

# Combining Work & Care

A BEST PRACTICE  
GUIDE FOR A  
CARER-FRIENDLY  
WORKPLACE

from the Helping Family Carers Team at Swansea Carers Centre



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Swansea Carers Centre is a specialist voluntary organisation that provides services across the City & County of Swansea. We provide support to all carers of people with an illness, disability or other long-term limiting condition. We share a vision that carers should be recognised, valued and supported in the workplace.

Swansea Carers Centre offers a comprehensive range of services for carers including an information and advice service, welfare benefit support, access to grants and special funds, a counselling service, advocacy services, respite, dementia support, volunteering opportunities, carers' mutual support groups, training, consultation opportunities and social occasions.

All our services are confidential.

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Today's population is ageing and living longer which means that more people are increasingly juggling the demands of their working lives with multiple caring responsibilities.

Anyone can become a carer at any point in their life, either temporarily or long term.

It can be challenging to cope with work and being a carer, however there is information and support available for both employer and employee.

This practical guide for employers aims to raise the awareness of employees with caring responsibilities, identifying what can be done to support them, retain their skills and enable them to stay in the workplace.



**“Being a working carer can be very lonely, and a bit of employer support can often be the difference between a very good employee staying or deciding it’s all too much and leaving.”**

## Who is a carer?

A carer is someone who, *“spends a significant proportion of their life providing unpaid support to an adult family or friend or a disabled child who cannot manage without their help”*.

## Who is not a carer?

- People looking after children who do not have a disability or life-limiting condition
- People who work in care (i.e. care workers)
- Medical staff and community workers or volunteers



There are 6.5 million carers in the UK today and 370,230 are in Wales. That is 1 in 8 adults.

## DID YOU KNOW...?

About 6,000 people a day take on a caring role 3 million people in the UK are currently combining paid work with unpaid caring *“The peak age for caring – 45-64 – is also the point at which people are most likely to have developed the skills employers need to succeed.”*

1 in 5 people gives up employment to care often resulting in financial distress.

Only 1 in 6 organisations have carer policies in place to help achieve a better balance between home and working lives.

# A CARER-FRIENDLY EMPLOYER - THE BENEFITS

A survey carried out on micro, small, medium and large employers in the UK identified some of the business benefits of supporting carer in their workforce:

**Staff retention (92%)**

**Reduces sick leave and absenteeism (88%)**

**Increases productivity and performance (69%)**

**Retains talent and experience (92%)**

**Cuts recruitment and training costs as well as time costs (65%)**

**Strengthen staff loyalty and staff morale (93%)**

**Improves staff management (80%) and team working (75%)**

**Increases service delivery (72%)**

**Improves staff engagement (85%)**

**Improves the ability to attract to future staff (61%)**

# HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT CARERS AT WORK?

**Have a clear carer definition** - who is a carer and who is not, consider that caring responsibilities are different for each carer and that the requirements of their caring role can change.

**Identify employees with caring responsibilities** – Some people will not identify themselves as being a ‘carer’. They might just think they are simply a partner, mother, father, daughter, son, etc. looking after those they love. It can be helpful to **run a promotional campaign to help carers identify with the issue** through displaying posters, emails, intranet, etc.

**Carry out a survey or audit to find out how many of your employees have caring responsibilities, what their needs are and what they would like from the organisation in terms of support.** You can do this through a staff questionnaire and focus groups.

**Have a written policy outlining support available to carers. This may include options such as Flexible working or special leave arrangements.** This can enable carers to manage the demands of their caring role and ensure that they can deal with crisis situations. Flexible working may include, compressed hours, flexi start and finish times, term time working and home working.

**Encourage employees to know that they can come forward and what support is available to them.** This could be done through Intranet, staff handbooks, appraisals and induction procedures as well as HR policies. You could also use individual case studies!

**Work with line managers,** to help bridge the gap between having policies on paper and knowing how to apply them fairly and consistently. Offer carer awareness training to line managers.

**Have a carer champion,** readily recognisable, as a central point of contact for both carers and managers to approach for support and advice.

**Carers Assessments** – a statutory right for all carers it can enable carers to access support and respite from their Local Authority.

**Signpost employees to support services** for external advice, information, and help. **Swansea Carers Centre** is your local organisation that provides help and support for

carers in Swansea. Swansea Carers Centre offers services including welfare benefit advice, counselling, advocacy, carers support groups, respite, training and development.

**Create an open and supportive culture and environment amongst work colleagues.**

Ensure team members are 'carer aware' and that it is ok to talk about caring. Involve other members of staff to find a flexible solution across the team when a carer colleague needs flexibility to deal with a caring crisis.

**Promote and facilitate support group sessions**, having networks with people who are in similar caring circumstances and/or carers interest groups (for example group can meet once a month during lunch break or after work).

## Facts About Flexible Working

According to Carers UK (2014), the overall impact of introducing flexible working in the workplace on employers has been a positive one:

- 69% report a positive impact on employee relations
- 63% report a positive impact on recruitment and retention
- 35% report a positive impact on absence rates
- 28% report a positive impact on productivity

A Carer may also have a 'hidden disability' themselves yet have concerns about disclosing this to their employer.

It is **critical** that employers have an open-door culture so that employees can access the information and support necessary to maintain their own physical and mental health alongside their work and caring roles. Employees need to feel confident that they can speak up without fear of judgement or repercussion.

Very often management worry about saying the wrong thing and therefore say nothing. Simple approaches for support are to:

- Ask the individual what they need.
- Refer to Access to Work, it applies Mental Health too
- Know where to access help locally – your local Carers Centre
- Be prepared to change - DIVERSITY strengthens a Company.

# A CARER'S INSIGHT INTO EMPLOYERS IN SWANSEA

During the process of putting together this Good Practice Guide, Swansea Carers Centre undertook a small survey of working carers in Swansea.

## This is what we discovered...

- 62% of employed carers in Swansea work part-time
- Most Line Managers are aware of their employees caring responsibilities [97%]
- 28% of carers in Swansea don't feel supported at work by their employers

Employed carers in Swansea feel that their employer is carer-friendly because:

- They are allowed to keep their mobiles on to be contactable [73%]
- They are allowed special leave in emergency situations [58%]
- There is a carer-friendly culture among work colleagues [50%]
- They are allowed flexible working [46%]
- They are encouraged to ask for support when needed [38%]
- They have specific support services through workplace [31%]
- They are being signposted to info on care and support [23%]

Carers in Swansea who took part in the survey recommended that employers could support carers to effectively combine work and care by: -

Allowing flexible shifts

Rota re-arrangement when necessary

Being more approachable and considerate with carers

Many carers combine part time work with claiming benefits so need warning if there is a change to their wage or hours

Allowing reduction in working hours when needed

Providing emergency leave as needed

Being more flexible with working times

Extending and revising the work from home policy

Allowing time off when attending hospital appointments

# CARERS ASSESSMENTS

A Carers Assessment is a legal entitlement for all carers. It is your opportunity to discuss with the Local Authority what support or services you may need to help you with your caring role.

A Carers Assessment is an independent assessment of your needs as a carer, the person you care for does not have to be assessed and they do not need to be living with you.

## There is a clear legal duty on the Local Authority to consider

- Whether you have needs for support or are likely to do so in the future
- The extent to which you are willing and able to care or will be willing to do so in the future
- What matters to you and what outcomes you wish to achieve
- The assessment **MUST** also have regard to whether you work, wish to work, whether you are or wish to participate in education or training

## Equalities Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 aims to **prevent discrimination in the workplace**. The Act extends protection to employees against discrimination by association, this includes carers. An example of discrimination by association is not being considered for promotion because you care for someone with a disability or long term condition.

Organisations need to have policies and procedures in place to ensure that there are equal job opportunities for all. They must also prevent discrimination across all aspects of the organisation.

This can be achieved by:

- Having an **equal opportunity policy** in place.
- Training staff on the requirements of equal opportunity legislations.

# BEST PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS

- Have a toolkit of support in place for working carers.** This toolkit may include factsheets such as 'New to Caring'; 'Coming out of Hospital'; 'Managing Carers -Top Tips for Line Managers Factsheet'; and 'Carer's Top Ten Questions and Answers' full of guidance relating to caring, information about mental health problems and how to apply for carers benefits (carers allowance)
- Host regular external speakers** to talk about issues such as coping with dementia
- Have an **online support forum** and a care free advice services
- Create a "Carers Passport"** that can be completed by employee with caring responsibilities that they consider would impact on their ability to work, short or long term. The passport would describe their caring responsibilities and caring needs/adjustments as well as actions to take if the carers needs to leave work suddenly or is unable to attend to work. The Passport enables employees to take their requirements from one manager to another as they move around departments and promotes open and honest conversations about the carer and employer needs.
- Deliver training** to support people with caring responsibilities
- Hold an **annual census** of work-life balance issues

- *Give line managers autonomy and training on managing carers within their team*
- *Organise regular consultations with carers in your organisation*
- *Provide websites targeting working carers with relevant information*
- *Do not pigeon hole carers into types, as they are make up a heterogeneous group with varying needs*
- *Offer practical tips and advice for carers*
- *Create good communication and trust within the organisation*
- *Demonstrate trust – between the carer and their line manager; and*
- *Flexibility – react to carers; needs there and then, and don't get bogged down in procedures and form filling*

## RESOURCES/FURTHER READING

- Local Carers Centres:
  - Swansea Carers Centre** [www.swanseacarerscentre.org.uk](http://www.swanseacarerscentre.org.uk)
  - Neath Port Talbot Carers Service** [www.nptcarers.co.uk](http://www.nptcarers.co.uk)
  - CAVS** [www.cavs.org.uk](http://www.cavs.org.uk)
  - Bridgend Carers Centre** [www.bridgendcarers.co.uk](http://www.bridgendcarers.co.uk)
- **Carers UK** [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)
- **Carers Trust** [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)
- **Employers for Carers** [www.employersforcarers.org](http://www.employersforcarers.org)
- Carers UK, Employers for Carers, Embrace-learning, *Supporting Carers at Work: A Line Managers' Guide*, [www.embrace-learning.co.uk](http://www.embrace-learning.co.uk)
- Skills for Care, 2012, *Carers In Your Workforce Matter: A Guide For Employers: Helping To Identify And Support Unpaid Carers In The Workforce*; available at:
  - <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Document-library/Skills/Carers/Carers-in-your-workforce-matter---complete-pack.pdf>
- Carers UK for Employers for Carers/HM Government Task and Finish Group, 2013, *Supporting Working Carers: The Benefits To Families, Business And The Economy*
- Skills for Care, *Carers In Your Workforce Matter: A Guide For Employers –Helping To Identify And Support Unpaid Carers In The Workforce*; available at:
  - <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Document-library/Skills/Carers/Carers-in-your-workforce-matter---complete-pack.pdf>
- Carers UK, 2006, *Who Carers Wins: The Social And Business Benefits Of Supporting Working Carers*; available at: [www.employersforcarers.org/files/pdfs/Who\\_Cares\\_Wins.pdf](http://www.employersforcarers.org/files/pdfs/Who_Cares_Wins.pdf)
- [www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview](http://www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview)
- [www.carers.org/local-service/flintshire/services/recognising-positive-employment-practices](http://www.carers.org/local-service/flintshire/services/recognising-positive-employment-practices)
- [www.gov.uk/access-to-work](http://www.gov.uk/access-to-work)
- Disability & Employment | Factsheets | CIPD
- <https://businesswales.gov.wales/skillsgateway/disabled-peoples-employment>
- [www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/employment](http://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person/employment)
- [www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/factsheets-carers-wales/working-carers-guide](http://www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/factsheets-carers-wales/working-carers-guide)



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