

Supporting carers in the workplace



In association with



The Prince's
Responsible
Business Network



Carers at work What you need to know



6.5m

people in the UK
are carers

One in seven people
juggle working and
unpaid caring



Nearly **half a million** people
have given up
work over the
past two years
as a result of
caring – that's

600

people every day

Why caring matters

Society today is undergoing a transformation that will change the way we all live.

An ageing population coupled with a higher retirement age means that people are now living – and working – for longer. One of the main consequences of this shift is that more people than ever before are having to juggle work with caring for a family member or friend.

Today, it is estimated that one in seven¹ of the UK's workforce are unpaid carers – and this number is only going to grow. For many, this responsibility comes with significant pressures, from financial strain to emotional stress and physical exhaustion. Without the right support, combining caring with working can be incredibly difficult – so much so that 600 people every day find themselves having to give up work in order to care².

Caring can present huge challenges for businesses too. Without support, employees who are balancing caring with working can struggle to perform well in the workplace or – even worse – drop out of the workforce altogether, resulting in the loss of experienced and skilled staff.

Adopting carer-friendly policies and practices can help address this, keeping valuable skills and expertise in the workforce and increasing productivity. So supporting employees with caring responsibilities isn't just the right thing to do – it's also something that makes good business sense, and helps companies meet the productivity challenge outlined in the government's Industrial Strategy.

At Centrica, we're passionate about supporting carers in our workplace. We've worked with Carers UK for the past 15 years to develop a paid carers' leave policy and a carers' employee network offering offering vital peer support to our colleagues – but we want to do more.

Last year, we announced a three-year partnership with Carers UK to build on our commitment and to highlight this critical issue. Together, we want to put the spotlight on working carers, raise awareness of the challenges of juggling work and care, share what we've learnt, and promote the benefits of supporting carers in the workplace.

In association with Business in the Community (BITC), we're on a mission to encourage and help the business community increase support for working carers. We want to bring together employers who are already doing great things in this space, alongside others that want to do more, so that together we can explore solutions, share learnings and create a better environment for working carers everywhere.

Together we can develop the workplace of the future – one in which **no one is forced to choose between their career and caring**



The impact of juggling work and care

Today's carers face huge pressures, ranging from financial strain to emotional stress and physical exhaustion.

In 2018, nearly three out of four carers in the UK said they had suffered mental ill health, and 61% said they had suffered physical ill health as a result of caring³. Carers providing round the clock care are more than twice as likely to be in bad health as non-carers. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that 2.6 million people have now given up work so that they can care⁴ for a family member or friend.

But leaving work or reducing hours to care has serious financial implications, both in the short and longer term. The New Policy Institute found that 1.2 million unpaid carers are in poverty in the UK⁵, while 37% said they were struggling to make ends meet in Carers UK's State of Caring survey⁶.

Losing carers from the workforce is also a significant challenge for employers. Nine out of ten working carers are over the age of 30, and the majority are over the age of 45⁷. Very often they are the most skilled and experienced staff in an organisation – the people businesses least want to lose. If these people work less efficiently, or worse, are forced to leave the workforce, this has huge implications for employers.

Many organisations have taken important steps towards supporting working carers through carer-friendly policies like carers' leave or flexible working policies – but there's still more that we as employers can do.

Carer-friendly workplace cultures are what really support working carers. This means improving line managers' understanding and flexibility, particularly for those in customer-facing roles. It also means raising awareness of working carers and providing senior role models – 37% of employees with caring responsibilities told BITC it's important to see and hear about senior managers balancing work and caring responsibilities, but only 7% feel that they have.⁹

It is estimated that the direct cost to an employer of losing a working carer is between 100% and 150% of their annual salary.⁸

As employers, it's so important that we nurture this type of inclusive culture. We must pro-actively support our employee carers – or we'll keep seeing a decline in productivity and an exodus of talent from this crucial group.

What makes the biggest difference to carers in the workplace?

New research from Carers UK¹⁰ identifies the support workers would find most useful, imagining they were providing unpaid care:

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| <p>1 A supportive employer and understanding line manager</p> | <p>2 Flexible working</p> | <p>3 Paid carers' leave of between 5 –10 days per year</p> |
| <p>4 Long-term unpaid carers' leave</p> | <p>5 Signposting information and advice</p> | <p>6 Peer support network</p> |

We estimate that UK companies could **save up to £4.8 billion every year** through avoiding unplanned absences and a further **£3.4 billion** through improved employee retention by adopting flexible working policies to support those with caring responsibilities.¹⁴



The business case for a carer-friendly workplace

The societal case for a carer-friendly workplace is obvious – but we believe the business case is equally clear.

A Carers UK study of over 200 British businesses highlighted some of the benefits experienced by employers who supported carers in the workplace:

- 92% saw better staff retention
- 88% experienced lower absence
- 69% observed higher productivity
- 61% witnessed improved recruitment¹¹

To help prove the business case for carer-friendly workplaces, we've recently calculated the financial saving made by supporting our people with a flexible carer policy and peer support:

- Estimated saving of **£1.8 million a year** by avoiding unplanned absences and presenteeism (working while unwell or not fully performing) due to caring responsibilities.¹²
- Further cumulative savings of **£1.3 million** through increased retention by supporting colleagues to stay in work while they care for loved ones.¹³

On average, Centrica carers take just 3.4 days of matched care leave each year.

At Centrica, we've had an equally positive experience. We offer paid carers' leave of up to six weeks for our colleagues who care. Despite the substantial paid leave available via this policy, we've found that the average amount of carers' leave taken is just 3.4 matched days per year. Instead of taking intermittent bouts of carers' leave, we've found that our employees prefer to work with their line managers to agree flexible working arrangements that help them balance their longer term work and care commitments – and we've created a culture in which they're able to do this.

These figures are significant for us – but imagine if similar flexible working policies were adopted by businesses across the UK.

£3.1 million is the estimated financial saving Centrica has made by avoiding unplanned absences and improving employee retention, by supporting our people with a flexible carer policy and peer support.

Creating a carer-friendly workplace at Centrica

We believe that we have to do everything possible to support employees with caring responsibilities to stay in work and progress their careers.

Supporting our people's health and well-being is the right thing to do for them – and it also means better service for our customers and a more successful business.

Over the past 15 years, we've introduced a range of carer-friendly policies and practices to help support our employees, including:

1. Paid carers' leave for all

We've extended our paid carers' leave policy to all Centrica colleagues globally so they can take up to six weeks of paid carers' leave. This includes an initial 10 days paid carers' leave, followed by another two weeks of discretionary leave, matched with two weeks annual leave. The roll out of line manager training globally will help our managers know the policy and its benefits, so they can make sure its applied fairly.

2. Flexible working

The key to being able to manage working and caring effectively for many employees is the ability to work flexibly and discuss their needs with their line manager at different stages in their care journey. We offer the right to request flexible working from day one, including offering reduced or alternative hours, as well as working from home where practicable.

3. Carers' employee network

One in three employees who are caring and working at the same time have felt lonely or isolated in the workplace as a result¹⁵. To help with this, our carers' employee network offers vital emotional and practical support to more than 1,100 Centrica carers across 16 locations. This includes critical peer support when people need it most, from being there for a conversation to helping people find information and advice, both within Centrica and beyond.

4. MyCare employee assistance line

Invaluable free advice and assistance is provided by independent counsellors to employees and family members.

5. Mental health first aiders

We've recruited and trained more than 300 mental health first aiders across our sites and field teams. They're on hand to provide a friendly face and encourage employees to open up and seek any support they might need. This is vitally important for carers, who might be experiencing mental health issues as a result of their role.

Centrica's new global care leave policy

Our new paid carers' leave policy will give employees more **paid-for leave** without using annual leave allowances, so they can meet their caring responsibilities. We're now offering 10 days paid carers' leave, followed by another two weeks matched with two weeks annual leave. This means **our employees can access up to six weeks of paid carers' leave in total.**



“My name's Lynne and I've worked at Centrica for nearly 20 years. I looked after my mum when she had Alzheimer's, and I now also care for my dad. Mum needed proper care and she wouldn't co-operate with people around her. It took its toll emotionally. I had to have a lot of time off last year because we couldn't find her a care home, then my dad had a stroke and I just couldn't cope.

My manager enabled me to stay working – she has been so understanding and flexible, she's like a guardian angel. To have a caring policy is just a piece of paper but to have people who embody that policy is worth its weight in gold. Being part of the carers' network means I can talk to people when I'm having a bad day too. These things are what made the difference to me and kept me going.

Lynne Pool, Developer

Carers UK – campaigning for change

Carers UK is committed to making life better for the 6.5 million carers in the UK. It has been campaigning for carers' rights for the past 50 years, and provides crucial connections and support for carers – a vital part of which is the support carers receive at work.

Employers for Carers:

Employers for Carers, Carers UK's business forum, supports employers across the UK to develop carer-friendly workplaces. It has twin aims of supporting businesses and their employees' wellbeing – increasingly important in our ageing society.

With 120 employer members and a reach of more than 1.7 million employees, Employers for Carers provides practical information and advice to organisations, whilst also promoting the business case for this increasingly important issue.

Employers for Carers has developed a benchmarking scheme, called **Carer Confident**, which allows employers to robustly benchmark their organisation to develop and sustain support for carers within the workplace. Employers who successfully demonstrate that they've built an inclusive workplace for carers receive a certificate of achievement.

The Scottish Government in partnership with Carers Scotland has developed an employer recognition scheme, called Carer Positive, awarded to employers in Scotland who value and support carers in their workplace.

Centrica and Carers UK partnership:

Carers UK and Centrica have joined forces in a three-year partnership to improve the lives of the UK's 6.5 million carers. As part of this, we want to help one million carers stay in, or return to, work by 2030. We'll do this by leading by example to help more carers manage working and caring; encouraging and helping the business community to create carer-friendly workplaces and advocating for the introduction of paid carers' leave with the UK government.

A right to paid carers' leave:

A right to paid carers' leave has been identified by carers as one of the most helpful workplace interventions. However, Carers UK has identified that the UK is trailing other countries in how it sets statutory entitlements to carers' leave. Supported by Centrica, Carers UK is calling on the Government to introduce paid carers' leave of five to ten days for all companies.

Carers UK estimate that paid carers' leave of at least five days per year could save the UK economy around £3.5 billion a year.¹⁶



BITC – Building more inclusive workplaces

Business in the Community (BITC) is the oldest and largest business-led membership organisation dedicated to responsible business, of which Centrica is a member.

BITC is committed to helping employers understand the challenges and opportunities of an ageing population – something they believe is vital to create productive, innovative and inclusive multi-generational teams, as we all lead longer working lives.

By 2025 it's predicted that there will be a million more workers aged over 50, and 300,000 fewer under the age of 30¹⁷. This means more people are likely to find themselves balancing working and caring – and there will be more employers seeking the valuable skills and expertise of older workers. We need to prepare for this now, and BITC believes employer's hold the key to change.

BITC's Age at Work campaign aims to build workplaces that can help employers realise the huge benefits of a multi-generational workforce, and to create environments in which age does not limit an employee's success.

As part of the campaign, BITC wants employers to recognise the invaluable skills carers bring to the workplace, and to introduce Mid-life MOTs to help employees make informed choices about how to balance their work and other responsibilities in the future.

Today, only one in five people over 50 feel that they can talk openly with their employer about adjusting their job to suit their needs¹⁸. We need to change this, and we need to make sure we can retain valuable talent from this skilled, experienced group. This is how we can build a more inclusive workforce – one that's fit for the future.

Mid-life MOTS

Mid-life MOTs are a great way to support employees, including those with caring responsibilities, to stay in the workforce and continue to progress their careers.

The mid-life MOT is a programme of conversations covering work, wealth and health which helps people to make informed choices for their future. **With the right support, employees can navigate the transitions and challenges of mid-life and remain in work.**

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- ³ Carers Week (2018) Supporting Carers to be Healthy and Connected
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- ⁵ New Policy Institute (2016) Informal carers & poverty in the UK
- ⁶ Carers UK (2018) State of Caring Survey
- ⁷ Census 2011
- ⁸ Efc/HMG (2013) Supporting Working Carers: The Benefits to Families, Business and the Economy. The Corporate Leadership Council estimates that the cumulative costs to an employer of an employee leaving work are equal to an employee's last salary, while Hay Group suggests it could cost anywhere from 50–150% of their salary
- ⁹ BITC (2018) Equal Lives
- ¹⁰ YouGov polling, commissioned by Carers UK (2019) Juggling work and unpaid care
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- ¹² Centrica internal data
- ¹³ Centrica internal data
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- ¹⁶ CiPD (2019) Megatrends: Flexible working
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- ¹⁸ Centre for Ageing Better (2018) Age discrimination in the workplace. Statistics from YouGov research

Top tips for creating a carer-friendly workplace

1

Introduce carer-friendly policies and flexible working practices

Paid carers' leave and flexible working are amongst the solutions proven to help carers stay in work. Commit to putting the right policies, procedures and practices in place and join Employers for Carers to get practical advice and support implementing this.

2

Create a positive and inclusive culture for carers

A supportive employer and an understanding line manager are the top things carers say they want. Encourage an open and accepting workplace in which people can thrive by being themselves and talking about life outside work. Go further by offering access to practical and emotional support through a peer network that gives carers the confidence to seek help.

3

Share positive stories and celebrate role models

Many carers don't recognise themselves as a carer and some worry that sharing this part of their life will affect their career. Tell positive stories about carers in your workplace to break down stigmas and celebrate positive role models.

4

Communication and training are key

Make it simple and easy for people to understand what support is on offer for carers in your organisation, including whether any existing policies apply to carers. Good communication of carer policies and training for line managers are essential for success.