



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network



Toolkit

SUPPORTING CARERS IN THE WORKPLACE

June 2024

A practical guide for employers



TOOLKIT

SUPPORTING CARERS IN THE WORKPLACE: A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

Caring is a significant issue for UK businesses. One in seven employees balance caring responsibilities with work, with hundreds giving up work every day when this is no longer possible. In order to attract and retain talent it is vital that employers provide effective support for employees with caring responsibilities, to allow them to balance their work with caring.

What is caring?

A carer is anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem, or an addiction, and cannot cope without their supportⁱ. This is separate from parental caring. Support is unpaid and it is often difficult for someone to identify the support they provide as caring. The NHS estimates that it takes someone an average of two years to acknowledge and identify their role as a carer.ⁱⁱ

Caring can include a wide range of support, including helping with personal care, shopping, meals and household chores, filling in forms, managing money, attending medical appointments and providing emotional support. Some carers may live with those they care for, while others may be caring at a distance.

Balancing work and care

As life expectancy has increased, supported by medical advancesⁱⁱⁱ, it is likely that every one of us will have caring responsibilities at some point in our lives. Therefore, many carers will need to juggle caring responsibilities with their work.

There are at least 2.5 million informal, unpaid carers in the UK workplace,^{iv} with more who do not yet identify as carers. Carers UK say that this represents one in seven employees.^v Moreover, three-quarters of working carers worry about being able to continue working, with an average of 600 working carers leaving work each day.^{vi} While carers can be any age, this is a particular issue for older workers and women. The peak age for caring is from 52 to 69,^{vii} and the majority of care is provided by women.^{viii}

The Business in the Community report [Who Cares? Transforming how we combine work with caring responsibilities](#) and survey found that 44 per cent of employees have caring responsibilities and four in ten of them are responsible for an adult of working age or older, or are providing 'sandwich care', i.e. care for both children and adults.

Although caring responsibilities are increasingly shared, we found that women still do more caring and that men still struggle to access support for caring. Employees caring for older adults are least likely to feel supported by their employer.^{ix}



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‘What would make the most difference? If caring for ageing parents was given the same status as caring for children.’ Respondent to BITC Who Cares? Survey. ^x

The importance of the role of working carers has been recognised by the government, with the introduction of the Carers Leave Act, in 2024.^{xi} This provides carers one week’s unpaid Carer’s Leave each year. Leading employers have been providing Carers Leave and other support before this year, going beyond the new legislative minimum e.g. providing paid Carers Leave, recognising that supporting carers in the workplace is good for business.

The business case for supporting carers

Use this business case to build support for your carers strategy at senior levels. Supporting carers in your workplace can help to:

- **Improve productivity:** employers who have policies in place to support carers see improved service delivery, cost savings and increased productivity.^{xii}
- **Reduce turnover costs:** Balancing care with work can be difficult and, without support, many carers end up leaving work altogether, particularly if they do not receive support from their employer.^{xiii}
- **Retain skills and reduce recruitment costs:** The peak age for caring at 50 to 69^{xiv} is when many will have developed valuable skills, experience, knowledge and personal and professional networks, which are lost if a caring employee leaves work.^{xv}
- **Close the gender pay gap:** the majority of carers are female^{xvi}, so supporting them to stay in work and balance caring with progression at work can support gender diversity goals and contribute towards reducing the gender pay gap. Women aged between 50 and 59 have the highest pay gap^{xvii}, with the peak age for caring at 50-69.^{xviii}
- **Retain older workers and reap the rewards of multigenerational working:** helping older workers manage their caring responsibilities,

alongside work, enables them to continue working for longer. This can help to increase age diversity and build an efficient, productive and innovative multigenerational workforce.^{xix}

Recommendations for Employer Action

When shaping support for working carers, the best approach is to be ‘carer friendly’ enabling carers to respond as and when they need to.^{xx}

1. **Develop a carers policy and provide Carers Leave:** a third of working carers have said that their employer does not provide any support for carers,^{xxi} but from April 2024 it has been a legal requirement to provide a week’s unpaid Carers Leave.^{xxii} Consider whether you can provide any additional carers leave or whether you might be able to offer paid carers leave. Leading employers provide more support for carers than the statutory minimum.
2. **Offer flexible working to working carers:** Embed and normalise a flexible working culture across the organisation. Nine in ten working carers say that flexible working is the most important employment adjustment.^{xxiii} Ensure it is seen as a business solution for all teams and employees. Train and empower line managers on how to manage flexible working and explore the other ways they can support carers in their teams. BITC’s new [Inclusive Flexible Working toolkit](#) will help you do this.
3. **Set up a Carers Network:** Developing a peer-led employee Carers Network with a senior level champion or chair or encouraging staff to become ‘Carer Champions’, can encourage support between carers, management and other employees, plus increase the visibility of carers, create role models and promote the balancing of work and caring. Business in the Community can help you to do this – contact your relationship manager or our [Advisory Services](#). Non-members can contact us via [our website](#).
4. **Provide information and support for caring employees:** a carers online portal will provide information and resources and can signpost carers towards support from your EAP,

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external advisory services and local authorities. Encourage a 'speak up' culture to enable carers to talk about their needs and consider using the Carers Passport to support carers moving between teams.^{xxiv} Raise awareness about carers' roles across your workforce and share stories of carers at all levels in the organisation, to enable employees to self-identify as carers and increase understanding and empathy.

5 Offer mid-life MOTs: mid-life MOTs provide the opportunity for employees in the later stages of their careers to have a conversation about their job, wellbeing and future finances. Planning on how to navigate transitions, such as becoming a carer, can be effectively managed. Through a series of conversations in group discussions, seminars, workshops, one to ones and online platforms, employees gain clarity and confidence about how to shape their future at work. Our [toolkit](#) shows you how to do this.

6 Collect data and insights: Collect and analyse data on carers in your organisation – [we can help you do this](#). Set goals and monitor progress – you could consider overall numbers, engagement, characteristics, retention, recruitment and development. Using surveys and focus groups will help you deepen your understanding of the needs of your caring workforce. If you have a carers network, this can help to collect data and insights too. Use insights to inform your policy development and improvement. Our [Age Friendly Employer toolkit](#) and accompanying guide [Getting Started on Age: from data to action](#) provide tips on analysing data and gathering employee insights.

BITC Member Case Studies

SUPPORTING CARERS AT WORK: CENTRICA

Business in the Community member Centrica are passionate about supporting carers at work, with a carers leave policy and carers' employee network, offering vital peer support to colleagues, plus engagement in awareness raising within the company, in the media and with key stakeholders including Carers UK.

Centrica's Carers' Leave Policy allows individuals to match their annual leave entitlement with Paid Carers' Leave of up to 30 days. This allows employees to juggle their annual leave, work and care responsibilities in a way that works for them. On average, Centrica employees with caring responsibilities take just over three days of 'paid, matched carers leave' each year. The designated leave aims to help employees meet their caring commitments and maintain an active career.

Centrica estimates they have saved £1.8 million a year by supporting their people with a flexible carer policy and peer support, achieved by avoiding unplanned absences and higher productivity, with further financial savings achieved through increased colleague retention.

SUPPORTING CARERS AT WORK: AVIVA

Business in the Community member Aviva have a generous parental leave policy, but also understand that employees with informal caring responsibilities are just as likely to need help and flexibility as parents with young children and so decided to help them in the same way.

Aviva's carer policy, introduced in 2017, gives carers paid leave of 35 hours a year for planned events and a further 35 hours for emergencies, plus the same entitlement to unpaid leave as parents with dependent children.

Aviva also supports its carers policies with awareness raising campaigns, use of carers passports, and a carers network for informal carers, which has spearheaded recent development of Aviva's carers policies.

Resources and Links

Business in the Community has a wide range of resources and member services which can help you to support carers in your workplace. Below are some examples, and you can find more on our [website](#). Contact your relationship manager for more information. Non-members can find details about how to [join us](#) on our website.

[Who Cares? Transforming how we combine work with caring responsibilities](#)

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[Inclusive Flexible Working toolkit](#)

[The Mid-Life MOT: helping employees navigate mid-life](#)

[Becoming an Age Friendly Employer toolkit](#)

[Getting Started on Age: from data to action](#)

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You might also like to:

- Find out more about our [age](#) and [gender](#) work
- [Learn more about our advisory services](#)
- [Join us for one of our upcoming events](#)



Talk to one of our expert team today to learn how membership of BITC can help you take your responsible business journey further, and drive lasting global change.

ⁱ NHS England 'Who is a carer?' <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/comm-carers/carers/>

ⁱⁱ *ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ Kings Fund (2024) 'What is happening to life expectancy in England' <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/long-reads/whats-happening-life-expectancy-england#:~:text=Life%20expectancy%20recovered%20partially%20thereafter,below%202019%20pre%20pandemic%20levels.>

^{iv} Carers UK 'Key facts and figures about caring' <https://www.carersuk.org/policy-and-research/key-facts-and-figures/>

^v Carers UK (2019) 'Juggling work and unpaid care' <https://www.carersuk.org/reports/juggling-work-and-unpaid-care/>

^{vi} *ibid*

^{vii} ONS 2019 'Living Longer: caring in later working life' <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/livinglongerhowourpopulationischangingandwhyitmatters/2019-03-15>

^{viii} *ibid*

^{ix} Business in the Community (2022) 'Who Cares? Transforming how we combine work with caring responsibilities' [Who Cares? - Business in the Community \(bitc.org.uk\)](#)

^x *ibid*

^{xi} GOV.UK 'Unpaid Carer's Leave' <https://www.gov.uk/carers-leave>

^{xii} Carers UK for Employers for Carers/Department of Health Task and Finish Group (2013) Employers Business Benefits Survey.

Available at: <http://www.employersforcarers.org/resources/research/item/809-employers-business-benefits-survey>

^{xiii} Carers UK (2019) 'Juggling work and unpaid care' <https://www.carersuk.org/reports/juggling-work-and-unpaid-care/>

^{xiv} ONS 2019 'Living Longer: caring in later working life' <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/livinglongerhowourpopulationischangingandwhyitmatters/2019-03-15>

^{xv} *ibid*

^{xvi} *ibid*

^{xvii} TUC (2024) 'TUC: Gender pay gap means women work first two months of the year unpaid' <https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/tuc-gender-pay-gap-means-women-work-first-two-months-year-unpaid#:~:text=Women%20aged%20between%2050%20and,gender%20pay%20gap%20of%202018.1%25>

^{xviii} *ibid*

^{xix} Business in the Community (2020) 'Becoming an Age Friendly Employer' <https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/becoming-an-age-friendly-employer/>

^{xx} CIPD (2021) 'Supporting working carers' <https://www.cipd.org.uk/knowledge/reports/supporting-working-carers/>

^{xxi} Carers UK (2019) 'Juggling work and unpaid care' <https://www.carersuk.org/reports/juggling-work-and-unpaid-care/>

^{xxii} GOV.UK 'Unpaid Carer's Leave' <https://www.gov.uk/carers-leave>

^{xxiii} Carers UK (2019) 'Juggling work and unpaid care' <https://www.carersuk.org/reports/juggling-work-and-unpaid-care/>

^{xxiv} GOV.UK: Carers Passport <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carers-passport>