
Carers in your workforce matter

A guide for employers - helping to identify and support unpaid carers in the workforce

“we’re helping you
to better support
carers”

Carers can be defined as someone who ‘spends a significant proportion of their life providing unpaid support to family or potentially friends. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill , frail , disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems.¹ Such carers are not to be confused with paid carers (often described as Care workers, Senior care workers, community support, outreach workers and personal assistants). However, those employed in such roles may also be carers in their own time for friends or family.

This pack aims to raise awareness of the unpaid carers you will have in your social care workforce, identify what you can do to support them, retain their skills and prevent them having to leave your workforce.

¹ ‘Carers at The Heart of the 21st Century’ Department of Health, 2008.

Contents

1. Recruiting, employing and retaining unpaid carers in the social care workforce.....	4
2. How many of my staff are likely to be carers?	5
3. Why is supporting working carers so important?	8
4. Carers' legal rights – a summary.....	11
5. How can I retain the skills of my employees who are carers?	12
6. Learning and development for those employees who are carers; what works?.....	17
7. How do I know if changes have had an impact on working carers?.....	21
8. Awareness raising in your organisation.....	22
9. Notes and action planning.....	23
10. Further specialist sources of support.....	27

1. Recruiting, employing and retaining unpaid carers in the social care workforce

Carers can be defined as someone who ‘spends a significant proportion of their life providing unpaid support to family or potentially friends. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems’¹. Such carers are not to be confused with paid carers (often described as care workers, senior care workers, community support, outreach workers and personal assistants). However, those employed in such roles may also be carers in their own time for friends or family.

Many employers in the social care field are well aware of the important contribution that unpaid carers make to the lives of many people. The support that carers provide is vital to enable many to have a continued quality of life within their own home.

“We pay for care to cover the times we are at work, all other times such as evenings and weekends, we do the caring”⁴

Male carer, working full-time

Many people employed by social care organisations are also unpaid carers. Caring can affect anyone, from the chief executive to the handyman:

3 million people in the UK are currently combining paid work with unpaid caring²

Being an unpaid carer can prove challenging when combined with paid employment. Some unpaid carers may be leaving work early to care for someone or arriving at work already having completed several hours of caring. Others may be trying to fit in their caring duties whilst on their lunch break. Some will be faced daily with trying to meet the often unpredictable needs of the cared for person.

1 in 5 carers feel forced to give up work completely³

“My sister used to be Mum’s main carer and it got too much and she cut off and wouldn’t communicate ... I am now on the phone all the time and not getting much rest trying to sort out all the problems of a newly implemented care plan. It is a constant battle”⁵

Female carer, working part-time

¹ ‘Carers at The Heart of the 21st Century’ Department of Health, 2008.

² Facts about Carers, Carers UK, published on Carers UK website (2009).

³ We care. Do you? (2005) Carers UK.

⁴ Caring at a Distance: Bridging the Gap. Employers for Carers, Carers UK and Nomura, 2011.

⁵ Caring at a Distance: Bridging the Gap. Employers for Carers, Carers UK and Nomura, 2011.

2. How many of my staff are likely to be carers?

1 in 8 workers in the UK are currently combining paid work with unpaid care.⁶ Two-thirds of these people are working full-time and a third are working part-time. This means that in any organisation employing 100 people, there are likely to be at least 12 carers.

Within adult social care organisations the likely incidence of unpaid carers in the workforce is:⁷

Type of employer	Potential number of unpaid 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+

These figures represent a minimum number of carers in a workforce, as we know that the number of carers is generally higher than reported. The peak age for unpaid caring is 45-64, arguably the time when many employees will have gained vital skills and knowledge and be a valuable asset to their workplace. Within adult social care almost half of the workforce (46%) fall into this age bracket.

Unpaid caring affects both men and women: 47% of economically active unpaid carers in the UK are men and 53% are women.⁸ Of these, men are more likely than women to be employed full-time (62% vs 38%). The picture with regards to the social care workforce is somewhat different though as according to National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC) data

more than eight out of ten workers are female. Two in five women in the sector work full-time, a third work part-time and the remainder are contracted to work on a temporary basis (i.e. bank, pool and agency staff).⁹ This profile of the social care workforce (a high majority of women working part-time) indicates that there are likely to be significantly higher numbers of working carers across social care as a whole than in some other sectors.

Identification of the prevalence of carers is complex, partly because unpaid carers who are in paid employment can also be 'hidden' and this could be for a number of reasons. They may not see themselves as a carer (but rather as a wife, husband, partner, friend, daughter or son) or they may not be comfortable sharing information about their caring responsibilities with their employer because they fear that their commitment to their job will be questioned. Also, employees can often become carers whilst they are employed by an organisation, thus 'slipping' into a caring role which goes un-noticed by the employer or perhaps the employee themselves.

"It would help if on your application form there was something there to say you're a carer, otherwise you've actually got to go and tell someone – which you don't always feel comfortable doing."¹⁰

Carer

6 Facts about Carers, Carers UK, published on Carers UK website (2009).

7 Taken from bespoke analysis of Skills for Care's National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (NMDS-SC).

8 Carers, Employment and Services Report Series (2007), University of Leeds for Carers UK.

9 Taken from bespoke analysis of Skills for Care's National Minimum Dataset for Social Care (NMDS-SC).

10 Reproduced from NIACE: 'Who Cares? Supporting Young Adult Carers to Learn' 2011.

Those working in social care and undertaking caring responsibilities can often fail to recognise that they are, or have become carers themselves. If they do recognise themselves as carers, it can be problematic asking for support or help through the teams or services that they are part of as an employee. For example, how easy might it be for the operations manager of a carers support organisation to ask for support as a working carer herself? How difficult might it be for a social worker to ask for a Carers Assessment, knowing that a fellow colleague may be responsible for doing this with him?

In East Sussex County Council (ESCC), it had been recognised that staff had been reluctant to identify and acknowledge their caring role and been put off by believing that 'everyone would know their business.' The Council reviewed its Flexible Working Strategy, including a Toolkit for Managers to support staff with caring responsibilities. This includes a section on 'Support to access a Carers Assessment; why have one and where to go to get one'.

Within the guidance it is acknowledged that social care staff with caring responsibilities would prefer to have their assessment completed by someone outside their own team environment. The strategy states that ESCC will inform staff of their statutory right to request a Carers Assessment, information on carers services and support and encourage staff to access this. Staff are assured that in all cases issues of confidentiality, professional boundaries and conflict of interest will be considered. ESCC advise managers to ensure that the staff member should not know the social worker undertaking the assessment or if they do then it should be in a professional capacity only. This means that often the Carers Assessment will be undertaken by a social worker from another team/geographical area.

Similarly, whilst carers often do not declare themselves, employers can overlook their possible existence. This may be due to a lack of awareness of carers or of caring as an issue, or because of assumptions which are often made about carers such as:

- It is assumed that carers are female and of a 'certain age'

FACT: 42% of carers are men; six out of ten male carers work, 90% of these full-time.¹¹ It is estimated that there are over 229,000 young adult carers aged 18-24 in the UK.¹²

- It is assumed that those who find themselves caring who are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic group (BAME) are doing it 'willingly and out of duty'.

FACT: BAME carers provide more care proportionately than White British carers, putting them at greater risk of ill-health, loss of paid employment and social exclusion. This has been highlighted in recent research¹³ which also reveals that the majority of BAME carers, who comprise 10% of carers in England, are of working age. Certain groups also experience greater levels of isolation, namely Pakistani and Bangladeshi carers.

- It is assumed that carers will not be found in the more senior roles within an organisation or indeed within certain prestigious professions.

FACT: Caring can happen to any of us, at whatever level in the workplace, although carers may often end up in lower paid jobs, if unsupported, because of difficulties in combining work and caring.

Studies¹⁴ have shown that more than half of carers caring for people who required a lot of support felt they had to give up work to care. Many retired early due to caring responsibilities, an average of 8 years early. Carers also lost an average of £11,000 per year in earnings because of giving up work, cutting their hours or taking a more junior job.¹⁵

11 Carers, Employment and Services Report Series (2007), University of Leeds for Carers UK.

12 Becker F and Becker S 2008 Young Adult Carers in the UK. London. The Princess Royal Trust for Carers.

13 Half a Million Voices: Improving Support for BAME Carers, Carers UK, 2011.

14 Real Change, Not Short Change, Carers UK, 2007.

15 Real Change, Not Short Change, Carers UK, 2007.

Becoming a carer is not dependant on or triggered by social background, job role or location; it can and will happen to most of us in our lives at some point, either temporarily or for a longer period. If unsupported, it will also have an impact on career, income and health.

Think about your workforce, do you know the answer to the following questions?

- How many unpaid carers are there likely to be in my workforce either now or in the future? Have I made assumptions about who these might be and why?
- Do I know who the carers are in my workforce?
- Would those people necessarily identify or recognise themselves as carers?
- Have some people's circumstances changed to mean they have become a carer since they begun work with the organisation?
- Do I know if people have reduced their hours or retired early due to their caring responsibilities?
- How many people have asked for a career break and never returned? What were their reasons?
- Do I know if people have left my workforce due to their caring responsibilities?

3. Why is supporting working carers so important?

Those involved in the world of social care are very aware of the growing numbers of older people, the declining number of working age people and the impact that this will have on services. This cannot be separated from the impact that this will have on families whose members work within social care and their working lives; as the numbers of older people rise and the number of people in the working population falls, the proportion of workers having to take up caring responsibilities will grow. Families may be geographically 'spread out', involve re-marriages and multiple generations. With later state pension ages, working lives are also likely to be longer. All of this means that many more of us will be combining work and care, and for longer, and often in challenging circumstances.

“The anxiety and stress caused by caring is having a negative effect on my ability to work. I am at present under the GP. If only the rest of the family would pull together there would be so much less pressure. Any problems, they are always passed onto me to sort out.”¹⁶

Female carer, working full-time and caring at a distance

“I have recently decided to give up my London based job as I found it too much to care for my relative, run my own home and cover a demanding role in London. Employers seem to be compassionate with employees in respect of childcare needs but not with employees who have responsibility for an elderly parent.”¹⁷

Female carer, working part-time

Already 90% of working carers are aged 30 plus.¹⁸ At this stage of their working career, many workers have had over 15 years of training, numerous years of experience and gained many skills. The peak age for unpaid caring is 45-64, arguably the time when many employees will have gained vital skills and knowledge and be a valuable asset to their workplace.

A survey by the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) found that the median recruitment cost of filling a vacancy was £7,500 for senior managers/directors and £2,500 for other employees with maximum costs as much as £55,000 for senior appointments.¹⁹ Turnover costs, which include vacancy cover, and training and induction costs were found to be on average just over £6,000.²⁰

Therefore to retain carers' skills in the workplace by supporting them well, is to avoid this cost, both in terms of money and the loss of skills.

¹⁶ Caring at a Distance: Bridging the Gap, Employers for Carers, Carers UK and Nomura, 2011.

¹⁷ Caring at a Distance: bridging the gap, Employers for Carers, Carers UK and Nomura, 2011.

¹⁸ Reproduced from NIACE 'Who Cares? Supporting Young Adult Carers to Learn' 2011.

¹⁹ CIPD Annual survey report 2011 Resourcing and talent planning.

²⁰ CIPD Annual survey report 2009 Recruitment, retention and turnover.

Further benefits of supporting working carers in your workforce include:

Attracting and retaining staff

The Hyde Group, one of the UK's leading providers of affordable housing, have recognised the need to attract and retain carers in their workforce and the value of enabling them to stay at work. They have extended the option of requesting flexible working to all employees and also offer 'dependants leave' (five days a year) and special/carers leave (five days a year). Similarly, The Sefton Equalities Partnership, which involves the Council and a range of local public and voluntary sector organisations, has implemented a multi agency flexible working policy 'which takes into account the needs of carers and the benefits that flexible working can offer to employers in terms of recruitment and retention of skilled staff.'²¹

Taking on caring responsibilities can happen very suddenly. As a result of an accident or a sudden illness, employees can be faced with pressures at work at a time when they are under great emotional and physical stress. It is at this time, that a supportive employer can offer the time, space and practical guidance that can make the difference between retaining an employee and the person leaving employment altogether.

“Without the flexibility I would definitely be under a lot more stress and would probably have to be considering reducing or stopping work which I can't really afford to do – or possibly Dad would have to move into residential care”.

Programme Manager, working full-time²¹

Reducing stress and thus sickness, and thereby increasing productivity

Stress is a well documented cause of sickness within social care and therefore introducing measure to lessen the stress for working carers may well reduce sickness.

“I know that work will allow me time off for something important or immovable that dad needs me for, so I'm happy to make that time up and be flexible in return when work needs me to travel or work out of my usual hours. Without this flexibility I suppose I would have to consider calling in sick when an appointment like the one today comes up which can only happen on a Thursday between 10 and 2”.

Project Manager, working full-time²²

“I'm a believer in give and take. If you are flexible with your employees, they'll be flexible with you, for example, when extra cover is needed”.

Owner, SME²³

²¹ Skills for Care 2012.
²² Skills for Care 2012.
²³ Employers for Carers, 2012.

Increasing staff morale and motivation

Recognition and support of working carers can improve an employees commitment and motivation to give 'their best'. In an effort to do this, Newcastle City Council, a member of the Employers for Carers forum, offers a wide range of flexible working arrangements to its employees and up to five days per year paid emergency leave. The Council also actively seeks information about employees' caring responsibilities and how it can support them; 22% of its workforce have declared their caring role. Lancashire County Council's Working Carers Scheme (see Section 5 'How can I retain the skills of my staff who are carers?') has also proved this point;

"My employer has provided me with flexible working options and are supportive to my needs which allow me to work around my mother".

Working carer, Lancashire County Council

Ensuring an empathetic and experienced workforce

Those who have caring responsibilities bring experience, empathy and many skills to the work place. Those who have had personal experience of caring are rarely left untouched by this experience and often add great value to social care organisations that are looking for those who show a commitment to the social care values of respect, choice and dignity. With personal insight often comes commitment and ideas on how to 'make things better' and this is a real asset to social care organisations.

Building a resilient workforce

As we have seen, it is increasingly likely that employees will combine caring with work. Therefore, it makes business sense to build the resilience of the workforce to deal with the changes ahead of it, as well as current ones. Sunderland City Council, a longstanding member of the Employers for Carers forum, has a number of established policies to support carers in its workforce. These include a flexible working hours scheme, paid carers leave and access to in-house counselling services. The Council is also continuing to develop, and raise awareness of, the support available for carers in its workforce, including looking at ways of creating an environment where people feel confident to come forward for support.

For social care employers, it is important to 'walk the talk' and embody the values that we hold for our services for our employees as well. Are staff who are being asked to support carers in their working life, not being supported themselves if they care for others in their private lives? For example, does your organisation need to consider whether managers and leaders are modelling the kinds of attitudes and behaviours towards members of staff who are also carers that match those that are that are expected of their own staff? Does the culture of your organisation ('how things are done around here') foster and support your own staff who are carers? Are your employees being expected to plan or deliver care with dignity and compassion when they themselves are not treated this way as carers by their own employers?

'In the light of the current economic climate and demographic changes it is vitally important that we place a priority on retaining the skills and experience of valued employees within the workforce so that both businesses and the wider economy can benefit'.

Recognised, Valued and Supported: Next steps for the Carers Strategy, HM Government, 2010.

4. Carers' legal rights — a summary²⁴

It is also important to be aware of the legal rights that carers now have in the workplace. There are comprehensive guides to these²⁵ but the following is a summary of the key entitlements and rights of carers who work (correct at time of going to press).²⁶

Protection from discrimination

Although up until recently carers have not been directly (or explicitly) protected from discrimination in the workplace, this situation has now changed. If an employee is looking after someone who is elderly or disabled, the law – under the Equality Act 2010 – will protect them against direct discrimination or harassment because of their caring responsibilities. This is because they are counted as being 'associated' with someone who is protected by the law because of their age or disability.

The right to request flexible working

Since April 2007 the Work and Families Act 2006 (The Work and Families

(Northern Ireland) Order 2006 in Northern Ireland) has given carers, as well as parents, the right to request flexible working such as changing hours or working from home.

Further information is available from Carers UK and Employers for Carers (see 'Further Specialist Sources of Support' Part 10).

A right to time off in emergencies

All employees have the right to take 'reasonable time off' to deal with unexpected situations involving a dependant. At the discretion of you, the employer, this time off can be paid. To use this right to time off, employees must inform you as soon as possible after the emergency has happened.

Parental leave

Employees who have at least one year's continuous service and are responsible for a child aged under 5, or under 18 if the child receives Disability Living Allowance, are entitled to:

- 13 weeks (unpaid) parental leave per child to look after their child, or
- 18 weeks (unpaid) parental leave per child to look after their disabled child.

²⁴ Extract from Supporting carers in employment, a carer's guide, Employers for Carers and Carers UK, 2012.

²⁵ Supporting carers in employment, a carer's guide, Employers for Carers and Carers UK, 2012

Supporting carers in employment, an employer's guide, Employers for Carers and Carers UK, 2009.

²⁶ May 2012.

5. How can I retain the skills of my employees who are carers?

As we have seen, the loss of any worker is expensive, disruptive and has an impact on the quality of service delivered. Particularly with direct care, people who use services and their families value a consistent relationship with one or two people, finding the constant change of staff unsettling and frustrating. Therefore, it makes business sense to retain staff and their skills. However, all too often workers with caring responsibilities, faced with mounting pressure and a lack of understanding from employers, feel they have no choice but to leave paid employment.

To be able to offer some solutions, it's important to understand what areas working carers may struggle with.

These can be grouped as:

Practical challenges, these include:
unpredictability in caring responsibilities

- finding out about – and securing - support for the person they are looking after
- interruptions to working day (i.e. telephone calls, appointments, sorting out care arrangements when they break down)
- finding out about – and securing – help for themselves as a carer accessing and arranging respite care.

Psychological challenges, these include:

- stress involved in juggling roles of caring and working if unsupported feelings of guilt for leaving the cared for person
- isolation/lack of support
- lack of confidence due to the pressures mentioned and the perception that they may be viewed 'differently' to other employees
- being less ambitious for themselves
- not wanting to change jobs if current employer is carer friendly.

Systemic challenges, these include:

- lack of understanding by institutions of the problems faced by carers organisational inertia
- assumptions that carers can't/don't want to be engaged in paid employment
- assumptions that carers can't retain skilled or responsible roles or that they are not interested in career advancement
- out-of-date or ill informed attitudes towards carers (for example, no knowledge or recognition of Carers Rights (see 'Carers Legal Rights; a Summary').

Here are some suggestions about what you could do to overcome some of these challenges:

- know who are carers in your workforce by seeking to identify them, for example by circulating information during Carers Week or by surveying your staff
- don't assume you know what would help - ask!
- use staff surveys, awareness raising events, one to one and team conversations to find out more about carers' support needs
- ensure you have the right information to help 'signpost' carers to local and national support (e.g. through a local carers centre or a national helpline)
- try describing 'what' a carer typically does in order to identify employees who are carers. The term 'carer' isn't one that all people recognise, understand or identify with and thus having descriptions and explanations of what you mean by this term can help with identification, both for your organisation and the employees within it
- include information about national and local sources of support for carers in staff handbooks and on the staff intranet. A directory of useful organisations is available on the Carers UK website www.carersuk.org
- offer flexible arrangements such as flexible breaks, flexible starting/finishing times/job shares flexible leave arrangements can make a real difference for carers. As well as statutory
- right to time off in emergencies, paid leave for emergency or planned caring (for example, following discharge of a relative from hospital) can be critical for carers and help to reduce absence and staff turnover
- 'normalise' carers within the organisation; awareness raising, carers champion, charity of the year etc. Perhaps having a 'carer identification' section on all staff appraisals would help to raise awareness and 'normalise' recognition of the caring role
- adapt or create a carers policy. Large employers will often have a specific carers policy but smaller organisations may include carers in their generic policies. Creating a workplace culture that is supportive to carers is also crucial to help ensure that policies become reality in the workplace
- apply equal opportunities to all posts advertised
- ensure your adverts include a reference to being an equal opportunities employer. It is also helpful to give some examples of the flexible opportunities your organisation offers
- consider offering career breaks. Career breaks or sabbaticals should also be considered on a paid or unpaid basis as they can help to retain the skills and talent of carers in your workforce in the longer term
- offer flexible opportunities for learning and development (see Section 6 'Learning and development for those employees who are carers; what works')
- introduce carer champions. This can be a way of encouraging recognition, gaining feedback to suggestions for adaptations to policies etc, as well as developing a supportive network for working carers within your organisation.

Every little helps...

Access to a telephone

Being able to use a phone at work can give both a carer and the person they care for, a great sense of reassurance. Often carers are the first contact number to call in an emergency, either for the cared for person or through a call centre that may monitor the welfare of the cared for person. Therefore as well as being able to make calls, it's important for carers peace of mind to be able to receive calls also.

Clear messages which come out of research into retention strategies highlight that retention rates increase when staff feel valued and respected, enabled and supported by actions such as those above.

Lancashire County Council is committed to providing flexible working options and support to its working carers. It has a 'Working Carer Policy', through which working carers can access support, advice and information and sign up to the Working Carers database. Workers who have signed up receive regular information, both from within the Council and also national and local carer information. To further recognise their commitment to the valuable contribution that working carers make to the organisation, two half-day carer workshops are organised per year, which can be attended in the working day. Topics have included Human Resource information, information around services available for carers, Welfare Rights and occupational health.

Joanne McMaster, Carers Strategy Officer, says 'the scheme has been in place for over two years now and provides invaluable support to working carers. Around 650 carers are currently signed up to the scheme and receive information and advice not only in relation to their caring role but also around the flexible working opportunities the council offers them as working carers. We as a council recognise the importance of supporting working carers, valuing the contribution they make. It makes business sense to care for carers!'

Larger social care employers that are comprised of a number of departments or teams often deliver their support to staff through a range of policies, processes and approaches. Adopting a 'whole organisation approach' can ensure that the needs of employees who are carers are actively considered at all levels, by all staff and across all parts of the organisation. Consider the following approach within your organisation:

Whole organisational approach to supporting carers in your workforce

Leadership, management and infrastructure

Recruitment and Marketing	Assessment of individual need	Ongoing support	Learning and development	Evaluation of support
Inclusion of 'carer status' on application forms	Company induction includes carer awareness	Supervision, ongoing awareness, monitoring of support offered	Individual learning programme identified	Feedback on support offered, usefulness of policy
Mention of 'carer Friendly' employment practices	Training for supervisory staff in carer policies	Adaptations made as required	Flexibility built into any learning programmes offered	Consult with carers Forum
Use of flexible recruitment approaches e.g. flexi hours, part-time working and working from home	Identification of mentoring or support in individual's induction, identification of caring responsibilities, supportive practices offered	Appropriate sharing of carer status across relevant parts of the organisation. Communication links between carer, manager, HR support and other parties	Carer forum used for further support. Tutor support offered	Any further changes seen as useful made

Creating a flexible workforce for a flexible service

Providing care and support to citizens is a 24 hour day, 365 days a year activity. This is both a challenge and an opportunity. In order to cover this amount of service and support, flexible working patterns will be required. This flexibility can enable people who have other responsibilities such as children or caring responsibilities to work hours that are flexible enough to work around their family and other commitments.

In order to facilitate this, employers should:

- examine their staffing needs and refocus their approach to one that works with a multiplicity of staff to deliver outcomes, rather than the traditional notion of the full-time workers
- ensure efficient rota and payment systems
- develop job descriptions that are outcome-based, not process focused
- introduce induction and learning programmes that equip staff to cross the continuum of care, from personal assistant to allied medical professional
- plan for a system that is responsive and able to cope with unexpected absences; this can be of great benefit to employees and also gives peace of mind to people who use services and their families.

Increasingly, the use of technology can be a way in which employees can work flexibly. In some roles within social care, it is possible to use devices such as mobile 'smart' phones to work 'remotely' which can allow carers the flexibility needed to fit in caring responsibilities and work. The use of such technology is not dependant on an office being open, which can also mean that employees can work flexibly to better suit their caring responsibilities, whilst still getting the job done.

Hertfordshire County Council is an example of an employer who is seeking to offer solutions to the challenges of working and caring.

Hertfordshire County Council has a long track record of supporting carers both within its own workforce and more widely within the county. The Council was named in 2009 by Working Families as one of the best family friendly employers of the past three decades for the leadership it has shown in its flexible working and family friendly initiatives.

- 31% of the Council's staff are carers. Support for work-life balance is central to its policies. A range of flexible working opportunities are offered to all employees.
- Council employees can take up to five days paid leave to deal with emergencies involving dependants and also an extra 20 days unpaid leave each year.
- The work-life balance strategy was linked to the Council's comprehensive change programme, which over three years reduced accommodation from 51 offices to three main bases. Flexible working is not just an HR policy, but a recognised means of achieving business objectives and personal commitment.
- The Council has seen increased staff retention rates as a result of these policies.²⁷

²⁷ Carers and Employment, making a difference, realising potential, ADASS, Employers for Carers and Carers UK, 2011.

6. Learning and development for those employees who are carers – what works?

Social care employers know that investing time and effort into developing the skills of your workforce means a better quality of service. Employees who are juggling working and caring responsibilities may encounter particular problems with learning such as:

- Having to decline learning opportunities due to caring responsibilities
- Finding the right time/extra time to study
- Having to find replacement care for the times they are learning
- Problems with attending courses that are at times when they would be caring
- Having the energy, mental and physical, to access opportunities to learn new skills.

It's important to have a good understanding of how any learning or development activities may be perceived by your employees at an individual level. Through the use of supervision and HR processes, each employee should be offered the chance to discuss their learning requirements. Flexibility is often the key, so offering later completion dates, flexible studying times or peer support can be helpful to working carers.

'Understand that sometimes we don't want to sit in a classroom and we don't want to be there because we can't deal with what's going on at home. So if you could just send work home for us we could do it and it would encourage us..don't pressure us, we don't need more pressure, we have had enough already ... just be supportive.'²⁸

Young adult carer

As well as barriers to developing their skills, working carers face barriers in using their skills. Highly trained staff who are carers can feel that the energy and time needed to both apply for and hold down a role 'higher up' in the organisation is more than they can manage. They may also feel that their employer would want 'too much' from them, when they are already stretched.

²⁸ Re produced from NIACE 'Who Cares? Supporting Young Adult Carers to Learn' 2011.

Employers themselves can also be guilty of assuming that working carers will be looking for a less skilled or responsible job. It is through these circumstances that employers lose skilled staff or fail to utilise skilled staff in the right way. Almost 45% of men and 55% of women who are in paid work and caring for more than 20 hours a week are in elementary occupations, in sales, customer service or personal services.

Employers should:

- Look at each individual's learning needs
- Be flexible in the way learning is offered
- Offer learning in different formats
- Introduce a learning 'buddy' scheme
- Engage in a holistic approach to learning, taking account of the personal circumstances of the individual and the impact of engagement in learning on other areas of their life, particularly their caring role
- Ensure that learning methods and outcomes allow the learner to be 'in control', thus allowing those who have caring responsibilities to plan their own learning around caring
- Recognise the expertise and insight that can be gained from undertaking a caring role and how the organisation and the employee can best use this. Is there an appropriate opportunity for the employee to help others learn from their experiences?

To help your organisation and its managers to be aware of these adaptations, it's also important not to overlook the need to raise awareness of carers needs through the general learning and development that you give to all staff. Perhaps you include it in your induction process, perhaps you place posters up to remind people of carers issues and what you do to support them or run a learning event to raise awareness throughout your staff group. Resources to be able to do any of the above are available at: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/carers

Recognising and capturing existing skills of employees who are carers

Carers often carry a range of skills and knowledge developed through their caring responsibilities that are transferable into the workplace. Often these areas of knowledge and skills are areas that employers need in their workforce. It is important for employers to consider these areas both in recruitment practice and in future learning and development.

When recruiting, employers can actively consider the transferability of acquired skills to their specific workplace. You may need to help some carers to recognise the possibility of this transfer of skills or knowledge but in many cases carers are already aware. Previous experience and knowledge can help to 'speed' the development of a competent and confident employee and is a real bonus for the employer. Recognition of caring experience can also be a key factor in retaining staff.

Through learning and development, employees can be encouraged to gain recognition for their existing skills and knowledge, possibly through accreditation and eventually by gaining qualifications.

Currently many qualifications in social care are made up of small 'bite size' units. Many of these units can be 'banked' and then put towards small, medium or large qualifications in the form of various awards, certificates and diplomas.³⁰ It may be that employees who are carers feel they do not have time to consider gaining whole qualifications as their caring responsibilities take up all their free time. However, with encouragement they can be supported to realise that they may be gaining accreditation for what they already know and do. Although they may not be ready to take on a whole qualification they can gain a range of units which can then be banked and used as building blocks for qualifications when they feel ready for the bigger undertaking. The following scenario demonstrates how caring responsibilities can be more officially recognised in the accreditation of possible units. These are just some of the possibilities and there will be lots more.

29 More than a job; working carers; evidence from the 2001 Census, 2006, Carers UK.

30 For more information, please see: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications_and_training

What skills and knowledge does Amy have that could be useful to an employer in social care?

Skills	Knowledge	Evidence	Links to qualification units ³¹
Communication skills	How to communicate in a range of ways to suit the person	Hairdressing career Relationship with mum	SHC 21 Introduction to communication in health, social care or children's and young people's settings
Dealing with incontinence	How to manage incontinence with dignity	Managing her mum's incontinence	HSC 026 Implement person centred approaches in health and social care DEM 204 Understand and Implement a person centred approach to the care and support of individuals with dementia
Time management	How to manage your time effectively	Managing to care for mum and two children and work	HSC 025 Role of Health and Social Care Worker HSC 025 (Learning Outcome 3 – partnership working)
Advocacy	How to advocate on someone's behalf	Gaining of services/benefits Adaptation of house	
Working with range of professionals	Understanding of partnership working and other professional roles	Advocated and managed mum's bathroom conversion with the Occupational Therapist and the Council	
Risk management	How to assess risk	Manages mum's environment to manage the risk Manages her own time to lessen risk to mum	HSC 027 Contribute to health and safety in health and social care ASM 34 Administer medication to individuals and monitor the effects
Safe handling of medication	How to handle medicines	Manages all her mum's medication	
Communicating with individuals with dementia	Understanding of dementia	Learning about her mum's condition	DEM 201 Dementia awareness DEM 205 Understand the factors that can influence communication and interaction with individuals who have dementia
Supporting individuals in general daily living	Understanding of individual needs	Caring responsibilities	HSC 2007 Support independence in the tasks of daily living HSC 2013 Support care plan activities

³¹ For more detail on the Qualifications and Credit Framework and qualifications in social care, please see: www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications_and_training

Consider the following scenario:

Amy trained as hairdresser when she left school. For the past two years, she has been caring for her mum. Her mum has dementia and requires a lot of support. She often falls, has a very poor short term memory and is frequently incontinent. This incontinence has meant that Amy has had to advocate on behalf of her mum for adaptations to the house. Amy also deals with all her mum's medication as she gets confused. Amy still cuts hair when she can, to fit in around her caring responsibilities. She lives in the next street to her mum and has two school age children. She is considering a career in social care.

7. How do I know if changes have had an impact on working carers?

You will want to know that changes you have introduced have made a positive impact on your workforce.

There are many ways of achieving this but here are some suggestions:

- Employee satisfaction survey – through this approach, you can ask working carers whether they feel more supported by any changes you have made. You could also ask them whether their improved satisfaction would make them stay with your organisation for longer or work harder?
- Using supervision and appraisal – appraisal can be used to ask about the impact of changes on an individual level or an organisational level. Supervision is a good moment to ask if changes brought in have helped.
- Monitoring sickness rates – we know that those with heavy caring responsibilities are two to three times more likely than workers without caring responsibilities to be in poor health. If unsupported, we also know that carers often end up resorting to taking time off sick or using up their annual leave to care and then becoming ill. Therefore, measuring sickness rates could prove to be a way of measuring the impact of changes.
- Recruitment practices – by advertising that you are a flexible, 'carer friendly' employer, you may find that you attract more of a different type of person. Carers can bring considerable skills into an organisation and will be motivated to perform well if supported in their caring responsibilities. Consider asking those recruited whether your status as a 'carer friendly' employer affected their decision to work for you?

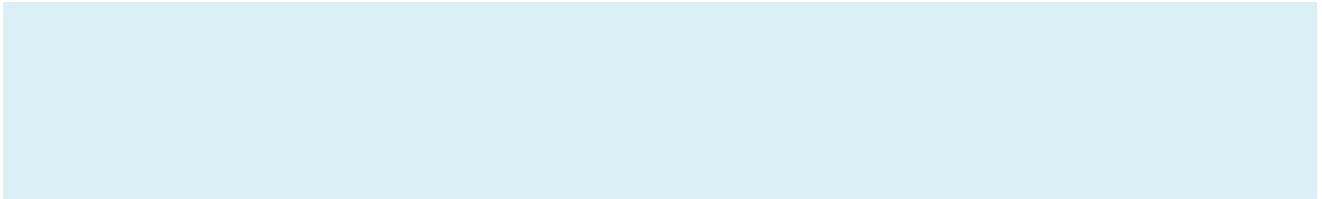
8. Awareness raising in your organisation

Alongside the support that you can give your workforce there are a number of other sources of help and assistance that employees can access themselves. There are several national organisations which exist to provide support for carers. Many of these can 'signpost' carers to support which is available locally.

Details of these are listed on the enclosed poster which you could display on your staff notice board etc. There is also space for you to write details of who your staff can contact within your organisation for support.

9. Notes and action planning

Below is space for you to consider and plan what you may do to support carers in your workforce. To help you, we have offered a number of 'starting questions' as a guide of areas to consider.



Does my organisation have carers employed within it? Will this number be likely to rise in the future and if so, why?



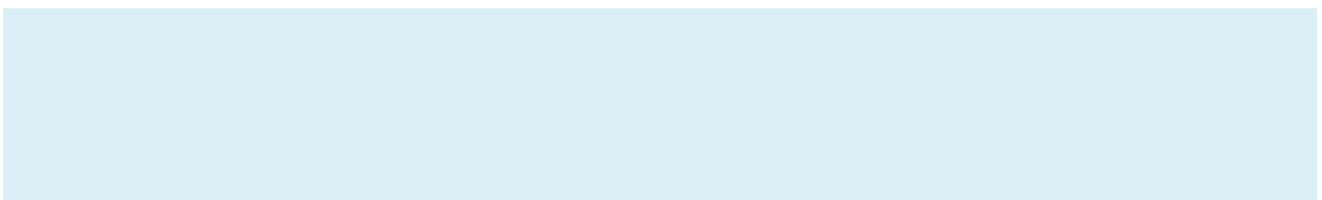
Have I made assumptions about who these might be and why?



Do I know who the carers are in my workforce? Do the relevant people in my organisation know who is combining caring and work?



Do the the staff in my organisation have sufficient knowledge of what a carer is and what this might mean to be able to identify them and support them well? Do some/all staff need training in this area (see www.skillsforcare.org.uk/carers for free resources to do this).



Have we got a range of supportive measures in place to support working carers? Are they used? Are they sufficient?



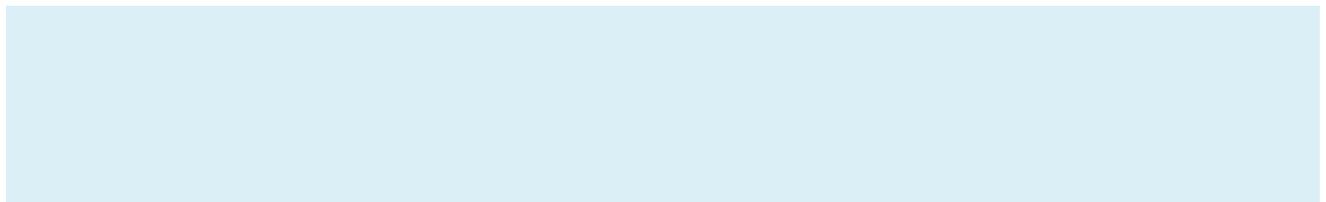
Have we got a system for identifying carers? Whose responsibility is this? What difference does it make once we know?



Do I know if people have reduced their hours or retired early due to their caring responsibilities?



Do I know if people have left my workforce due to their caring responsibilities?



Is there monitoring in place to measure the effectiveness of the support offered for carers?



Action plan

Below is an action planning table that is based on the organisational approach described in 'How can I retain the skills of my employees who are carers?'

Use it to help you plan in detail your next steps and monitor your progress.

	Recruitment and marketing	Organisational policies	Assessment of individual need	Ongoing support	Learning and development support	Evaluation of carer support offered
I will...						
To do this, I will involve...						
The outcome will be...						
We will measure it's impact by...						

10. Further specialist sources of support

We hope that the information provided here has helped you to consider the number of working carers you may have in your workforce and what support you can be giving them. However, there are other sources of support to help you as you develop your ideas:

For you as a social care employer:

Employers for Carers is a membership organisation and practical service for employers, managed and administered by Carers UK, whose key purpose is to support employers to support the carers in their workforce. It provides a range of resources for employers and managers, including case studies, practical tips, model policies and access to expert training and consultancy. It also provides information and resources for your employees:

www.employersforcarers.org

Contact: employers@carersuk.org

Telephone: 0207 378 4956

For the carers in your workforce:

There are several national and many local organisations that exist to provide advice and support for carers. Find out what is locally available to you by using these sites as a starting point. Here are some of them:

Carers UK — www.carersuk.org

Carers Trust — www.carers.org

Carers Direct www.nhs.uk/carersdirect/Pages/CarersDirectHome.aspx

Direct gov — www.direct.gov.uk/en/caringforsomeone/index.htm

There are other organisations who support carers of those with specific conditions. There are too many to mention here but examples are:

The Alzheimers Society — www.alzheimers.org.uk

The Multiple Sclerosis Society — www.mssociety.org.uk

Re-Think (Mental Illness) — www.rethink.org.uk

Acknowledgements

Skills for Care thank the following partners for their input into 'Carers in your Workforce Matter':

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

Action for Carers

Carers Trust

Department of Health

East Sussex County Council

Employers for Carers

Lancashire County Council

NIACE

North Lincolnshire Care Trust Plus

Skills for care
West Gate
6 Grace Street
Leeds
LS1 2RP

Telephone: 0113 245 1716
Fax: 0113 243 6417
info@skillsforcare.org.uk
www.skillsforcare.org.uk