

Employees with caring responsibilities

Best practice ideas



Guide for Employers

How to support employees with caring responsibilities

These are ideas which employers of different sizes and in different sectors have successfully introduced. Whatever support for carers that you offer, promote it widely and regularly to ensure your employees are aware of, and can access, it.

1. Carer's leave

- ▶ A number of days' fully paid dedicated carer's leave each year, over and above annual leave. Some employers offer up to ten.
- ▶ A number of days' fully paid carer's leave each year, matched by a day from the employee's leave allowance (you might offer a mixture of dedicated leave and matched, to maximise this support).
- ▶ A number of days of unpaid carer's leave.

Carer's leave can be used when the carer needs to be with the person they care for:

- during a bout of poor physical and/or emotional health, or whilst they recuperate;
- in order to oversee any required adaptations to the home environment;
- to attend a medical or non-medical appointment.

Or they might need the leave for themselves, to rest and recover after a period of intense caring.

2. Manager training

Managers often worry about saying or doing the wrong thing, or are uncertain how to implement carer policies fairly. Many carer-friendly employers invest in training – face to face or virtual – to build confidence and embed a carer-friendly culture.

3. Carer passport

This can be as simple as a note on file which records your conversation with your employee about what flexibility they need in order to combine work and care. This conversation involves balancing the

needs of the individual with the needs of the business, within existing company policies. The 'passport' provides a straightforward way to document flexibility and support so it can be carried into an employee's future roles, perhaps with a new manager, without having to repeat the same conversations.

4. Jointly app

Jointly is an app developed by Carers UK that enables simple communication and coordination between those who share the care with your employee. There is a small cost to the user, but many employers now pay for it directly as a carer benefit.

The app combines group messaging with other useful features including to-do and medication lists, and is a simple and practical solution which has been developed by carers for carers.

You can find out more at <https://www.carersuk.org/search/jointly-app>.

5. Mentoring/buddying

Individual peer-to-peer support, from one carer to another, can help to retain someone, particularly when they have just become a carer and wonder whether and how they will be able to combine work and caring. This is most often organised via an employee network or forum.

6. Employee network/forum

A network or forum supports carers, as well as raising awareness of their needs and promoting an understanding of their roles. It enables peer-to-peer practical and emotional support, giving carers the confidence to seek help when they need it. Carers become more visible, raising awareness among all staff about caring and challenging negative attitudes. A network also enables you to promote and explain the support you offer, and to seek the collective views of carers, so that you can embed carer needs in your policies, and promote carer-friendly behaviour.

7. Priority car parking

A simple idea which can make a world of difference to a carer who has to respond to an emergency call from home: their car always parked as close to the workplace entrance as possible can save vital time and promotes peace of mind.

8. Signposting

Make it easy for carers to find the support they need outside work. There are many organisations which can help; the key ones are included on a separate factsheet within this pack, for you to distribute to staff.

9. Wellbeing and counselling services

You can seek external support for your carers via the many commercial employee assistance programmes (EAPs) which are available. They may be able to provide counselling services too. Internally, your occupational health team can be tasked to develop specific support for carers.

10. Access to phone

In some workplaces and some roles, employees do not routinely have access to a phone during working hours. A policy that permits a carer to have access to a phone at all times – whether their personal mobile or a nominated number on the premises – provides peace of mind and enables the carer to concentrate on work.