

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

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."



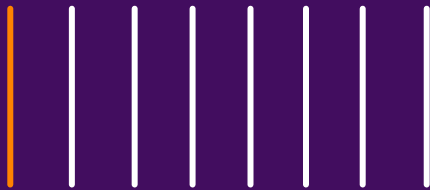
Introduction

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 give up employment to care often resulting financial distress.

Only one in six organisations have carer policies in place to help achieve a better balance between home and working lives

Being 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 92%**
-
- ✓ **RETAINS TALENT AND EXPERIENCE 92%**
 - ✓ **STRENGTHEN STAFF LOYALTY AND STAFF MORALE 93%**
 - ✓ **CUTS RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING COSTS AS WELL AS TIME COSTS 65%**
 - ✓ **IMPROVES STAFF MANAGEMENT 80% AND TEAM WORKING 75%**
 - ✓ **INCREASES SERVICE DELIVERY 72%**
 - ✓ **IMPROVES STAFF ENGAGEMENT 85%**
 - ✓ **IMPROVES THE ABILITY TO ATTRACT TO FUTURE STAFF**
-
- ✓ **BUILDS A RESILIENT WORKFORCE A DEAL WITH CHANGES**
 - ✓ **IMPROVES STAFF WELLBEING BY REDUCING STRESS AND THUS SICKNESS**
 - ✓ **PROVIDES HAPPIER WORK / LIFE BALANCE**

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's Insight into Empoyers 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

Best Practices 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 carefree advice service
- **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 need 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**
- **Flexibility - react to carer's needs there and then, and don't get bogged down in procedures and form filling**

Carer's Passport

Swansea Carers Centre recognises the need for staff with caring responsibilities to be able to balance these with their work commitments. We want you to be a supportive employer and therefore introduce the Carers Passport as an important tool for facilitating a conversation between staff who have caring responsibilities and their managers/line managers regarding flexibility within a safe environment.

The purpose of the passport is to enable a carer and their manager to hold a supportive conversation and document the flexibilities needed to support the carer in combining caring and work. The aim is to minimise the need to re-negotiate these flexibilities every time an employee moves post, moves between departments or is assigned a new manager. This document belongs to the employee and their manager should have a copy. This is designed to be a living document to be reviewed every year and in response to any changes in the nature or impact of the caring responsibilities.

In order to record an agreement in the passport, it is important that you follow the relevant departmental procedures. When a passport is reviewed (either an action or the passport overall), a manager changes, or an employee moves to a new role, the passport does not guarantee that the previously agreed arrangements will remain in place.

EXAMPLE CARER'S PASSPORT:

Section 1

Name:

Name of manager:

Section 2

Overview of employee's caring responsibilities

This section should include:

- A summary of employee's caring responsibilities
- The impact this has on their working life
- Any further information that may help their manager understand the impact their caring responsibilities have on them and their work.

Section 3

Overview of carer's role and team

Section 4

Flexibilities which would be helpful

This section deals with flexibilities specific to carer's current job which would help them combine caring and work. These are intended to inform their discussion with their manager.

Section 5

Flexibilities agreed between carer and their manager

This section deals with flexibilities specific to carer's current job which would help them combine caring and work.

- Set out agreed actions with dates for implementation.
- Action agreed:
- Date of implementation:
- Date to review action:

Section 6

Any other actions agreed at the meeting

This section might include for example contacting the employee assistance programme, contacting Swansea Carers Centre for a carers assessment, or to gather information, support and/or financial help tailored to the carer's circumstances.

Section 7

Consent and signatures

Carer consents to my manager keeping a copy of this passport.

Employee signature:

Date:

Manager signature:

Date:

Date of next review



Carers Rights in Work

If you are juggling work with looking after someone, you are not alone – there are three million working carers in the UK. Juggling work and care can be very challenging, so it's important to find out about your rights.

This factsheet provides a simple summary.

It applies to people living in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Your rights in work

Your rights in work come from two sources:

- The law gives you '**Statutory rights**' which everyone has
- Your contract of employment gives you '**Contractual rights**' which can be more generous than statutory rights.

This information is about Statutory rights. However, it is always worth checking your contract of employment, staff handbook, HR policies or letter of appointment to see if you have any contractual rights on top of your statutory rights.

The right to request flexible working

All employees have a right to request flexible working after they have worked for the same employer for 26 weeks (six months), as long as they haven't already made a flexible working request within the last 12 months.

Flexible working requests should be made in writing and should include details of the revised working pattern you are seeking, how you think this may affect your employer's business and how you think this can be dealt with. Only one request is allowed in a year.

Employers must have a sound business reason for rejecting any request.

Examples of flexible working:

- Home working
- Part-time working
- Term-time working
- Working compressed hours
- Working staggered hours
- Working annualised hours
- Flexi-time
- Shift working
- Job sharing



The right to time off in emergencies

All employees have the right to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off work to deal with an emergency or an unforeseen matter involving a dependant. This may be your partner, child or parent, or someone living with you as part of your family – others who rely on you for help in an emergency may also qualify.

The time off is unpaid unless your employer is willing to give paid time off as a contractual right.

Examples of emergency situations

- A disruption or breakdown in care arrangements
- The death of a dependant
- If a dependant falls ill or is in an accident
- To make longer-term arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured (but not to provide long-term care yourself)
- An incident involving a child during school hours

Protection from discrimination

In England, Wales and Scotland, if you are looking after someone who is elderly or disabled, the law – under the Equality Act 2010 – will protect you against direct discrimination or harassment because of your caring responsibilities. In some cases, carers may have rights under disability and sex discrimination legislation.

The right to parental leave

If you have worked for the same employer for 12 months and you are responsible for a child aged under 18, you are entitled to 18 weeks' leave per child, which must be taken by the child's 18th birthday.

This time off is unpaid unless your employer is willing to give paid time off as a contractual right.

For more information on your rights in work visit [Swanseacarerscentre.org.uk](https://www.swanseacarerscentre.org.uk)

This factsheet is designed to provide helpful information and advice. It is not an authoritative statement of the law. We work to ensure that our factsheets are accurate and up to date.

National policy change

In September 2021, the Government announced that working carers will have the right to a week's unpaid leave and the ability to request flexible working from the moment they start their employment. This is in response to the Government's consultation on carers' leave, launched in March 2020, in recognition of the need to better support working carers. It is a good step forward. The Government has said that legislation to introduce the new leave rights will be brought in "when parliamentary time allows", so as yet, we do not know when these changes will be implemented.

Working Carer's Story

Becoming a parent is a landmark event in anyone's life yet when your much wanted and loved new baby has a disability it introduces you to a whole new world of problems, considerations and emotions that had not been part of your life before. This was the case for me when my daughter was born with profound and multiple disabilities and the future that I had envisioned for her, myself and the rest of my family was now no longer possible and instead was replaced with something a lot less certain. My working life was the first casualty as her early years were taken up with hospital stays, many appointments, therapies and the exhausting around the clock care that she needed.

Once my daughter was in full time school and with the help of my incredibly supportive parents I decided to train as a nurse. It was a long road as completing my degree took longer than expected as so much time had to be taken off to look after my daughter however I finally qualified. I accepted a job at Singleton Hospital and began my nursing career. For several years things ran relatively smoothly with my parents providing care for my daughter when I was working. However as my parents aged and developed their own needs they found it increasingly difficult to provide the level of care and time my daughter's conditions demanded and by the time she reached her teens it was obvious we needed help. I had been using my annual leave and shift swaps to try to manage our situation but we needed a more long term and sustainable solution if I was to carry on working.

With the support of Swansea Carers Centre I was referred for a Carers Assessment which enabled me to access a Direct Payment pay for respite support. Due to the complexity of my daughter's disability the only appropriate option was to employ a qualified Carer Agency however there was not one in the locality or anywhere near that was qualified to care for anyone under 18. Swansea Carers Centre supported me to have discussions with HR at work and with Children's Social Services to find a solution. After several discussions an agency was sourced that was willing to undertake a paediatric registration, in the meantime work agreed that for a short term I could work school hour shifts just until the Care Agency was qualified and care was in place. This is not a solution that is offered to many carers and I am aware that without the cooperation and consideration of HR within the Local Health Board and Social Services I would not have been able to keep the job that I love. Being a working carer is not an easy road, it is fraught with many challenges, demands, guilt and sleep deprivation and to make it achievable and worthwhile has taken the support of many people. I am thankful to my parents for making it possible for me to work in the first place and for understanding that despite the hardships, I still needed to create a way forward for myself and my family.

I am very grateful to my employers for listening to me, for being solution focused when faced with a problem that could have otherwise required me to leave my job and for understanding that my career and their investment in it was worth saving.

Resources and Further Reading

- **Local Carers Centres:**

- **Swansea Carers Centre** www.swanseacarerscentre.org.uk
- **Neath Port Talbot Carers Service** www.nptcarers.org.uk
- **CAVS** www.cavs.org.uk
- **Bridgend Carers Centre** www.bridgendcarers.wordpress.com
- **Carers UK** www.carersuk.org
- **Carers Trust** www.carers.org
- **Employers for Carers** www.employersforcarers.org

- **Carers UK**, Employers for Carers, Embrace-learning, *Supporting Carers at Work: A Line Managers' Guide*, 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: https://www.employersforcarers.org/files/pdfs/Who_Cares_Wins.pdf
- www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview
- <http://www.carers.org/local-service/flintshire/services/recognising-positive-employment-practices>



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