

Carer Friendly Company blueprint

Background

Carers UK has carried out research looking at carers' experiences when acting on behalf of the person they care for. This work has been supported by British Gas. For some carers, especially those who have very significant or stressful caring responsibilities, having to communicate with services that do not understand them, or their needs, can be very challenging.

The research explored the main issues that carers experience when acting on behalf of the person they care for, how they interact with different companies and services and what they would like to see from companies to help them to manage.¹

This blueprint incorporates those experiences and practice but goes broader than the relationship that companies or organisations have with their customers who are carers. It includes a positive culture that supports and understands caring, practice to support colleagues who are juggling work and unpaid care and aligned corporate values.

As our society ages and more people are living longer with disabilities and chronic illnesses in our local communities, unpaid caring is becoming ever more prevalent. We all have a 50:50 chance of providing unpaid care by the time we're in our 50s – in other words – during our working lives.²

We have developed a blueprint based on this research, in consultation with carers and with companies. We hope that this provides a framework for companies to improve and update their work to support carers. Carers UK will continue work with companies and organisations to develop this blueprint and to encourage positive action to support carers.

Key statistics

- There could be as many as 13.6 million carers in the UK.³
- Pre-pandemic, 1 in 7 workers was juggling work and unpaid care for a disabled, older or ill relative or friend.⁴ During the pandemic, this went up to 1 in 4.⁵
- 2.6 million people are estimated to have given up work to care.⁶
- Those using customer services on behalf of the person they care for can find it stressful and challenging.⁷

¹ Carer Friendly Company, Carers UK 2021

² Dr Yanan Zhang, Dr Matt Bennett, Professor Sue Yeandle, Will I Care? The probability of providing unpaid care, Carers UK, November 2019

³ [Carers Week 2020 research- the rise in the number of unpaid carers during the coronavirus outbreak](#), Carers UK June 2020

⁴ [Juggling work and unpaid care: a growing issue](#), Carers UK, February 2019

⁵ Carers Week 2020 research, Carers UK 2021

⁶ Juggling work and unpaid care, Carers UK 2019

⁷ Carer Friendly Company, Carers UK 2021

How the Carer Friendly Company blueprint is structured: three domains and eight objectives

Based on carers' experiences, there are three main domains

- Corporate or organisational values
- Investing in staff
- Client systems and processes

There are eight evidence-based objectives that sit below each of these domains drawing on practice, carers' experiences and what would make a difference.

Summary blueprint for a Carer Friendly Company

Corporate/organisation values

- Companies/services understand about caring
- Companies/services promote carer friendly images
- Companies promote carer friendly principles through procurement and other key relationships

Investing in staff

- Key staff are aware about caring
- Companies have carer friendly staff policies in place

Client systems and processes

- Systems are easy to use when acting on someone's behalf
- Systems record carers and 'remember' that they are acting on someone's behalf
- Companies/services signpost or refer carers to relevant support

Translating the blueprint into action

Domain 1 Corporate or organisation values

Objective 1: Companies and services understand about caring

This means that companies and services have clear corporate statements or approaches that demonstrate a commitment to understanding and supporting carers as clients, customers or acting on other people's behalf.

This could mean:

- Care awareness training for all staff – just 5 minutes – could make the difference as part of Diversity and Inclusion⁸
- Staff are aware of what support is on offer for carers as customers/clients
- Including carers or caring situations in publicity about the service
- Signing up to and supporting Carers Week and similar initiatives
- Corporate statements within social responsibility programmes
- Clear explicit inclusion of carers in Diversity and Inclusion policies and programmes
- Promoting carer friendly principles through sub-contractors and other company relationships

Objective 2: Companies and services promote carer friendly images

A key part of successful diversity and inclusion is reflected in marketing and communications. This is where services and companies can bring caring situations into images and publicity. At times, the carer might be depicted with the person they are caring for, talking about the carer's perspective, or on their own.

This could mean:

- Written publicity including testimony from customers who are carers, marketing, or advertising including carers
- Pictures and graphics of customers which involve carers

Objective 3: Companies promote carer friendly principles through procurement or other key relationships

This is where the company could help to encourage positive behaviour and support through procurement and other key relationships by leadership or incentives as part of procurement.

This could mean:

- Promoting carer friendly values through procurement
- Encouraging awareness and support of carer friendly elements such as Carers Week
- Direct measures by including carer friendly employment practices as a requirement of procurement

Domain 2 Investing in staff

Objective 4: Key staff are aware about caring

This means that key staff, particularly customer facing staff, understand some of the key challenges carers face when trying to use a service on behalf of someone else who might have a disability, be chronically ill, older and need support. Caring can be stressful, particularly if it happens suddenly and the carer finds themselves in unfamiliar territory trying to deal with someone else's affairs. Carers can often be time poor and not have much time for themselves. They can also be on low incomes making accessing services or support more difficult.

This could mean:

- Carer awareness training for key frontline staff dealing with customers, the nature and depth of the training being tailored to the service in question.⁹
- Staff designing systems and processes have more in-depth knowledge of carers' journeys
- Consultation and involvement with carers to understand how using a service affects them
- Making sure that services are accessible for low income carers
- Look at whether there are service offers that would particularly suit carers
- Staff are aware of what support there is for customers who are carers

Objective 5: Making sure the company/organisation has carer friendly employee policies

Companies that work with Carers UK have found that many of their staff can also be juggling work and unpaid care for relatives and friends – around 1 in 7 employees could be juggling work and care, or even as many as 1 in 3 in the NHS.¹⁰ Many of those caring will be experiencing the same challenges as clients or customers being a carer and trying to act on someone else's behalf.

This could mean:

- Holding workshops with employees who are carers
- Having carer friendly employee policies in place, such as flexible working arrangements and carer's or special leave
- Becoming a member of [Employers for Carers](#) or [Carer Positive](#) in Scotland
- Taking part in the [Carer Confident](#) benchmark

⁹ Carer Aware

¹⁰ March 2021, results of NHS staff survey

Domain 3 Client systems and processes

Objective 6: Systems are easy to use by carers when acting on someone else's behalf

For carers, they say that acting on behalf of someone else because of disability, illness or because they are older and need support can be difficult, frustrating and time-consuming. Some companies or services may need to balance carers' interests with the need for security, but there are ways that services can make systems more carer friendly.

This could mean:

- Systems are tested with carers to see what it is like if someone is a carer and acting on someone else's behalf.
- Experiences are clearly defined for those who have Power of Attorney or Deputyship in place and others who don't.
- Carers say that digital systems can be better at times but need to be properly tailored.

Objective 7: Systems and services flagging when carers are contacting a service

Most carers acting on someone else's behalf say that it's frustrating when systems don't consistently flag when they are acting on someone else's behalf. They say that they often need to repeatedly provide information.

This could mean:

- Systems or services record if someone has Power of Attorney or Deputyship.
- Systems or services record if someone is a carer where relevant
- Services ask routinely if the carer is acting on someone else's behalf
- For services that operate particular support for unpaid carers, pro-actively asking customers if they provide unpaid care

Objective 8: Companies/services signposting carers to support that is helpful as a carer

Carers often miss out on support because they don't recognise themselves as a carer and equally because they are not signposted to help. Caring can be complex and carers are often time poor. Being pointed in the right direction can provide a lifeline. This might not be appropriate for every company and service.

This could mean:

- Providing a link to Carers UK's website [carersuk.org](https://www.carersuk.org)
- Thinking about any linked services or support
- Giving customers the Carers UK helpline number/ opening times

Further work and who to contact

Carers UK will continue to work to develop the blueprint. If you are interested in discussing any of the content of this as a company or organisation, then please contact client.services@carersuk.org.

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May 2021

*This work has been kindly
supported by*



Across the UK today 6.5 million people are carers – supporting a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill.

Caring will touch each and every one of us in our lifetime, whether we become a carer or need care ourselves. Whilst caring can be a rewarding experience, it can also impact on a person's health, finances and relationships.

Carers UK is here to listen, to give carers expert information and tailored advice. We champion the rights of carers and support them in finding new ways to manage at home, at work, or in their community.

We're here to make life better for carers.

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ISBN Number ISBN - 978-1-9161712-4-4 Publication code [UK4089_1020](https://www.carersuk.org). © Carers UK, May 2021.

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