



CARER POSITIVE

Supporting working carers in Scotland

Information and Getting Started Guide



carerpositive.org

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Carer Positive - an Introduction

A growing number of organisations across Scotland are proud to call themselves “Carer Positive” employers.

With as many as 1 in 8 of the workforce estimated to be juggling work with caring responsibilities, employers are increasingly recognising the need to support and retain employees who are carers.



Carer Positive aims to raise awareness of the growing number of carers in the workforce, and to award recognition to those employers with good practice in supporting these employees.

Launched and funded by the Scottish Government, employers of all sizes and across all sectors are taking part and those already awarded include local authorities, health boards and other public bodies; utility companies; financial institutions; further and higher education institutions and a range of voluntary sector organisations and private companies.

- There are around 760,000 unpaid carers in Scotland, with this figure forecast to increase significantly as the population ages.
- Around 270,000 people are estimated to be juggling work with caring responsibilities – as many as 1 in 8 of the workforce.
- As people work longer, more and more of the workforce are taking on the dual roles of working and caring.
- Without the right support in the workplace, a significant number of carers leave paid employment – this has implications for the individuals, their families and employers.
- With the right support, employers retain skilled and valuable staff, and all employees benefit from a healthier and more productive working environment.

Why this is Important

Carers represent a significant part of the working age population, both in the workplace, and in the wider labour market.

Valuable Skills and Experience

Caring can impact on people across the whole working age spectrum, although it tends to hit a peak at an age when many employees will have gained valuable skills and experience. Losing valuable members of staff can result in a loss of skills, knowledge and experience, as well as leading to increased recruitment and training costs.

As the population ages and the number of carers rises, the effects of losing carers from the workforce will grow. Combined with this, we are working longer; more of us will become carers, and more of us will be working carers.



An employee might have been caring for a long time or find themselves faced with new caring responsibilities without much warning or time for preparation. Either way, the difficulty of managing the dual pressures of work and home life can be hard to bear. Without support, carers may suffer from stress and exhaustion. Some feel driven to give up work because it simply becomes too much.

In addition to being good employment practice, supporting carers to remain productively in work delivers real benefits to employers and the wider economy. As an employer, the need to recognise this will continue to represent an important factor in workforce management, and in the ability to retain a healthy and productive workforce.

At a time when many organisations are under pressure because of external economic factors, it makes good business sense to have a working environment where members of staff who are carers feel supported to work productively, and crucially to remain with their employer.

The Business Case



Evidence has shown that supportive policies and working practices can -

- o Attract and Retain staff
- o Reduce stress and sickness absence
- o Reduce recruitment and training costs
- o Increase resilience and productivity
- o Improve service delivery
- o Produce cost savings
- o Improve people management and staff morale

Enabling carers to benefit from a supportive workplace doesn't need to mean significant upheaval or change. Many organisations already have flexible working or carer's policies in place which can help employees who are carers manage their work and caring responsibilities effectively.

Sometimes very small but practical changes can make a big difference.



Wider Linkages

Supporting the health and wellbeing of carers, and contributing to a more engaged workforce can help employers demonstrate social responsibility, funding aims, and linkages to related workforce issues including equality, diversity and gender balance.

Carer Positive is an important element of wider Scottish Government aims to promote better and fairer working practices in Scotland, as reflected in the Fair Work Framework and the Scottish Business Pledge. Visit the Scottish Business Pledge website to see where Carer Positive is highlighted within the Workforce Engagement Pledge element:
<https://scottishbusinesspledge.scot/pledge-elements/workforce-engagement/>

What's Involved?



The award incorporates 3 levels, from 'Engaged', to 'Established', through to 'Exemplary'. If they wish, employers can progress from one stage to the next, building from an initial level of commitment to embedding a culture of support for carers within the organisation.

To be awarded Carer Positive status, organisations submit an application form describing how they meet criteria in 5 key areas.

- Identification of carers
- Policy
- Practical Support
- Communication, Awareness Raising and Training
- Peer Support

Three overlapping application forms are shown. The central form is titled 'Application form Level 1 (ENGAGED)' and contains sections for 'Employer details', 'Carer details', and 'How you support carers'. The forms are white with blue and green accents, matching the Carer Positive branding.

It is free to participate, and the self-assessment process is designed to be clear, straightforward, and not too time consuming.

Download a application form at carerpositive.org/apply or contact us by phone or email and we will send one out to you.

Although we offer initial and ongoing support, organisations are encouraged to identify and develop their own actions as appropriate to their size and structure. This can include work-life balance policies, flexible working conditions, or small and simple practical measures that can make a real difference to how carers feel supported at work.

Participating employers are awarded with a framed certificate for each level and the presentation will be promoted on our website and social media.

Other benefits include access to events resources and a peer support network; workplace posters and Carer Positive logos which can be displayed on documents and communication materials.



Carer Positive and Small Employers

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

Small, medium and micro employers may think they are unable to offer the type of support that larger employers can, however providing a supportive environment for carers is something that all employers can develop.

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.

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 now but they might at some point in the future. Caring can happen unexpectedly at any time, or may develop gradually, such as an elderly relative becoming more dependent. Being prepared will help you and your staff deal with potential changes and challenges of an existing staff member becoming a carer or someone with caring responsibilities joining the team.

If you only have a few employees and one of them does become a carer, that person could represent a huge percentage of your workforce. Would you want to lose someone with that skillset and experience? Being a supportive employer could help them stay in work and prevent you 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'. As long as you communicate the support you have for carers effectively to employees, or show where carers are supported within relevant HR paperwork, this is fine. If you have nothing existing, a simple statement can be prepared – we can even provide examples if you like.

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

Full flexible working is not always required to support working carers. However, could it be possible to enable someone to come in or leave a bit earlier or later - even for just 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 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?

These tips and links should help you get started becoming a Carer Positive employer -

- Small things can often make a big difference. Don't underestimate what you can do to be a supportive employer. If there are things you simply can't offer, 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.
- 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 such as on the Carers UK 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 and do not fall foul of the law. You can find out more at ACAS, which has a series of guides for employers and employees.

Helpful links and other sources of support can be found
in our Best Practice booklet.

You can download this booklet from our website at carerpositive.org/resources
or contact us by phone or email and we will send you a copy.

Become a Carer Positive Employer and help support working carers.

Benefits both Carers and Your Business

Awards for each Level of Achievement

Access to Support and Resources

Free to Participate

More and more employers are applying to be recognised as Carer Positive.
Join them, so that more carers, and you as an employer can enjoy the
benefits of a Carer Positive workplace.

Visit our website for more information and resources

www.carerpositive.org

Or for more information, contact the Carer Positive team at

0141 378 1065

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