



You and your working carers

A guide for employers supporting unpaid carers in their employment





Contents

Introduction	page 3
Background information on working carers	Page 4
What are the issues for working carers	Page 5
Why should employers be concerned about working carers?	Page 6
What we can do as employers	Page 7
Carers Leeds – how can we help	Page 8
Useful contacts	Page 8



Introduction



This toolkit is designed to help employers effectively support their working carers, so they can approach the issues and challenges due to the increasing numbers of working carers in our workforces with confidence.

Coordinated by Carers Leeds we draw on the experience of our partner employers in Leeds who have shared their practical experiences of supporting their working carers, the successes and challenges they have faced. We also use the specialist knowledge and skills of Carers Leeds and national/regional carers organisations.

Who is the toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed to be used by any employer, irrespective of size, sector or scope. It is free to use for employers based in Leeds. Typically those accessing it will be managers, owners, team leaders, HR professionals, and diversity and welfare professionals.

This guide aims to benefit employers and managers of working carers. It aims to:

- provide useful and relevant information to organisations on the issues faced by working carers
- set out the reasons why working carers are important to organisations
- suggest ways to effectively support working carers
- provide information on Carers Leeds and what we do
- provide details of relevant contacts



Who is a carer?



A **carer** is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.

A **working carer** is someone who has caring responsibilities, but is also in paid employment.



How many working carers are there?

The number of working carers may be an under representation as employees are often reluctant to talk to managers about their caring responsibilities.

It is estimated that **1 in 9 employees** are caring for someone who is older, disabled or seriously ill.

Employees aged **45 to 54** are most likely to have caring responsibilities.

58% of working carers are female.

2 million people have given up work at some point to offer care and **3 million** have reduced their working hours.

There are over **70,000** carers and 35,000 working carers in Leeds.

It is anticipated that the number of working carers will continue to grow as people live longer, and the provision of social carer is limited.

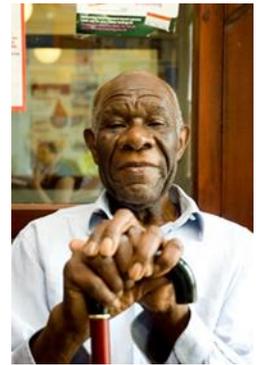




What are the issues for working carers?

Carers Leeds have carried out interviews with working carers and the main issues they say they face as working carers include:

- Time – the ability to organise and attend appointments, and other activities relating to person they are caring for. Most of these tend to take place during working hours which makes them hard to attend.
- The need to spend time at work on the phone or emailing support services for the person they are caring for.
- Priorities – working out what the priorities for the person they care for might be at any one time, whilst not being physically there with them.
- Distance – the fact that there is often a significant distance from the workplace, the carers home and the cared for persons home. There are also implications of travel methods and timings.
- Guilt – the dilemma over making priority decisions in favour of work rather than the person they are caring for.
- Conflict – between the needs of the cared for and the needs of the job.
- Juggling priorities – i.e. fitting the carer role in with the work role.
- Stress and work – excessive tiredness and stress whilst at work.



38% of working carers say they feel uncomfortable talking about their caring commitments and **35%** say that their employers do not understand the caring role.

One in six working carers gives up their work to care.



Why should employers be concerned about working carers?

There are three main reasons why employer recognition and understanding of the needs of working carers is important:

1. Business

- If employers want to keep their best employees they need to provide an appropriate work life balance strategy. In the case of carers this means that if they do not support and make allowances for workers who are carers, they risk these people leaving the business, with all the consequential loss of talent and experience, and cost of replacement. Most working carers are at stages of their career where they are highly skilled and knowledgeable and their departure would have a significant impact.
- Working carers who are not supported are likely to be more stressed and less productive, with higher levels of absence. They also can have a negative impact on the rest of the team.
- Good employers also understand that greater flexibility and support for their people with their out of work issues raises the internal engagement and commitment of the workforce.
- By being seen as a caring and flexible employer, the reputation of the company as an employer of choice is enhanced, allowing it to attract and keep the very best employees.

2. Moral/Corporate Social Responsibility

- Employers have a moral obligation to the workforce and community around them to support their employees where there are challenges and difficulties outside of work which affect their wellbeing at work. This is usually reflected in the values and culture of organisations, and the very best organisations take their moral responsibilities seriously.

3. Legal

- Employers have legal obligations under flexible working regulations which can link in with the demands on working carers. There are also obligations under equality legislation relating to disability which can apply to carers.

In summary, losing good employees unnecessarily, particularly in today's highly competitive labour market, is wasteful and costly.



How well do I, as an employer, support Working Carers?

If you are reading this toolkit, you will have some understanding of the need to support working carers in your organisation. It is sometimes useful to have a look at how effective we actually are in this area.

At Carers Leeds, with our business partners who are employers in the city, we have prepared a self assessment questionnaire which will give you an idea of how supportive you are of your working carers. This is attached to this toolkit.

What we can do as employers?

The key areas where we as employers can make a difference are:

1. Increase the understanding of working carers and their issues.
This involves the provision of training, awareness and information both for managers and team members about working carers and the impact this role has on individuals at work. This might include for instance how to recognise where carers priorities are conflicted, or where stress levels are raised.
2. Develop a formal Personalised Care Plan to accommodate the needs of working carers. Typically this might include the following:
 - Details of the caring responsibilities
 - Key caring issues to be aware of for the manager
 - Flexibility agreed for working hours
 - Process to be followed in an emergency
 - Contact details for other parties
 - Review periods with the manager
3. Align internal HR policies and process to include the needs of working carers
This might include for instance:
 - Developing a specific carers policy
 - Setting up internal Carers Networks and Forums, to provide a forum for working carers to support each other.
 - Develop flexible working arrangements for working carers
 - Apply a working carers “check” to any new policy or procedure
4. Use expert external advice and support from Carers Leeds.
This is both to inform managers about working carer issues but also to provide direct support to working carers. It means providing a service to employees which is independent, professional and confidential.
5. Ensure we comply with relevant legislation
In particular the Equality Act (for instance, as most working carers are women) and Flexible Working Regulations



Carers Leeds – how can we help?

Carers Leeds is the only organisation in Leeds which focusses on the needs of unpaid carers. We are a charity and provide professional information and support to help carers in their caring role.

Our mission is that employers will support working carers in the same way as they support employees with young children. To work towards this goal, we are working with employers in the Leeds area with the following exciting initiatives:

1. Helping to raise awareness of the issues affecting working carers, through training and information to organisations
2. Training and support for line managers to recognise and deal with the issues of working carers
3. Provision of specialist advice and support for working carers at work, by our trained Carer Support Workers
4. Advice and help with HR teams over including carers in their flexible working and other HR policies
5. Provision of a community and forum for carer friendly employers across the Leeds area.
6. Provision of a free on line digital carers toolkit from Carers UK for all SMEs in the City
7. Provision of a regularly updated employers toolkit for supporting working carers
8. Helping employers draw up personalised carer support plans for employees.

Contact Details

Local	Carers Leeds Website: www.carersleeds.org.uk Telephone number: 0113 380 4300	Leeds Adult Social Care Website: www.leeds.gov.uk Telephone number: 0113 222 4401
	National	Carers UK Website: www.carersuk.org.uk Telephone number: 0808 808 7777