

Top Tips for Supporting Working Carers

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Top Tips for Supporting Working Carers has been produced by Think Local Act Personal in partnership with ADASS Yorkshire & Humberside, and ADASS North West Regions. The tips were developed collaboratively by participants at a series of workshops looking at good practice in supporting working carers. The project was facilitated by Exploring Opportunities, a small independent company. An in-depth report 'Supporting Working Carers' has been produced alongside the Top Tips. The report can be found on the TLAP website.

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Top tips for supporting working carers

This short document has been developed for employers, to highlight the issues surrounding working carers and how supporting them effectively can be good for business. The top tips detail actions employers can take to ensure that carers are supported within the workplace.

Who are working carers?

A working carer is someone in full or part-time employment, who also provides unpaid support, or who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their age, physical or mental illness, or disability.

Why supporting carers works for your business?

Supporting carers to remain in work by embedding flexible working approaches and effective support structures, brings significant benefits to both carers and their families, businesses and the wider economy.

Employers for Carers (2013), set out a business case for supporting working carers. It highlights the benefits of supporting working carers which include:

- Attracting and retaining staff
- Reducing stress, sick leave and absenteeism
- Reducing recruitment and training costs
- Increasing resilience and productivity
- Improving service delivery
- Producing cost savings
- Improving people management and staff morale (*ibid.*)

“Far from compromising business objectives, research shows that recognising caring and adopting a flexible approach achieves impressive business results.” (ibid.)

The data regarding the prevalence of caring roles and the impact on the ability of working carers to maintain their employment, is compelling and businesses need to be aware of the impact on their productivity when this is not managed effectively.

Key Facts

- An estimated 137.3 million working days were lost due to sickness or injury in the UK in 2016 (Comer, 2017). According to ONS statistics, this equates to 4.3 days per worker over the course of a year (ibid.), costing employers an average of £16 billion (Personnel Today, 2015). In addition, estimated costs for replacing individual staff members who leave, amount to approximately £30,614 per employee, including lost output, recruitment and the timescales for upskilling new staff (Oxford Economics, 2014). A recent study by the London School of Economics (Pickard, 2012) concludes that:

“Carers leaving employment also involves high costs to the public purse. The study shows that the public expenditure costs of carers leaving employment in England amount to around £1.3 billion a year.”

- Recent research from the CIPD (2016) suggests that the private sector is likely to rank home/family/carer responsibilities among their top causes of absence. This highlights the importance of understanding working carers, along with the need to support this group and the outcomes that can be achieved from doing so.
- 1 in 9 workers in the UK are caring for another person, and 6,000 people every day become carers for another individual. This number is expected to grow in the forthcoming years (Carers UK, 2013).
- 2.3m people in the UK have given up work at some point in order to care for a loved one, and nearly 3m people have reduced their working hours (ibid).
- As the population ages, the number of people becoming carers will grow. In addition, changes in the retirement age mean that more people will be juggling work and caring and at an older age (Employers for Carers, 2013).
- Most carers fall within the 50-64 age bracket (Carers UK, 2015). People in this age group often have significant skills and have accrued a wealth of professional experience which would be a substantial loss to an employer (ibid).
- Carers UK (2016) identified that 38% of employee respondents who balance care and work are uncomfortable discussing their caring duties in the workplace, and 35% feel that their employer does not understand their caring role.
- Organisations that have begun to support working carers more effectively are showing some impressive results. The Employers for Carers business case (2013) outlines some useful case studies which bring to life how businesses can benefit from actively supporting working carers.
- By making a concerted effort to support working carers in a more effective way, organisations such as Centrica estimate potential cost savings of £2.5m through increased staff retention, whilst BT claims to have achieved a potential £5m in savings through a 21% productivity increase by reducing workplace stress and absenteeism (ibid). These savings highlight the impact that supporting working carers can have.



Top tips for employers

- 1) Get to know which of your employees are working carers.
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- 2) Identify leaders for working carers within your organisation.
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- 3) Develop and/or review your workplace support and policies, in order to ensure that they are flexible, responsive and explicitly support working carers.
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- 4) Ensure that support is in place and is clearly communicated to all staff.
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- 5) Equip your managers to support working carers and make sure they do so!
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- 6) Create opportunities for working carers to support one another.
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- 7) Ensure job opportunities and promotions are flexible, and support applications from working carers.
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- 8) Monitor, evaluate and review your approaches to supporting working carers.
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- 9) Communicate clearly that you are a working carer friendly employer, and what additional support you offer.

1

Get to know which of your employees are working carers

What do you need to know?

Why is this important?

- Understanding your workforce helps to build a resilient business/organisation and helps to ensure business continuity.
- Enables you to target support to where it is needed, and reduce costs.
- Helps to retain staff and cut costs in recruitment, and the training of new staff.
- Helps to retain specialist skills in your workforce.

How can you do this?

- Train managers to understand the role of carers and ensure they discuss caring roles with individual team members.
- Raise the profile of working carers in team meetings, intranet and staff newsletters.
- Include an awareness of working carers within recruitment monitoring processes and internal employee surveys.

2

Identify leaders for working carers within your organisation

What Needs to be in Place?

Why is this important?

- Identifying leaders and champions at a senior level, establishes credibility for the issues within your organisation.
- Leaders will promote the culture shift that's needed.
- All managers and employees need to understand the issues and the benefits of supporting working carers to ensure it becomes business as usual.

How can you do this?

- Identify champions at all levels to support and advocate for working carers.
- Make links between working carer networks and named 'Champions' at a strategic and operational level.
- Include working carers issues in supervision/team meetings and personal development reviews where relevant.
- Regular reports on the impact of the implementation of relevant strategies and policies.

3

What Needs to be in Place?

Develop and/or review your workplace support and policies, in order to ensure that they are flexible, responsive and explicitly support working carers

Why is this important?

- Helps to attract and retain working carers and their skills, knowledge and experience.
- Helps managers to provide appropriate support.
- Improves workplace relations and team cohesion.

How can you do this?

- Develop contingency plans, flexible working practices and practical support to ensure business continuity.
- Regularly audit and review policies and/or workplace support to ensure that they support working carers e.g. flexible working.
- Involve working carers in reviewing and developing policies to ensure that they are fit for purpose.
- Promote policies that support working carers to continue in work e.g. on the intranet, job adverts.

4

What Needs to be in Place?

Ensure that support is in place and is clearly communicated to all staff

Why is this important?

- Helps ensure working carers feel supported and valued, leading to greater staff retention.
- Ensures all managers are aware of the support available and can refer staff to the appropriate policy.
- Working carers know where they can seek support.

How can you do this?

- Opt in to an Employee Assistance Package (including financial education training).
- Regular targeted communication to staff about resources, support and practical information that is available and how to access it.

5

Equip your managers to support working carers and make sure they do so!

What Needs to be in Place?

Why is this important?

- Keeps your business productive through minimising sickness/absence and reducing stress levels of carers.
- Increases employee loyalty, staff retention, team cohesiveness and productivity.
- Managers understand the individual's situation and what support will be helpful.

How can you do this?

- Communicate the support available for working carers effectively to all managers, including internal and external resources.
- If the person must take time off, ensure a practical and supportive return to work plan is in place.
- Provide training so that managers can deal with issues that arise effectively and sensitively.

6

What Needs to be in Place?

Create opportunities for working carers to support one another

Why is this important?

- Provides cost effective support to working carers.
- Providing access to support structures enables the working carer to feel valued, reduces stress levels and maintains productivity and effectiveness.
- Working carers feel supported by people who understand the challenges of continuing to work whilst balancing caring responsibilities.

How can you do this?

- Develop (virtual or face to face) Peer to Peer Networks for working carers including intranet discussion forums.
- Develop (virtual or face to face) Peer to Peer Networks for managers to share learning and develop solutions and provide consistency across the business.
- Ensure Peer to Peer support is promoted and encouraged through effective policies and training.

7

What Needs to be in Place?

Ensure job opportunities and promotions are flexible, and support applications from working carers

Why is this important?

- Fosters talent and supports the more effective utilisation of employees' skills and abilities.
- Reduces business continuity risks and can increase productivity.
- Creates improved staff satisfaction and loyalty to the organisation.

How can you do this?

- Ask working carers about the barriers that they experience in applying for new roles, and utilise the principles of 'reasonable adjustment' to support their career development.
- Be flexible when you are recruiting, including how you write job adverts, where you advertise and what working arrangements are possible in the role.
- Ensure that the staff responsible for recruitment understand the benefits of employing working carers.
- Ensure working carers have access to the full range of opportunities for skills, professional development, staff training, and career progression.

8

Monitor, evaluate and review your approaches to supporting working carers

Maintaining the Momentum

Why is this important?

- Ensures that your approach is working and allows you to make appropriate changes.
- Helps to build organisational resilience.
- Maintains a productive and responsive business.

How can you do this?

- Evaluate, monitor and review your activities with working carers e.g. through regular meetings and feedback mechanisms.
- Produce an annual report to the senior team/ board and working carers groups, on the effectiveness of your approach.
- Include in your Annual Employee survey.

Communicate clearly that you are a working carer friendly employer, and what additional support you offer

Why is this important?

- Helps you to become an 'Employer of Choice'.
- Helps recruit and retain skilled and committed individuals to your business.
- Minimises recruitment and training costs.

How can you do this?

- Communicate a strategic 'Statement of Intent' that identifies support for working carers including on your website and social media pages.
- Include the 'Statement of Intent' in job adverts, staff communications and marketing materials.
- Celebrate and publicise your success.

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Think Local Act Personal

Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) is a national strategic partnership of more than 50 organisations committed to supporting the continued implementation of personalisation and community-based health, care and support.

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