, where and when they work. This can include: part-time working, term-time working, job-sharing, flexitime, compressed hours, annual hours, working from home on a regular basis, remote working, teleconferences, career breaks.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING?

The Employment Rights Act 1996 provisions and regulations changed on 30 June 2014.<sup>6</sup> Now all employees, agency workers and office holders who have worked for their employer for 26 continuous weeks at the date of application have the statutory right to request flexible working. An employee can only make one statutory request in any 12 month period.

These employees can make a request for a change to their contractual terms and conditions of employment for any reason. Employees do not have to provide proof of their circumstances when they are requesting to work flexibly. However, it can help a request if as much information as possible is given. (When considering flexible working it is helpful to involve the whole team - especially the people potentially affected by the change. Team members might have helpful suggestions to accommodate a range of working patterns. This needs to be balanced with the need to respect the confidentiality of the employee).

Even though employees working for less than 26 continuous weeks do not have a statutory right to request flexible working, you may still wish to consider these requests.

## HOW SHOULD EMPLOYEES APPLY FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING?

Under this legislation carers can request changes to the hours and days worked, the timing of the hours they work, and/or their work location.

Any applications must:

- be made well in advance of when they want it to take effect
- be in writing on paper or electronically and dated
- state that the application is made under the statutory right to request
- give details of the flexible working pattern the carer is applying for
- explain what effect the new working pattern would have on the employer and how any effects might be dealt with
- state whether the carer has made a previous application and, if so, when.

The manager's responsibilities once an application is received are to:

- arrange a meeting with the carer within 28 days of the request, however the manager and the carer can agree to extend the time periods
- notify the carer of the decision in writing within 14 days of the date of the meeting.

The carer has the right to be accompanied by an accredited trade union representative or a colleague - other than a practising lawyer - at the meeting.

The manager may agree a temporary or continuing flexible working arrangement that may change the contract of employment. If the manager or carer is not sure a flexible working arrangement will work in practice, a trial period may be agreed. Contract variations should be confirmed in writing.

If a request is refused, the manager must give the grounds for the decision and why these grounds apply in the circumstances. If the request is made by employee carer covered by the legislation, the grounds for refusal must be one of the following:

- burden of additional costs
- detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
- inability to reorganise work among existing employees
- inability to recruit additional employees
- detrimental impact on quality
- detrimental impact on performance
- insufficiency of work during periods the carer proposes to work
- planned structural changes.

## APPEALS

If the request to work flexibly is refused, carers may wish to appeal. Any appeals should be dealt with as quickly as possible.

# FURTHER SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE

## **Carers UK**

Information on Carers' rights in the workplace  
[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

## **Employers for Carers**

Information and advice on how to eat healthily, be more active and lose weight  
[www.employersforcarers.org](http://www.employersforcarers.org)

## **Carers Trust**

[www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)

## **ACAS guide, flexible working**

Further information on flexible working  
[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

## **ACAS guide, time-off for dependants**

Information on other legal protections including time-off for dependants  
[www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

## **NHS Choices: Your guide to care and support**

Provides information for people who have care and support needs, their carers and people who are planning for their future care needs.

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/Pages/what-is-social-care.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/Pages/what-is-social-care.aspx)

**Carers Direct helpline - 0300 123 1053**

## **The Children's Society: Young Carers Include Programme**

The Young Carers Include programme works with voluntary and statutory services across the country to support young carers.

[www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/helping-children/young-carers](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/helping-children/young-carers)

## **NICE Guidance Workplace health: policy and management practices**

Information on other legal protections including time off for dependants

[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng13](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng13)

## **One You**

A key resource to promote adult health is the One You campaign. One You encourages people to reappraise their lifestyle choices, put themselves first and do something about their own health. Simply search One You online for a free online health quiz. There is also information and links to local sources of support to make a behaviour change.

<https://www.nhs.uk/oneyou#F3opDgKxBdb5p25L.97>





THE WORKPLACE  
WELLBEING CHARTER  
NATIONAL AWARD for ENGLAND™

## ABOUT THIS TOPIC GUIDE

This Topic Guide has been jointly produced between Public Health England, health@work and Liverpool City Council. The purpose of this guide is to provide information and support to help organisations of all sizes and sectors improve health in the workplace and to work towards achieving accreditation of the Workplace Wellbeing Charter.

## ABOUT THE WORKPLACE WELLBEING CHARTER

The Workplace Wellbeing Charter is an opportunity for employers to demonstrate their commitment to the health and well-being of their workforce. The positive impact that employment can have on health and wellbeing is now well documented. There is also strong evidence to show how having a healthy workforce can reduce sickness absence, lower staff turnover and boost productivity - this is good for employers, workers and the wider economy.

The Workplace Wellbeing Charter provides employers with an easy and clear guide on how to make workplaces a supportive and productive environment in which employees can flourish.

Organisations of all sizes can use the Charter standards. The Commitment level has been developed as a baseline for all businesses to achieve and acts as a useful checklist for smaller organisations to ensure legal obligations are met. The criteria for small businesses should not involve significant financial investments, and there are lots of free resources and guidance on the Charter website as well as support from your local provider.

Employers who volunteer to sign up will find help and support available through the Charter website. This will include a network of providers who can offer employers the services and advice they need to be accredited with the Charter, and help them to build the healthy workforce that business needs for the future.

[www.workplacewellbeing.org.uk](http://www.workplacewellbeing.org.uk)

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO SUPPORT YOUR ACCREDITATION

If you are considering applying for Charter accreditation we recommend you search for a provider in your area using the Charter website [www.wellbeingcharter.org.uk](http://www.wellbeingcharter.org.uk)

Complete a self-assessment using the benchmarking tool on the website. Your local provider can offer advice and support to help with this process and advise on next steps.

# REFERENCES

<sup>[1]</sup> Office for National Statistics. (2013). 2011 Census – unpaid care snapshot. Retrieved from [www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/carers-week/index.html](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/carers-week/index.html)

<sup>[2]</sup> Rayton, B., Dodge, T., & D’Analeze, G. (2012). The Evidence: Employee Engagement Task Force “Nailing the evidence” workgroup.

<sup>[3]</sup> Carers UK. (2013). Supporting Working Carers: The Benefits to Families, Business and the Economy. Final Report of the Carers in Employment Task and Finish Group.

<sup>[4]</sup> Carers UK. (2014). Facts about carers. Policy briefing.

<sup>[5]</sup> Durnham County Council. (2014). Caring for carers. A guide for employers and carers wishing to work. Retrieved from [www.durhamcarers.info/SiteCollectionDocuments/CAS10365 % 20Caring % 20for % 20Carers % 20- % 20A % 20guide % 20for % 20employers % 20and % 20carers % 20wishing % 20to % 20work.pdf](http://www.durhamcarers.info/SiteCollectionDocuments/CAS10365%20Caring%20for%20Carers%20-%20A%20guide%20for%20employers%20and%20carers%20wishing%20to%20work.pdf)

<sup>[6]</sup> Acas. (2014). The right to request flexible working: an Acas guide. Retrieved from [www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/1/a/The-right-to-request-flexible-working-the-Acas-guide.pdf](http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/1/a/The-right-to-request-flexible-working-the-Acas-guide.pdf)

These guides have been jointly produced between Public Health England, Health@Work  
and Liverpool City Council.

The Workplace Wellbeing Charter National Award for England is a Registered Trademark