

Carer Positive and small employers

Carer Positive is relevant and appropriate for all organisations to participate in – whatever their size and structure.

Small, medium and micro employers may think that they can't offer the type of support that larger employers have the capacity for within their organisations. However providing a supportive environment for carers is something that all employers can develop. Key to remember is that being recognised as Carer Positive means that you have the type of support in place that is appropriate for your own working environment, without compromising business productivity or service delivery.

FAQs

I've only got a couple of employees and they don't have caring responsibilities, so why is this relevant to me?

- Your staff may not have caring responsibilities at the moment, but they might at some point in the future. Caring can happen quite unexpectedly at any time, or may develop gradually, for example as an elderly relative becomes more dependent. Being prepared for this as an employer will help you and your staff deal with the potential changes and challenges that becoming new to caring may present. You may also recruit a new employee who is a carer
- You might only have a few employees, but if one of these employees does become a carer, they could therefore represent 50% of your workforce. They could have a valuable skillset, or experience you'd find difficult to replace. Being a supportive employer could be the difference in retaining or losing that member of staff

I don't have a formal Carers Policy in place – is this a problem?

- You don't need to have a separate 'Carers Policy' in place. As long as you communicate the support you have for carers effectively to employees, or show within any relevant HR paperwork where carers are supported this is fine. If you have nothing existing, a simple statement can be prepared – contact us for examples if this would help

Because of the nature of my business, I'd struggle to offer flexible working – can I still become Carer Positive?

- If it's possible to incorporate greater flexibility into the working day or week (which isn't always required anyway), then great – it might just be enabling someone to come in or leave a bit earlier or later, and it might only be for a temporary period of time

- Sometimes it's just not possible to alter someone's working hours, particularly in a small business with limited options for making alternative arrangements. And that's okay – support is not always about changing work patterns. Flexibility to attend a hospital or GP appointment may be required from time to time, but these can generally be discussed in advance and needn't alter a normal pattern of working

So, as a small employer, how can I support employees who are carers?

- Small things can often make a big difference, so don't underestimate what you can do to be a supportive employer. If there are things you simply can't offer as an employer, focus on what is possible
- Sit down and discuss with your employee how they think their caring responsibilities may impact on their working lives. Let them know you want to support them and explore together what is possible within the scope of the business. Knowing you care, and that they can have that conversation is in itself very helpful and reassuring
- Simple provisions, like having access to a telephone, being allowed to keep a mobile phone on, or getting privacy to make a call can be helpful to carers and reduces the worry of not being able to keep in touch with the person they care for
- Signpost carers to external sources of support such as local carers centres who may be able to help with specialised information and advice. You can find a list of local carers centres on the Carers Scotland website: <http://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/get-support/local-support>
- Carers often feel lonely and isolated, and peer support can help reduce this. Some larger organisations have employee carer groups or networks which wouldn't always be possible in a smaller organisation. Again, signposting to carers centres will help carers connect with other people in the same situation – there may be local groups which meet regularly, or they could access online peer support: <http://www.carersuk.org/forum>
- Some small or medium employers source their HR support externally – why not check what provisions might be provided for carers, for example access to employee assistance schemes
- Carers have certain statutory rights as employees – make sure you and they are aware of these. You can find out more at ACAS, which has a series of guides for employers and employees: <http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=1362>
- Visit the Carer Positive website for more advice, information, and resources: <http://www.carerpositive.org/>
- We are also happy to provide further support – contact Sue McLintock on 0141 445 3070, or at sue.mclintock@carerscotland.org