

A Greater Manchester Working Carer Toolkit for Employers

DRAFT

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INTRODUCTION

One in nine of the workforce across the UK combine caring for a loved one with paid work and in Greater Manchester this equates to around 142,000 employees (ONS Census, 2011). This toolkit highlights why it makes good sense to introduce policies and practices to support working carers within your organisation to maintain that balance, supporting both their wellbeing, and your business. As well as providing tips and practical examples of ways that can help you make the most of your existing workforce, recruit effectively, improve staff wellbeing and reduce staff turnover and sickness absence, this toolkit also showcases employers who are already leading the way on supporting working carers and gaining the benefits of this, and highlights the experiences of Greater Manchester carers themselves.

This toolkit is based around the ADASS Top Tips for Supporting Working Carers (2017) (link: <https://www.adass.org.uk/media/5920/workingcarerstoptips-final-3152017.pdf>) and also provides examples built from the experiences of carers working across Greater Manchester.

We want to encourage you to introduce the good practice outlined within this toolkit in your organisation in order to provide better opportunities for carers living and working in Greater Manchester. The examples given can be implemented for all staff across your organisation, and are relevant to all sizes of organisation in all sectors, helping your employees balance their working life with their responsibilities outside work.

A checklist is provided at the end of this document to enable you to carry out a self-assessment on practices within your organisation that will help you to support the carers working within your organisation.

Definition of a Working Carer

A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.

Working Carers can be in full/part time employment and also provide the above.

The experience of GM carers

A survey was conducted in 2018 by the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership of carers across Greater Manchester to look at their own experience of balancing work and care, and determine what would best help them achieve a good work life balance, feels supported in work and therefore be as productive and happy in work as possible, with their wellbeing maintained. Over 400 carers responded from across all areas of Greater Manchester and from a wide variety of occupational sectors. The responses of those carers have helped to shape the content of this toolkit.

A Person-Centred Approach

Every working carer is different. Their needs, the needs of the person they care for (which may change over time), the type of job they do, the proximity of the person they care for to their workplace, and even their personal / financial situation will impact what flexibility they need, and are able to achieve. It is vital therefore that whilst as an employer you might have an organisational policy, this is supported by effective manager training and workplace awareness-raising, to embed a culture that is supportive of and conducive to work-life balance, and with tools that support this.

Carers in Greater Manchester quote some practical examples of how they have been enabled to be supported at work, and these included:

- ✓ Use of technology to enable them to dial in to meetings where short notice caring responsibilities prevent them from coming into the office
- ✓ The ability to have access to a telephone and private time for calls, allowing them to have a mobile phone with them at all times –carers in Greater Manchester report that this has a significant impact on their peace of mind and ability to concentrate on their job in work
- ✓ Providing access to a private room to make and receive carer-related calls during working hours
- ✓ Flexibility of working arrangements around medical appointments for the person they care for, taking time off and then working additional hours at a later time, rather than using annual leave

WHY SUPPORT WORKING CARERS IN GREATER MANCHESTER?

Good for Carers:

The Greater Manchester position is one where carers tend to be younger than the national average and therefore more likely to be of working age, however are less likely to be in employment. With an ageing population, more people are likely to need care, and the number of carers will increase. The increase in retirement age means an even higher proportion of these will be of working age. Without organisational support to working carers, a significant proportion of the Greater Manchester working population could become unable to work, or be prevented from flourishing in organisations that don't make the most of their talent.

Within Greater Manchester some of our carers share this experience:

"It is so stressful at times I have thought about resigning but couldn't support my family if I did"

"My caring responsibilities stops me from moving jobs and progressing my professional career"

Some working carers in Greater Manchester however have a really positive experience of how a supportive work environment has enabled them to balance working and caring, and to stay in work:

"Being able to continue to work during a very difficult time when I first became a carer was absolutely critical to me retaining a sense of self and helping me to stay"

"I couldn't wish for a more supportive boss. Without her understanding, compassion and acceptance of my need to work flexible hours and without her allowing me to reduce my hours on a"

Good for Business:

Whilst the vast majority of employers have comprehensive policies and support procedures to help employees with young children, a recent report from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) suggests that only one third of businesses have either a formal written policy or even an informal verbal policy in place to support working carers. Many working carers feel uncomfortable talking about caring at work and feel that their employer doesn't understand their caring role, which can be stressful and have a negative effect on their health, wellbeing and finances. For employers who need to maintain high levels of employee engagement and productivity this is not good for business.

So whilst there is a moral case for supporting working carers, and this approach is usually reciprocated by the employee who is more likely to "go the extra mile", there is also a strong business case for employers. These benefits include:

- Increasing staff morale and loyalty
- Staff retention
- Reducing sick leave and absenteeism
- Improving staff engagement
- Improving people management
- Making team working more effective
- Improving service delivery
- Increasing productivity
- Reducing recruitment and training costs
- Improving the ability to attract
- Producing cost savings

HM Government Carers in Employment Task and Finish Group 'Supporting Working Carers: The Benefits to Families, Business and the Economy'

The average cost of replacing an employee has been estimated at between 50 to 150% of their salary

(Employee Engagement Task Force, 2012)

Greater Manchester carers say.....

"(My manager) was extremely understanding of my situation and trusted me with the flexibility and autonomy to get on with my work/caring role without question. This actually made me more determined to demonstrate that I could do both, produce good quality work and I fully respected and was grateful for this"

"Flexible agile working has massively helped me to keep my private life private whilst not taking away from my role which I love"

Centrica's experience:

Better retention of staff can mean reduced costs for businesses – Centrica nationally estimate a saving of £2.5m through increased retention, and a saving of around £4.5m through reductions in unplanned absenteeism

(Employment for Green 2015)

BEST PRACTICE – WHAT CAN MY ORGANISATION DO?

The best practice tips, suggestions and resources contained in this toolkit are based on feedback from working carers through surveys conducted by Carers UK (2017), CIPD (2016), ADASS (2017) and the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership (2017) and are built around the ADASS Top Tips for Supporting Working Carers (2017)

1. Get to know your working carers

Fundamental to supporting your working carers is having an awareness of who they are within your organisation. This way, you can ensure that you communicate effectively, find out what's important to them, involve them in any developments that you implement to support them, and monitor the effectiveness of any measures that you put in place. Getting to know who the carers are within your organisation helps you to target support where it is needed, retain employees and specialist skills, and through this build a resilient business.

Examples of good practice include:

- Asking applicants to identify whether they are a carer on application forms, and holding this information as part of your employee monitoring data
- Include working carers in any staff equality / protected groups
- Train managers to understand the role of carers and have constructive discussions in with individual employees
- Include an awareness of carers in staff survey and audits

Remember that some members of staff may not identify themselves as carers, and most will only identify themselves where they feel supported to do so, so the following sections in this toolkit describe ways in which you can establish good working arrangements and create a supportive culture within your organisation.

2. Identify champions within your organisation

Creating a workplace culture that engages and supports carers requires the support of senior leadership. Your organisation should consider identifying carer champions at all levels including board level and within senior management. Such champions can provide:

- Clear leadership on promoting flexibility, and the issues faced by carers
- Additional validity and credibility to the challenges experienced by working carers
- Opportunities for working carers to discuss issues with someone influential within the organisation
- An opportunity to promote positive outcomes to the rest of the organisation and make supporting carers 'business as usual'

A senior leadership champion would:

- act as an ambassador for carers issues within the workplace
- ensure that the corporate vision and strategy in terms of support to working carers is implemented
- promote the business benefits of supporting working carers within the organisation
- support a peer to peer employee network within the organisation
- review employee opinion survey results and make recommendations to develop/implement/adapt policy

It is important to identify people who champion support to carers at all levels within the organisation. Line managers who have generated a supportive and productive culture within their teams are an excellent resource to act as exemplars, and support other managers throughout the organisation.

3. Implement or review workplace policies and support

It is good practice to introduce a policy for supporting working carers to demonstrate your commitment and to set out the practical arrangements that are in place to support them. The majority of organisations have a written policy promoting flexible working practices around childcare, but these often do not extend to include dependent adults, or to the specific experiences of parent-carers. Organisations may choose to:

- Write a specific policy aimed at how to support working carers
- Ensure that any family friendly policies include specific reference to, and address the needs of working carers

A policy could include:

- Flexible working practices and practical support to ensure business continuity
- Auditing and review arrangements to ensure that the policies (such as flexible working) are effective
- How supportive information will be made available to working carers
- Training and development activity to support working carers
- How your organisation will promote your support of working carers (e.g. through job adverts and internet site)

It is important to ensure that working carers within your organisations are involved in the development of this, so that their views, opinions and needs are included, and that the policy is fit for purpose.

The self-assessment tool at the end of this toolkit can provide a framework for what to include in your policy and action plan, and how you plan to address it.

A Focus on Flexible Working

Flexibility is important to working carers to both:

- Respond to crisis situations
- Manage repeated appointments and other planned support to the person they care for

From the Carers UK and the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership surveys the most frequent response when asked what would best support carers to stay in work and maintain a better work-life balance, was flexibility. This was not just about having formal flexible working arrangements or paid time off, but was around employers having a creative, flexible approach to their working arrangements when the need arose, through an employee feeling confident to be able to discuss their needs with their employer, and how arrangements can be made that best meet both personal and business need.

The legal position

All employees have the legal right to request flexible working once they have worked for the same employer for 26 weeks

“(My manager) was extremely understanding of my situation and trusted me with the flexibility and autonomy to get on with my work/caring role without question. This actually made me more determined to demonstrate that I could do both, produce good quality work and I fully respected and was grateful for this”

Types of Formal Flexible Working Arrangements

<p>Part time working Roles can be offered on reduced daily hours, or fewer days worked per week for a proportionately reduced salary</p>	<p>Flexi-time Employees are able to build up a bank of time to take at a mutually agreed later date</p>
<p>Job sharing Share the responsibilities of one job across two or more people, so that the full time role is covered but people have the possibility to work full time</p>	<p>Agile / Home working This can be done either formally or informally to allow an employee to work at / closer to home on occasions where they may need to</p>
<p>Term-time working Employees work part-time hours – working increased hours in term time for time off during school holidays</p>	<p>Career Breaks These allow employees to take unpaid time off work for a period of time, but with the security of a job to go back to</p>
<p>Compressed Hours</p>	<p>Flexible start and finish Either informally or formally, this allows employees flexibility around their caring</p>

Employees work their contracted hours but in a shorter time frame, such as a 4 day week or nine day fortnight

responsibilities whilst still working within their contracted hours

Annualised Hours

Employees work a contracted number of hours over a 12 month period, varying the number of hours on an agreed basis throughout the year

A 2014 UK government overview of cost / benefit evidence shows that “the majority of businesses believe implementing flexible working arrangements is unproblematic and incurs very few costs”

http://www.psi.org.uk/site/project_detail/costs_and_benefits_to_business_of_adopting_work_life_balance_working_practice

The Carers UK survey, and the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership survey also highlighted how precious annual leave is to a working carer, and how quickly this leave can be taken up through caring responsibilities, rather than in ensuring their own wellbeing. Examples given of how employers can help with this, through flexibility, include the following which are all examples given by Greater Manchester carers:

Flexible Approaches to Leave for Carers

- **The ability to change shifts/working days at short notice for emergencies**
- **The need to be able to respond to emergencies and to manage appointments particularly health and social care appointments**
- **The ability to take unpaid time off if necessary to complement paid leave**
- **Flexibility around working hours to be able to bank hours or make up time at a later date**
- **Homeworking either side of appointments to minimise own personal leave taken**
- **Working from home where there is the ability to do so, and this is possible given the nature of the work**

ACAS have some useful flexible working guidance available on their website including information on employees’ rights, sample policy templates, and guides on flexible working, work-life balance and homeworking: <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1616>

The **UK Government** website has useful explanations around handling requests for flexible working: <https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working>

The **Carers Trust** website gives some real examples of how flexible working has supported employees to balance working and caring: <https://carers.org/article/flexible-working>

Case study – Centrica

Centrica recognises that carers make a substantial contribution to its business and remains committed to providing an inclusive and diverse workforce that works well for its customers. The company believes that supporting carers reduces staff turnover, cuts recruitment and training costs, retains talent and experience, builds resilience and improves employee engagement and wellbeing. Centrica estimates cost savings of £2.5m through increased staff retention and £4.5m through reduced unplanned absenteeism. Centrica's offering to carers is well rounded, thorough and based on a real understanding of what its carers want as well as what will enhance its business.

Centrica has a well-established, employee-led carers network, which has been active since 2005. The carers network provides a valuable source of support and guidance and enables carers to share information and experiences. It is sponsored by the Managing Director of British Gas, and Centrica believes that senior sponsorship has been crucial to its continued success and sustainability.

Centrica also has an innovative carer's leave policy, which offers up to one month matched paid leave per year to help with caring responsibilities, for example, to nurse someone after a serious illness or discharge from hospital, or to help someone move into residential care. Carer's leave is in addition to dependent and emergency leave and there is no service requirement to be eligible. The policy includes close friends as well as family members, which makes the definition of carer all-encompassing.

At Centrica, flexible working is a day-one right, enabling employees to balance work with their caring responsibilities. Employees experiencing difficult family issues can seek professional advice from independent counsellors through a 24-hour employee assistance programme, which is also available free to family members.

In December 2014, Centrica launched a new online portal for working parents and carers, giving them easy access to a range of family-friendly resources and services, including information on back-up eldercare, a webinar series and specific resources for working carers.

Centrica has also launched a pilot training programme to up-skill line managers in managing flexible workers and in particular people with caring responsibilities. The pilot has been a success, a key finding being that managers feel more confident about having effective conversations regarding caring. Centrica is now investigating a wider roll-out which would incorporate the training into existing line manager training modules.

Centrica's approach to carers has had a real impact. As one employee reports: "I have gained significant benefit from the approach Centrica takes to people with caring responsibilities. From the company carers policy and framework, through the Centrica carers support network and my line manager support, I have been able to work in a flexible way, including the use of carer's leave, that has enabled me to balance complex caring responsibilities while delivering on my work activities. Without the understanding and support of the company my caring responsibilities would be difficult to balance with my workload and both would suffer. I really appreciate the flexibility and support I have been given."

4. Ensure access to support for working carers

Accessing relevant information is a priority for employees with caring responsibilities, particularly when they are new to caring. Employers can put together a carer's guide for this purpose, or ensure that a dedicated intranet page for working carers contains a link to locally provided services, as well as those provided internally within the organisation.

Many existing employee benefits can be harnessed to provide valuable assistance to working carers. As an employer you should ensure that all benefits are well-communicated, understood, and used by employees within your organisation. Useful benefits might include:

- **Financial education** – this may be particularly useful to working carers, and should be promoted as much as possible. This could be existing in-house provision, or access to external not-for-profit organisations that exist to provide financial advice for employees. The Money Advice Service, which is a free and impartial advisory service set up by government, offers dedicated advice including to employers, and helps you to help your employees manage their money <https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/employer-best-practices>

- **Counselling services** – Being a carer can be hard work and stressful, and counselling provides a chance for carers to focus on themselves. It gives carers a safe place to talk about issues that are troubling them, and allowing counsellors to help them find their own solutions. Options for organisations include recruiting a workplace counsellor either full time or part time, or on an ad hoc basis, depending on the size of the workforce. Other companies may choose to invest in an employee assistance programme (EAP) – a standalone package that includes the provision of counselling support
- **Annual leave purchase** - Annual leave purchase programmes let your employees buy extra holiday days (usually within a maximum limit), and can allow employees to spread the monthly salary reductions over an entire year. Whilst the benefit of this will vary and are often dependent upon employees' financial circumstances, it can offer a lifeline to some employees with caring responsibilities

In addition, there will be a number of external services accessible to carers within your organisation that you can provide them with links to. As a first contact, they may want to contact their local Carers organisation. Links to the Greater Manchester locality based carers network are accessible here:

[\(Include map with links to web pages\)](#)

Case Study – Listawood

Listawood (SME) With a workforce of around 150 people, Listawood are a manufacturer of promotional products such as ceramic mugs, fridge magnets and mouse pads. The company have made a firm commitment to creating a culture of flexibility and support for those needing to balance their home and work lives, often at short notice, which they believe is a significant driver of their strong record of staff retention.

The recent economic downturn, and increased competition from emerging low wage economies, has placed enormous strain on Listawood's sector, creating pressure to keep staff costs low. As part of their performance management framework, Listawood regularly survey their employees to measure staff satisfaction. The company are aware that they do not offer the best salary levels in the area – indeed only 56 per cent of staff surveyed felt their pay was competitive when compared with other employers locally. However their deep rooted culture of flexibility is well recognised by staff – 97 per cent felt that the company offered better opportunities for work life balance than other employers in the area.

Explaining their approach, Managing Director Alex Turner said: “Losing highly trained staff is incredibly disruptive in any business. In the sales environment it fractures customer relationships which can result in reduced levels of business, and in the factory it compromises manufacturing efficiency. On top of this you then have to bear the costs associated with recruitment and training for their replacement. We are in no doubt that our staff retention levels are driven by our attitude to work life balance rather than the

generosity of our remuneration packages. This makes it possible for us to remain competitive and profitable in a highly competitive market, even during these unusually difficult trading conditions.”

5. Equip managers to support working carers

Working carers in Greater Manchester are very clear about the role that managers and team members play in minimising the stress of balancing working and caring. Managers and team members that show an understanding of a working carer’s situation can alleviate some of the feelings of guilt that they report, when having to be flexible around their working arrangements.

The line manager is critical in sensitively balancing the needs of the individual and the business, as they are likely to be the person who knows the individual best, who applies organisational policy relating to people management and also who is best placed to signpost carers to internal and external support mechanisms.

For working carers the attitude and behaviour of managers and other employees are just as important as formal policies

“(The employer) offered flexible working arrangements. Some of the staff were unresponsive to this so I had to find a way to get the job done.”

“I am fortunate to have a manager who understands that I am a carer however I feel that this is not necessarily consistent across the organisation”

“Consideration of the needs of carers is a key part of workplace policy. It is important to depend on the manager to ensure that the manager policies”

Line managers are key to making carer-friendly policies work. Training and supporting line managers can help them to understand the importance of engaging carers and how to help them. To create the right culture to support working carers, managers at all levels within your organisation should:

- Be trained so that they understand why awareness of working carers’ needs is important
- Be open to different flexible ways of working, and have a ‘can do’ approach to making adjustments
- Understand the different policies within the organisation, what degrees of flexibility are acceptable within the business, and what their role is in the process
- Understand how they will respond to emergency situations within their team, to enable business continuity
- Ensure that awareness is raised within the whole team
- Create a culture of openness and trust so that carers can speak up without recrimination

To achieve this you can:

- Ensure that managers are aware of flexible working policies agreed within the organisation
- Provide training for managers so that they can deal with issues that arise effectively and sensitively, and can promote carer awareness throughout the team

Training and other support resources available:

- **Skills for Care** have a number of resources aimed at managers, to support you to support the carers in your workplace: <https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Topics/Carers/Carers.aspx>
- **Employers for Carers** offer a variety of guides, handbooks and training courses, including induction and line manager training that can be tailored if necessary to suit the needs of your organisation: <https://www.employersforcarers.org/training/other-training-courses>

A Focus on Carers Passports

Ensuring consistency when a working carer changes line-manager is one of the reasons why more organisations are introducing a **Carer Passport** – this is essentially a conversation about the flexibility needed 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 Carer Passport also provides a straightforward way to document flexibility and support so it can be carried into an employee's future roles, without having to repeat the same conversations. Together with Carers Trust and the Department of Health, Carers UK has launched a Carer Passport scheme; the following clip explains how a Carer Passport scheme in your workplace could benefit you:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ie6pZpZc43k>

A Carer Passport scheme can:

- Aid identification and support of carers in the workplace
- Raise awareness of caring
- Provide a concrete, easily understandable offer of support
- Provide a mechanism that makes carers feel valued
- Provide help/assistance to managers or key professionals
- Provide a short-cut to knowing what support is needed, without having to ask lots of questions
- Help in local discussions and support

Some excellent resources around setting up a carer passport scheme within your organisation have been produced by the Department of Health and Social Care in partnership with Carers UK and the Carers Trust, and they are available here:

<https://www.carerpassport.uk/employment/resources>

Case Study – Manchester City Council

6. Peer to peer support

Where carers are able to support each other, they are likely to feel less isolated. Carers can also be a useful source of information for colleagues with caring responsibilities.

With input from carers, set up a staff carers group or forum to allow carers to meet together occasionally for mutual support, information sharing and to raise the profile of caring in the organisation, and allow time for the carers you employ to attend the group. There are a number of different ways of enabling this depending on the type and structure of your organisation - it might be a face to face or a virtual group.

Staff groups also provide a forum to invite professionals who are able to give working carers an insight into their own rights as carers, or to issues specific to the person they care for.

7. Ensure job opportunities and promotions are flexible

Carers UK reported in 2017 that in their survey, 4 out of 10 carers had given up work completely to care. People aged 55-64 are the most likely to be carers, which is a time at which employees have built up considerable and valuable skills and experience in their chosen work.

Providing support to carers to ensure that as an employer you maintain their valuable skills, improve staff satisfaction and ensure their well-being is maintained.

“My caring responsibilities stops me from moving jobs and progressing my professional career”

To ensure that carers can continue to care and remain in employment, to ensure that talent is maintained within your organisation, keep carers' skills sharp and ensure that your employees' well-being is maintained.

Working carers are also less likely to be promoted in their workplace, meaning that future talent is often overlooked. It is important to have flexible approaches to recruitment, promotion and career development as well as to working arrangements. It can be helpful to use an approach of 'reasonable adjustment' and think about:

- The wording of job adverts, and promotion of development opportunities
- Being as flexible as possible about working arrangements for roles, and publicising this
- Ensuring that arrangements within your organisation for training and skills development do not directly or indirectly discriminate against those with caring responsibilities
- Ensuring that this good practice is embedded throughout the organisation, so that employees in business support functions such as Human Resources, and Training and Development support and promote this good practice

8. Monitor, evaluate and review arrangements

Once you have established some good working practices to support carers within your organisation, you will need to make sure that you maintain the momentum to embed the good practice and ensure that it's making a difference. Monitoring, evaluating and reviewing your approaches enables

you to ensure they are working, and to adapt and amend them to suit your organisation and the carers that you employ.

You can do this by:

- Evaluating, monitoring and reviewing activities with working carers, such as through regular meetings and feedback mechanisms. If you have established a working carer staff group you could provide a feedback mechanism through this group
- Reporting on effectiveness to your senior team / board
- Through an annual staff satisfaction survey
- Examining data such as exit and turnover information

9. Communication and promotion

Once you have adopted best practice as a working carer employer you will want to promote being an employer of choice, so that as well as having existing staff with enhanced wellbeing and better support, you are able to gain the business benefits of better recruitment and retention and minimised recruitment and training costs.

You can do this by:

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

Case study – Sainsburys

As one of the first FTSE 100 companies with a carers policy, Sainsburys are committed to helping colleagues balance their responsibilities at home and at work. Here is a link to their website where they describe what they have done to support staff, and how this benefits both employees and the business:

<https://www.about.sainsburys.co.uk/making-a-difference/our-values/our-stories/2017/helping-our-unsung-carer-heroes>

And here are some real examples of the difference this has made to individual employees:

<https://www.about.sainsburys.co.uk/making-a-difference/our-values/our-stories/2017/20-06-17-carers-week>