Supporting Working Carers: A Growing Challenge

Learn how employers can develop a carer friendly workplace culture
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The purpose of this paper is to highlight the challenges facing people juggling work with care and to explore how employers can develop a workplace culture that supports them.

One in seven UK employees\(^1\) is caring for an older, sick or disabled family member or friend who cannot manage without their support. Currently 600 carers leave work every day, a figure which is not sustainable given the challenges to UK productivity.

Supporting carers in the workplace is an issue which cannot be ignored:

- The UK is facing a significant skills gap; over the next decade, the number of workers aged 16-49 is forecast to drop while the number of people aged 50-65 will rise
- Increasing numbers of workers will be taking on caring responsibilities; with our ageing population and rising State Pension age, more people will be combining work with care
- Carers will include many of your most talented and experienced employees; the peak age for caring is 45-64, an age at which many people will have gained valuable skills and knowledge in the workplace.

Organisations which fail to address these issues and do not create a workplace culture which supports carers are potentially at risk of:

- Losing top talent and skills
- Incurred recruitment and retraining costs
- Facing productivity losses

All this impacts the bottom line

It has never been more important to address this growing workforce challenge and to reap the business benefits of creating a fundamentally fair and healthy workplace where everybody has equal opportunity to thrive.

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\(^1\) Carers UK (2019) Juggling work and unpaid care: A growing issue
The National Outlook

Around half of the UK’s 6.5 million carers combine work with their unpaid caring responsibilities (Census 2011), and the peak age for caring often coincides with the peak of an individual’s career, in their 40s-60s.

As many as 1 in 4 women aged 50-64 have caring responsibilities (1 in 6 men) and a growing number of people are also sandwich carers, combining care for an older person with childcare. These dual caring responsibilities can be particularly challenging when combined with paid work. Recent research from the Office for National Statistics showed that more than 1 in 4 sandwich carers are reporting symptoms of mental ill health.

The government’s Industrial Strategy (2018) has also recognised that our ageing population will mean that people will be working longer whilst having to juggle caring responsibilities, directly impacting on productivity.

Three steps towards creating a culture of support for carers

Awareness
Define and create better understanding about caring responsibilities. Begin by talking about it and normalising the experience. Start a genuine dialogue that raises awareness as a first step towards encouraging carers to seek the support they need.

Speaking up
Encourage people to share their experiences and listen to what they say. It is up to senior management and line managers to create an environment in which individuals feel it is safe to speak up and to share their problems. An open and honest culture will help ensure employees are supported to balance work and care.

Insights
Monitor and measure the take up and impact of carer support. Collecting data around the take up of policies such as flexible working, as well as metrics for issues such as absenteeism, gives valuable insight into how well people practices are implemented and received. With a data-driven approach, specific goals can be set and measured.

Carers’ voices

The level of flexibility around working time enables me to feel like I can do a good job of parenting my disabled child at the same time as doing a good job at work. The difference this makes to my feeling of self-worth is hard to put into words.

Employee from a world-leading food manufacturer

I am a carer for my father who has dementia. As my mother is elderly too, I couldn’t wish for a more supportive direct manager and unit lead during difficult times. The flexibility and support they give me TRULY makes this a great place to work!!

Employee from the banking sector

I recently had to temporarily cut my hours in order to look after my father despite working in a specialist role, I was given full support to do this. I’m not sure I would get the same treatment elsewhere.

Employee from an insurance company

Census 2011
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Awareness

Awareness of caring starts by gaining insight into the number of carers within the workplace.

1 in 7
workers in the UK has caring responsibilities

51%
of the UK’s Best Workplaces™ know which employees in their organisation have caring responsibilities for elderly, ill or disabled people

24%
Only 24% of the organisations which didn’t gain recognition from Great Place to Work® managed to identify carers among their workforce

Demonstrating a clear commitment

Organisations that actively support caregiving employees are adopting explicit written policies and procedures.

1 in 3
34% of carers in the UK do not receive any support from their employer

43%
of Best Workplaces™ have a written policy aimed at the needs of carers

18%
Only 18% of private organisations in the UK have a formal, written policy in place to support carers

Creating a culture that supports carers

Employers for Carers found that 71% of working carers have felt lonely or isolated in the workplace because of being a carer. Organisations can make tangible steps to avoid employees feeling this way. Best Workplaces™ are addressing the needs of caregivers, and consequently reporting higher levels of employee wellbeing.

People are encouraged to balance their work life and their personal life

Management shows a sincere interest in me as a person, not just an employee

“I am able to take time off from work when I think it’s necessary”

82% 44%
National UK average

84% 49%
Best Workplaces

92% 51%

3 Carers UK (2019) Juggling work and unpaid care: A growing issue
4 CIPD 2016 Research Report: Creating an enabling future for carers in the workplace
5 Carers UK (2015) Caring and isolation in the workplace
In partnership with:

Cisco introduced ‘Rethink’ to support parents who have children with a developmental disability such as autism, by helping them communicate with their child more effectively, connect with experts, and collaborate with their child’s care team. With ‘Rethink’, employees have 7 hours free access to an expert via phone consultations, an individual learning plan for their child, step by step training videos, training materials and expert webinars, and they can track their child’s progress online.

Industry: Utilities
Size: Large

For over 15 years, Centrica has introduced a range of carer-friendly policies. Most recently they’ve updated their policy giving employees up to six weeks of paid carers leave. This includes 10 days (two weeks) paid carers’ leave and if additional care leave is required, a further 10 days (two weeks) can be taken when matched with annual leave entitlement. Centrica also offer flexible working, a Carers’ employee network, an employee assistance line, and Carers regional representatives to encourage employees to seek any support they might need.

Industry: Financial Services & Insurance
Size: Large

Aviva’s carers policy enables full-time employees with caring responsibilities to take up to 35 hours of paid leave per year for planned events, such as to attend hospital appointments and up to 35 hours of paid leave for emergencies. The amount of paid leave for part-time employees is pro-rated. Carers can also request up to three months of unpaid leave and adjustments to their working patterns, for example part-time hours. Aviva also doubled bereavement leave entitlement from 35 to 70 hours per year.

Industry: Information Technology/Software
Size: Medium

Intuit UK offer all employees with at least one year’s service up to four weeks fully paid time off per year to support family members who need additional support. Time can be taken in days or weeks and covers scenarios such as supporting a spouse after an operation or finding long-term nursing care for an elderly parent/in-law.

Industry: Financial Services & Insurance
Size: Super Large

mbna provide emergency childcare for employees whose childcare arrangements have broken down unexpectedly and also holiday childcare to help out during holidays, through ‘My Family Care’. Employees can also access the backup and adult care service to request help for an elderly relative or for themselves after injury. Each employee gets up to twenty days per annum free.

Industry: Staffing & Recruitment
Size: Medium

Every employee at Vibe attends a workshop and has at least two ‘Vision for Life’ coaching sessions with a life coach. Employees design their own plan, often including Health & Fitness Goals, Family/Relationship Goals, Financial/career/Business Goals, Personal Development, Fun time & Recreation goals.
What you can do

No matter where you are on your journey to creating a culture that supports carers in the workplace, the process of moving from good to great begins by looking at your current practices and taking these 6 big picture action steps:

1. **Develop a carer friendly workplace culture**
   Recognise that there will be carers in your workforce – one in seven employees in any workplace is juggling work with care. Deliver top level championship, support for line managers, and the right policies to support carers.

2. **Offer flexible working**
   Consider how jobs are designed and promoted as flexible and how flexibility is embedded in all workplace policies.

3. **Provide dedicated care leave**
   Offer short-term paid care leave of between 5-10 days per year and longer periods of unpaid leave. Communicate paid leave entitlements clearly.

4. **Include carers in broader diversity and inclusion policies**
   Recognise the diversity of caring and offer support that acknowledges this, including mid-career reviews and learning and development opportunities.

5. **Signpost to information and advice**
   Provide and promote links to sources of information and advice for employees on internal and external platforms.

6. **Develop a peer support network**
   Acknowledge the power of peer to peer support and create the opportunity for carers to connect and engage with each other.
How we can help

Great Place to Work

Face to Face consulting support and Employee Metrics

Our Great Place to Work® consultants can design a customised programme of workshops and focus groups to help you improve your current carers policies and other practices that impact your employee experience. Based on your specific objectives, we can also provide you with an Employee Metrics Report with comprehensive insight on how your organisation is performing in key areas of the talent management life cycle against UK Best Workplaces™ and/or sector comparisons.

Access to our Inspiration Library

At Great Place to Work® we have over 30 years of experience analysing and compiling best practices from top organisations around the globe. Get access to our inspiration library of innovative best practices to complement and improve your workplace culture.

Obtain Official Recognition for ‘Excellence in Wellbeing’

Our ‘Excellence in Wellbeing’ programme allows organisations to assess their current wellbeing practices, while enabling them to brand themselves as a centre of wellbeing to current employees and future candidates.

Employers for Carers, Carers UK’s business forum

EfC Digital platform

Our online platform offers a range of dedicated resources and practical advice for member organisations including line manager guides, e-Learning, templates, sample policies and case studies; designed to help build your strategy around supporting working carers.

Workplace Diagnostics and Lunch and Learns

• In-house sessions for managers and employees tailored to meet your requirements.
• Participation in networking events with opportunities to share and learn from other employers.

Carer Confident benchmark

Our employer benchmarking scheme supports organisations to create a positive and inclusive workplace for staff who are, or will become, carers and to make the most of the talents that they can bring. The certificate of achievement is presented to employers with a UK presence who demonstrate that they have built a workplace where carers are recognised, respected and supported.
About Great Place to Work® UK

Great Place to Work® UK is a consultancy specialising in workplace culture, helping organisations to create exceptional, high performing workplaces where employees feel trusted and valued. We help employers improve recruitment, retention and productivity by putting employees at the heart of the organisation, analysing what they think and feel and identifying the real issues that need to be addressed. Part of a global organisation, we apply insights from approximately 10,000 organisations across the world to benchmark individual performance and support employers in continuously improving employee experience to build and sustain business performance. We run the Best Workplaces™ awards to enable the organisations we work with to celebrate their achievements, build their employer brand and inspire others to take action.

www.greatplacetowork.co.uk

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About Carers UK

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 and 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.

www.carersuk.org

Our Employers for Carers (EFC) forum is a growing membership service and forum for employers. Informed by business, its key purpose is to provide practical, “hands-on”, help to employers to support the one in seven carers in their workforce. Formally launched in 2009, EFC now has nearly 150 member organisations covering around 2 million employees. We provide a dedicated web platform for members with a range of practical employer resources including e-learning, toolkits, model policies and case studies, and access to expert training and consultancy and networking events. www.employersforcarers.org

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