

GOLTC Employment, Education and Family Care Interest Group

# Supporting carers in the workplace: a policy and practice perspective from the UK

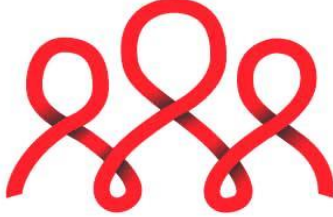
10 February 2025

Katherine Wilson,  
Head of Employment and Specialist Delivery  
Carers UK

**Carers UK is here to make life better for carers**



**We give expert advice,**  
information and support



**We connect carers so**  
no-one has to care alone



**We campaign together**  
for lasting change



**We innovate** to find new  
ways to reach and  
support carers



# Content of this presentation



- **Policy context** in the UK including facts about carers and employment
- **Legal rights** of carers in the workplace and potential next steps
- **Good practice** developments and what helps

# Numbers of 'working carers' in the UK

- Census 2021 estimates **3 million carers** in paid employment
- Carers UK's research suggests that number may be even higher – around **1 in 7** in any workplace
- Gender balance; **women** have a **50/50 chance** of providing care by age **46** (for men, age 57)
- Sectoral differences: **32%** of **National Health Service** staff provide unpaid care
- Fluctuations: University of Sheffield found that 1.9 million people in employment became carers every year between 2010 and 2020 – **5,300 workers every day**

# Impacts of caring on work

- **Working below potential**, including reducing working hours and giving up career opportunities
- **Stress** of doing ‘two jobs’ if unsupported – a key reason carers give up work or reduce working hours
- **Giving up work** – 2.6 million people have given up work to care, around **600 people a day** in recent years



# Carers' priorities for workplace support



- **Understanding**
  - Top of the list of what carers say they need from a manager or employer is a **recognition** and understanding of their situation
- **Flexibility**
  - Flexible working and flexible **leave** arrangements
- **Information**
  - **Signposting** to information and support, including workplace provisions and external organisations that can help with caring

# Carers' legal rights at work



- Right to **time off in emergencies** to care for **dependants**
- Right to request **flexible working**
- **Parental leave** and shared parental leave
- Protection from **discrimination** (Equality Act 2010)
- Right to **carer's leave** for planned commitments (Carer's Leave Act 2023)

# Carer's Leave Act 2023



- New right to take up to **five days' unpaid leave** to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need
- Available from first day of employment
- Leave can be taken flexibly for **planned** and **foreseen** caring commitments
- Rights to return to the same job, same terms and conditions and **protection** from dismissal or any detriment because of taking leave



# Employers for Carers: Carers UK's business forum

Informed by Business

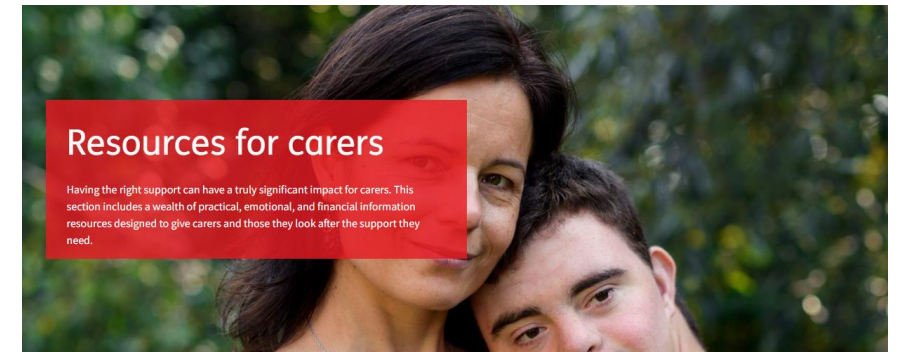
Supported by the specialist knowledge of Carers UK

230 members representing 3m employees

- **Supports** employers to develop **carer friendly workplaces**
- **Promotes** the **bottom-line benefits** of supporting carers
- **Influences** employment **policy** and **practice**

# How we help

- Access to expert resources and practical information on our member's platform, **EfC Digital**
- Individual **account management**
- Tailored **workplace sessions**
- Tailored **promotional materials** and support
- Programme of **networking events**
- Audit of workplace **policy and practice**
- Discounted entry to EfC's employer benchmark, **Carer Confident**



## Jointly app

Developed by Carers UK, Jointly is an innovative mobile and online app that is designed by carers for carers. Jointly makes caring easier, less stressful and more organised by making communication and coordination between those who share the care as easy as a text message.

[Read more](#)

# Good practice (1)

Research shows that it takes an average of **two years to self-identify as a carer ...**

- **Preparation:** Enabling carers to identify themselves and come forward for support
- **Policy and guidance:** Making your support for carers transparent
- **Practical support:** Offering practical help and adjustments for carers
- **Peer support:** Connecting carers to others in the workplace
- **Promoting support:** Communicating support to and for carers regularly

# Good practice (2)

- **Preparation:** e.g. staff surveys, guidance on having 1-2-1 conversations about caring
- **Policy and guidance:** e.g. dedicated carers policy or charter, offering **paid** carer's leave
- **Practical support:** e.g. permission to make personal calls, workplace adjustments, wellbeing scheme, Carers Passport, signposting to support for caring
- **Peer support:** e.g. carers network/support group, point(s) of contact, carers champion(s)
- **Promoting support:** e.g. dedicated awareness raising events/campaigns, and regularly communicating support available to staff and line managers

# Business benefits of supporting carers



- Improved **recruitment**
  - Attract a wide range of skills
- Improved **retention**
  - Keep skilled and experienced staff
- Improved **resilience**
  - When they are supported, carers feel less stressed and report better wellbeing
- Improved **results**
  - Better engagement and improved productivity

# Business benefits example



**Centrica**, a founder member of Employers for Carers, has introduced carer-friendly policies which it says has saved the company:

- around **£1.8 million** a year through preventing unplanned absences and presenteeism
- and further cumulative savings of **£1.3 million** through increased staff retention

# What next on the policy front?



Carers UK wants to see:

- A new statutory right to **paid** Carers' Leave, building on the Carer's Leave Act 2023
- Stronger **protection from discrimination** through amending the Equality Act 2010 (and S 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998) to make caring the 10<sup>th</sup> protected characteristic
- A clear plan for **social care reform**, including recognition of the economic impact of social care, which can be fundamental for carers' ability to stay in or return to work

## Contact:

[www.employersforcarers.org](http://www.employersforcarers.org)  
[client.services@carersuk.org](mailto:client.services@carersuk.org)

[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)  
[info@carersuk.org](mailto:info@carersuk.org)