

We Care - Do You?

Balancing Work and
Care
- An Employer's
Guide



EQUAL

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We Care - Do You? is a transnational partnership between Estonia, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom funded through the European Social Fund's EQUAL Community Initiative Programme. This toolkit is one of the products of this partnership incorporating the experiences of three of the partners, Italy, the Netherlands and the UK.

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed for employers. It contains the business case for supporting working carers, making it clear how much a business can help itself by offering flexibility and services that will allow it to increase productivity and retain its workforce.

The toolkit will also be of use to trade union or other employee representatives wanting more information on what they can do to support and represent carers in their workforce. Carers may also find it useful to make use of the facts and figures and information about business benefits if they are going to seek better support and flexibility from their employer, or are thinking about returning to work and wondering what the best questions to ask might be.

What is a carer?

Carers provide unpaid care, outside a professional framework and within a personal relationship, for family, partners or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability.

Carers give so much to society yet they can experience ill health, poverty and discrimination because they provide care.

Introduction

Caring is an issue which faces everyone. Changing demographics – an ageing population, smaller families and different family structures – mean that most people will end up caring for someone at some point in their lives. The number of carers in Europe is set to grow by around 50% in the next 30 years. This means, for example, that for someone aged 24 now in the UK,

their chances of becoming a carer will have trebled by the time they are 59¹. These demographic changes are happening across Europe and the developed world.

Businesses benefit when they succeed in recruiting and retaining the best talent. Many carers are forced to give up work because of the difficulties in combining their roles. In addition, people with caring responsibilities are often overlooked as a pool of resource.

Research undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University for Carers UK as a part of the ACE National partnership, demonstrates the business case for flexible working for carers. (ref)

Caring is different from mainstream childcare, and needs a different response from employers. Caring for a sick or disabled relative or friend – for example as a result of accident or stroke – can happen overnight, and can be unpredictable.

Caring milestones are different too – a disabled child may still be at home with parents as a disabled adult, and all too often the ‘end of caring’ means a death or a move into residential care for a dearly loved family member, partner or friend.

The facts - UK

- There are 6 million carers in the UK, and 3 million combine work and care. Of these 1.4 million are men and 1.7 million are women.
- Carers are not a static group - more than 2.3 million people in the UK move in and out of caring situations each year.
- Research tells us that 3 out of 5 people will care at some stage in their working lives.
- Many carers find themselves forced to give up work due to a lack of care services or flexible employment. Research by the Equal Opportunities Commission found that 1 in 5 carers give up work to care

The facts – Netherlands ²

- There are 2.4 million carers in the Netherlands, who provide care for more than 8 hours per week and/or longer than 3 months
- More than 1.3 million carers under 65 combine work and care
- Of these, 400,000 find it difficult to do both
- 135,000 find it almost impossible to combine work and care
- Research has found that women experience more difficulty combining work and care, often because they are in the ‘sandwich’ generation providing both care and childcare

¹ Statistics from the 2001 UK census are taken from “We Care, Do You”, Yeandle et al, Sheffield Hallam University, Carers UK, 2005

² Figures from Mantelzorg in getallen, report of the Social and Cultural Planning Office, The Netherlands 2003

- The type of care provided has an impact on the burden of care; carers have more trouble combining work and care when providing personal care (such as washing, bathing, and feeding the care receiver), and/or psychosocial or emotional support

The facts – Italy

- Between 3 and 3.5 million people in Italy provide care to a dependent relative.
- 17% of economically inactive women of working age and 13% of retired women in Italy consider that caring has had a significant negative impact on their professional status, resulting in failure to access the labour market, giving up work to care, or early retirement.
- Working women face significant difficulties in combining work and care, with more than half reducing their working hours.
- One in four non-working women carers would consider part-time working as a means of combining work and care
- 23% of women working in the private sector would like to work part-time in order to combine work and care

When carers are forced to give up work, the considerable skills they have gained, not only from their paid work but also as a result of their caring responsibilities, are then lost to the workplace. Carers often face significant barriers in returning to work, and risk long-term financial and social disadvantage.

The business case

Developing and promoting support for carers in the workplace makes good business sense. In an increasingly tight and competitive labour market, it is crucial to business performance and service delivery to be an employer of choice. Developing support to enable carers to remain in – or return to – work will enhance retention and recruitment strategies and ensure that valuable skills are not lost to the workplace.

The peak age for caring in Italy, the UK and the Netherlands is currently 45 – 64 and many carers will be experienced employees in senior positions. Losing them means losing their knowledge and skills, in addition to the costs of recruiting and training to fill the gap they leave.

Given the cost to the economy of work-related stress, providing support to people, so that they can juggle their complex lives, has demonstrable returns in terms of reduced absenteeism and increased productivity.

The economic case

Future workforce predictions tell us that European economies will need more workers in the next 20 years, with fewer drawn from school or college leavers as the birth rate falls. As women continue to participate in the labour market

and people work longer and retire later, the European workforce will become increasingly complex. Employers will need to widen their recruitment pool at exactly the same time that society will see an increase in the need for care – and more carers. Carers save the UK economy the equivalent of a second National Health Service, and the value of unpaid care in the Netherlands is equivalent to 20-40% of total expenditure in the long term care sector - so it makes economic sense to support carers to work and care³.

The answers?

Employers are increasingly recognising the benefits of supporting working carers, but it is often the lack of external support – reliable, affordable alternative care services, hospital appointments and discharge policies that do not take into account the working lives of carers – that cause carers to give up work.

A range of solutions are needed to enable carers to work. The first phase of the ACE National partnership found that there are a range of barriers to work. Some carers need to develop skills in order to get back into the jobs market. Some will need support to write CV's, to access appropriate training, or simply in building their confidence.

Another major barrier to work is alternative service provision. Carers need to know that if they are going to be at work that the person they care for is safe and well.

So, good employment practice is not the only answer to allowing carers to access work and keeping them there, but it can make a huge difference.

What employers can do

Look at where they are at the moment in terms of carer support, and what they can do to improve their practice.-

Employers for Carers, a special interest group of employers in the UK, created a tool to enable employers to assess their practice in relation to carers, and provide suggestions for next steps. The tool can be found here: <http://www.carersuk.org/Employersforcarers/Assessmenttool>

As part of the Netherlands Mantelzorg@work project, data were collected on four organisations to look at how they could improve their support for carers, and are available at: www.werkenmantelzorg.nl Also a tool to assess how carer-friendly a business is and suggestions for support, is available on this website.

Examples of carer support Equal opportunities policy

³ Informal Care: an economic approach, Bernhard van den Berg, 2005

Employees with caring responsibilities should have the same opportunities to get a job or stay in work as everyone else, regardless of their responsibilities outside of work. Employers should therefore include carers in equal opportunities and diversity policies, alongside other factors such as race, gender etc, and communicate this to employees.

Carers policy

Some organisations find it useful to have a specific policy for employees with caring responsibilities. This can support managers when recruiting carers as well as provide detail about supporting employees in the process of balancing work and care.

This policy should include:

- Reference to the organisation's definition of a carer and what this means
- the support provisions available to carers
- support options available to their line managers.

Many of the support options will be dependent on the employee's needs, and employers should consult employees when they develop these policies about what provision will be most beneficial to them.

Flexible Working

Understanding the benefits that flexible working can bring to both the employer and the employees with caring responsibilities, is an important part of developing policies and practices. It has certainly been proven to benefit the employer in particular through cost savings and increased employee retention. Flexible working is the key to ensuring employees with caring responsibilities can work and continue to be effective in the workplace. It can provide mechanisms for all employees to balance work and life, but it can be specifically beneficial for those employees who are carers.

Adjustments can include:

- Flexible starting and finishing times – adjusting the working day to begin and end earlier or later, or even to have a break in the day, to enable an employee to work their full hours more flexibly
- Compressed working hours – completing contracted hours in a shorter period than normal, for example, working a nine day fortnight
- Annualised working hours – completing contracted hours, but making adjustments to allow for shorter or longer days or weeks across the period of a year
- Job sharing – two or more people fulfilling the requirements of a single post
- Job rotation – moving from one job to another for a specific period to reduce work commitments during a period of care
- Part-time working
- Home-working and tele-working – working in the home environment or other than in the normal workplace, often through the use of technology

- Term-time working – working contracted hours but within school term times
- Flexible holidays to fit in with alternative care arrangements

Flexible leave arrangements

Carers often use their annual leave to manage crises or periods of intensive care. This means that they do not have a break themselves, and can be tired or stressed as a result. Some leave arrangements which can help are:

- Emergency leave – a short period to be used to manage a care crisis
- Carers leave – a period given to be dedicated to caring, often when a short intensive period of care is needed
- Compassionate leave – used mostly following a bereavement
- Career break – used when a carer has to take a longer period out of the workplace, but wishes to return to their former job
- Salary sacrifice to build up a bank of leave to be used for caring
- Matched leave – an additional period of leave offered by an employer to ‘match’ annual leave an employee has to take to provide care – often used to cover a period following hospital discharge

Some of these will be statutory entitlements or at the discretion of the employer, depending on the systems of different countries. Small and medium size employers may offer flexible working or leave arrangements without embedding them in formal arrangements, but still responding to the needs of the individual.

Culture change

Building an open culture, with equality of opportunity for all, is an essential part of ensuring employees with caring responsibilities can balance work and care. Employers can have many good workplace policies and practices to attract and retain carers, however these will not be successful if the culture is not supportive and inclusive for all. The culture and working environment need to welcome and accommodate employees with caring responsibilities.

Although there is not one solution that fits all, as different organisations will have different work cultures, the policies and practices should be demonstrated and ‘be alive’ in the working environment. They should be understood and accepted at every level of the organisation, and publicised and promoted regularly and using different media. Many employers have found it useful to have a senior level carers champion, to be an ambassador and promote the policies available. As part of the culture, there should always be opportunities for employees with caring responsibilities to feel able to discuss these in an open way, with managers and with colleagues. One way to do this is to create a carers’ network supported by the employer. This is an important aspect in ensuring that policies are effective.

External support

There are many support options that can be provided for you and your employees with caring responsibilities, which can be sourced from outside the organisation. Where there is not sufficient resource or expertise within the organisation to support carers effectively and ensure that the appropriate workplace practices are implemented, it may be useful for you to engage with external experts in this area. Examples are:

- employee assistance programmes, which provide information and advice on a whole range of issues, including how to find services
- training for line managers and/or working carers to support implementation of carer-friendly working policies and practice
- 'brokers' to support carers to access services and support
- Information services provided by carers' organisations

Practical support

In addition to having good workplace policies and practices and an open culture, it is important you understand your employees' needs and are flexible, if you are going to recruit and retain the best talent for your organisation.

There are many practical solutions that you can discuss with your employees, some of which are included below:

- Flexible benefits, for example healthcare
- Access to a telephone
- Reserved or nearby car parking spaces
- Reasonable notice if shift patterns are changing or overtime is required
- Flexibility with regards to requiring employees to work or undertake training away from home

Useful contacts:

<http://www.carersuk.org/Home>

<http://www.carersuk.org/Employersforcarers>

<http://www.acecarers.org.uk/Home>

<http://www.werkenmantelzorg.nl>

<http://www.mantelzorg.nl>

<http://www.qidos.nl>

<http://www.mezzo.nl>

<http://www.arcopolis.it/elsa>

CASE STUDY

The Metropolitan Police

The Metropolitan Police worked with Carers UK from the beginning of their development of a carers policy. They approached Carers UK for help after contact was made through Work Life Balance events and campaigning. Carers UK offers consultancy for employers – in other countries there may be other organisations who do employment consultancy who would be worth approaching.

The strategy at the Met was effective at all stages because there was very high level buy in. This meant that staff throughout the organisation were aware that supporting carers was a priority.

The first step was to understand how many carers worked for the Met, and what their needs were. A leaflet was circulated with payslips to help people identify themselves as carers and make them aware that the Met was starting to work on these issues. There was also an article in the Met's internal newsletter.

Once a basic level of awareness had therefore been raised, a questionnaire about caring went out with the next set of payslips. Returns to the questionnaire came to Carers UK, so employees knew that their confidentiality was guaranteed. The questionnaire asked questions about whether people were carers, what support they had already and what kind of support would be useful to them, and would help them combine work and care. The questionnaire had around a 10% response rate. Just over half of the responses were from carers.

This was followed up by focus groups taken from questionnaire respondents who had indicated a willingness to take part.

A report was produced by Carers UK from all information gathered, which told the Met what the needs of their carers were. On the basis of this the Met developed a carers policy.

The launch of the carers policy had an event and more publicity in their internal newsletter, a launch event and information on their website. A major part of implementing their carers policy was the production of information, advice and signposting to Carers UK for further advice and information on the Met intranet.

A part of the policy was that they would continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of their carers policy, and use it to build a business case for supporting working carers.

CASE STUDY

The Department for Constitutional Affairs

The Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) had already started work on supporting carers in their workforce when they started to work with Carers UK. They had created a network for disabled employees, which raised issues around needs for carers, so a network for carers was also set up. The DCA

invested significant resources in the construction of their carers network, including 2 full time posts.

In advance of setting up the network they consulted a range of carers organisations including cares UK to create an information database to be used by their occupational welfare helpline.

When the network for carers was launched it was publicised through their internal newsletter, the DCA intranet, and events throughout the regions of the UK.

The network for caring itself has a newsletter, with formal membership including a membership form.

The membership of the network was then canvassed to ask what additional events would be useful to them. Events have continued to be used as a way of disseminating different kinds of information. The carers network also has an annual conference.

The DCA has a carers champion, a senior member of staff, the Director of Human Resources. Senior support and buy in has been important, and managerial support has been maintained through a continued programme of seminars. These are designed to help managers support and identify carers in their teams, and manage flexibility.

The model that was built by the DCA has now been taken on in a number of other government departments, the latest being the Cabinet Office.

CASE STUDY

Pentastope

Pentastope is a consultancy company which has been chosen twice as Employer of the Year by the Great Place to Work Institute in the Netherlands. The company does not have a specific policy for employees with caring responsibilities, but does have a philosophy that focuses on people - a culture in which the work life balance needs of its employees is recognised and taken into account.

For example, consultants with caring responsibilities have access to flexible working hours, and the company has a policy of open communication with clients to ensure that they understand the value of this approach.

Through the Mantelzorg@work project, funded by EQUAL, Penstascope raised awareness of issues for working carers not only with managers and colleagues, but with carers themselves. Penstascope published articles in internal newsletters, invited carers to participate in focus groups to develop a better awareness of their needs, and gave their carer employees flowers to mark National Carers Day. Pentastope also developed a workshop for managers on working carer's issues that will be rolled out to other employers as part of the project.

CASE STUDY

Care Brokers

In 2006, a new service was introduced in the Netherlands – care brokers - to support individual carers, in particular working carers to find a balance in work, care and leisure.

The core business of a care broker is to assume responsibility for tasks such as applications for aids and adaptations, accessing assessment procedures, finding information, identifying care services and help with filling in forms. Care brokers are often employed by Carer Support Centres as part of the service they provide, with others working on a freelance basis. Employers and carers can pay for their services directly, though some insurance companies now offer this service for carers as part of their health insurance packages. The services from Carer Support Centres are for free for carers.

CASE STUDY

Award for Good Practice in Balancing Work and Family Life

This award is promoted by the Municipality of Forli in Italy, in partnership with trades unions, employers and employer organisations, and aims to raise awareness in the business world of the needs of employees with childcare and caring responsibilities. The initiative promotes the provisions of Act 53 which was introduced in Italy in 2000 to support the reconciliation of work and family life. The Act provides funding for organisations wishing to implement work-life balance practices and promotes the business case for supporting employees with childcare and caring responsibilities.

Organisations in the private, public and voluntary sector can submit entries for the award, detailing good practice which has already been established or which is in the early stages of implementation. Good practice is described as “action aimed at inducing changes in culture, in behaviour, and in social organisation.” The awards are presented at a high profile event on March 8th, National Women’s Day in Italy, and every entrant submitting an example of good practice receives acknowledgment as a family-friendly organisation. Formula Servizi was an award winner in 2006. A service cooperative originally set up by 9 women in Forli in 1975, it increased its market share and turnover year on year and now employs 1,500 people nationally, the majority of whom are women.

Within an equalities framework, and with agreement from employees and trade unions, the company has implemented a series of initiatives:

- Flexible recruitment, taking into account a range of preferred working hours and locations following consultation with employees
- The introduction of part-time working
- The reorganisation of production schedules
- The introduction of job-sharing for a range of different roles

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action for carers and employment
led by **CARERS** UK

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