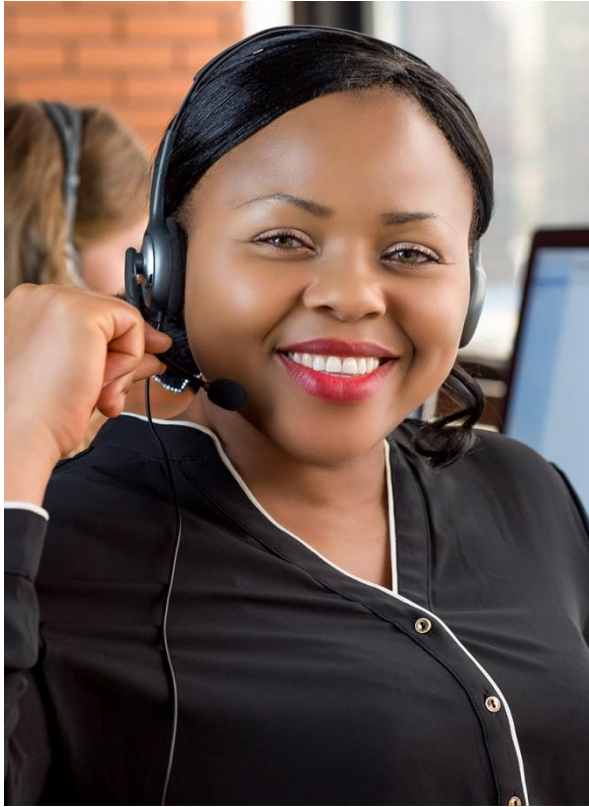


Toolkit



BUILDING CARING INTO YOUR WORKPLACE CONTINGENCY PLAN TOOLKIT FOR EMPLOYERS

About carers in the workplace

Caring for an ill, older or disabled family member, partner or friend will have an impact on most of us at some point in our lives. Already 1 in 7 people in the UK workforce have caring responsibilities and this ratio is set to increase as people live longer and retire later. Recent Carers UK research identified that as many as 600 people a day in the UK give up work to care, often because they face a caring crisis without knowing where to go for information and support. And yet, caring is still an issue which people find hard to discuss and plan for in the workplace.

Who are carers in the workplace?

Employers for Carers uses the following definition to describe carers in the workplace: *Carers are employees with caring responsibilities that have an impact on their working lives. These employees are responsible for the care and support of ill, older or disabled family members, partners or friends who are unable to care for themselves.*

About this toolkit

This Toolkit has been produced by Employers for Carers (EFC) to help you to:

- build caring into your workplace contingency plan at organisational level
- support managers within the organisation to use this as a basis for contingency planning at line manager level

Developing a workplace contingency plan for caring

What is a workplace contingency plan?

A contingency is anything that happens outside the range of normal operations that can affect an organisation's ability to function. Contingency planning is about being prepared for such events and having a policy in place to keep things running and ensure business

continuity. It isn't just about major crises or natural disasters but can also prepare organisations for more ongoing life-course events affecting their staff and operations.

Why is it important to build caring into your workplace contingency plan?

With our ageing population and people living longer with disabilities and health conditions, an increasing number of individuals in the UK are combining work and caring for older, disabled or seriously ill relatives or friends.

Recent Carers UK research revealed that the average person in the UK has a 50:50 chance of caring by age 50, with half of women caring by the age of 46, and half of men who can expect to care at 57. Caring is therefore likely to affect a substantial proportion of your workforce and any part of your organisation, including your business-critical operations. Because caring can involve unexpected events this can impact on staff retention and productivity if carers' support needs are not recognised or addressed.

As we currently know all too well with the coronavirus situation, no one can predict the future or how events beyond the control of an organisation such as health or caring situations will affect its employees' ability to work. However, while employers are more likely to build life-course events like becoming a parent, acquiring a long-term health condition or preparing for retirement, into their workforce planning and policies, they are less likely to include wider caring responsibilities.

How can we build caring into our workplace planning at organisation level?

Organisations vary in size, shape and purpose; some will have workplace contingency plans covering a range of circumstances and others will not. However, whatever the size of your organisation, including caring in your plan is an essential part of staff support, retention and productivity. It will help to ensure that you have always got a backup option when key staff face unforeseen events including relating to caring.

Here are three steps to building caring into your workplace contingency planning at organisational level:

1. Establish the aims and objectives of your plan

- Be pragmatic; check whether there is an existing workforce plan, or staff contingency plan, which you could enhance by including caring considerations. If your organisation doesn't have this think about developing one and what format is likely to work best. Generally short and simple will help to get most traction and be more likely to be understood and implemented in practice.
- If you have not already considered this, think about any **key roles** which would need to be covered as a priority if the staff members concerned had to be away from work

suddenly due to an unforeseen event for any reason, including for caring. Although many unexpected caring events are likely to be short term it is useful to build this into your planning given that 1 in 7 in the workplace in the UK are carers.

- Think about how you would arrange **staff cover** for key roles at short notice if needed within your organisation. If you don't already have an additional pool of workers who can step in to cover these posts at short notice consider preparing such a resource to undertake key tasks and provide training where appropriate (e.g. using contractors or re-training existing employees). In other cases, it may be that individual members of staff can be designated as temporary replacements for some key roles

2. Include caring issues, and carers, in your HR policies and provisions

- Review, and where needed, revise existing workplace policies and provisions which may be helpful to carers so that you are best equipped to support and retain them. The Employers for Carers membership platform **EfC Digital** provides information and good practice examples on offering support for carers in the workplace, e.g. flexible working arrangements and leave and other forms of practical help.
- **Flexible working arrangements and leave** are top of the list of things that can make a difference for carers, especially when facing unexpected events. Ensure that your flexible working and leave arrangements include caring and carers explicitly so that employees (and line managers) know that they are relevant to them.
- While some employees may have longer term caring responsibilities, for many others this situation may be relatively short term. In either case, however, relatively simple things like a small change in working hours or flexible arrangements, or a day or two of paid leave, can make all the difference for an employee facing an unexpected caring event.
- Consider other **practical support** in the workplace. Could you provide anything further for carers, or include caring specifically in existing support? This could include simple things like permission (and space) to make private calls or car parking close to the workplace. It could also include a health and wellbeing (or employee assistance) programme and signposting to practical information and advice on caring (eg from in-house champions, staff networking groups and external organisations like Carers UK).
- If your organisation doesn't have a workplace **carers passport** consider introducing one. This is essentially a tool to help facilitate a conversation between an employee and their line manager about caring responsibilities and any support needs, and a record which identifies that an employee is a carer and sets out an offer of support in

response. It can be carried into an employee's future roles, without having to repeat the same conversations. It can help to create a supportive working culture where staff feel that they have 'permission' to talk about their circumstances in a safe environment. It can also communicate existing workplace support for carers – including **recording any contingency plans that have been made for an individual facing an unforeseen caring event** - and encourage managers to apply policies more consistently across the organisation. Introducing a carers passport could help you retain valuable staff who are combining work and care. We have evidence on the benefits of its use from both employers and carers using the scheme, including EfC members. More information can be viewed on the Carer Passport website (<https://carerspassports.uk/>).

3. Communicate about caring, and support available about carers

- Talk about the **support** you provide for carers so that all managers and employees are aware of it and carers feel able to come forward for help if and when they need it.
- Try including **information about caring** on staff intranets, in posters around the office, staff handbooks and bulletins, and at workplace awareness raising events on health and wellbeing etc. Try not to say 'Are you a carer?' instead say something like 'Do you look after someone because they are older, ill or have a disability? If so, you are a carer' in order to help carers identify themselves and come forward for support.
- Identify and talk about **examples of caring situations**, including potential unexpected caring events. For example, these could range from an employee's parent living at a distance having a stroke or fall, their disabled child's health deteriorating suddenly, or their partner being involved in a road accident.
- Identify a senior level **carers champion**, to be an ambassador, promote the support available and to reassure staff that they won't be seen as less able to do their jobs should they talk about needing help to combine work and caring. Alternatively, have a point of contact with a carers remit where employees can go to discuss issues before formally asking for support from their line manager. Individuals talking about their personal experience of caring can be a very powerful way of encouraging others to recognise themselves as carers and come forward for support.
- Try to '**normalise**' caring and see it as something which can happen to anyone, at any time, including at work. Think about it as part of your organisation's wider work-life balance, life-course or health and wellbeing support, and include it in relevant staff induction conversations, manager training and mid-life reviews etc.
- **Support managers** to identify and help their staff who may be carers. Line managers play a key role in implementing carer-friendly policies and practices. However, they will need to be supported to make it 'OK to talk about caring', in order

not to feel like they are being intrusive and crossing professional and personal boundaries. If they have not had personal experience of caring they will also need to understand the issues that carers may face. Include information about caring, and support for carers, in manager inductions, development training and other communications.

- Encourage managers in your organisation to build caring into their contingency planning at **line manager and team level**. Managers need to be prepared for all contingencies and have a procedure in place to ensure they can support staff facing unforeseen events, including relating to caring. Contingency planning should be part of general line management of individuals and 'business as usual'. A separate toolkit specifically for line managers is available [here](#).

Top ten tips for employers: Summary

1. Be pragmatic; check whether there is an existing workplace plan which you could enhance by including caring. If you don't have one consider developing something short and simple which can be easily understood and implemented.
2. Review, and where needed revise, existing HR policies and provisions to ensure that caring, and carers, are included where relevant.
3. Ensure that your flexible working and leave arrangements include caring, and carers, explicitly so that employees (and line managers) know that they are relevant to them.
4. Think about other practical support in the workplace that could be provided including things like permission to make private calls or car parking close to the workplace.
5. Ensure that workplace support such as health and wellbeing (or employee assistance) programmes include caring, and carers, explicitly.
6. Signpost to practical information and advice on caring, eg from in-house champions, staff networking groups and external organisations like Carers UK.
7. If your organisation doesn't have a workplace carers passport consider introducing one to communicate relevant workplace support, including recording any contingency plans that have been made for individuals facing unexpected caring events.
8. Communicate about caring, and support available for carers in your workplace; include this information on staff intranets, in posters around the office, staff handbooks and bulletins, and at workplace awareness raising events on health and wellbeing etc.

9. Support managers to identify and help their staff who may be carers; include information about caring in manager inductions, development training and other communications.
10. Encourage all managers in your organisation to use this as a basis for contingency planning, and supporting carers, at line manager level.

Three next steps

1. Tell your managers and employees that your organisation is a member of EfC and that all our resources are available to them. Circulate your organisation's membership code to your team so that they can access these resources.
2. Circulate the monthly EfC e-bulletin to all employees as there will be new carers in your workforce regularly. Employees can also sign up to receive the e-bulletin on the EfC website.
3. Highlight to your managers and employees both workplace and external support available for carers, including signposting them to external organisations who can help such as Carers UK. For example Carers UK has a page on their website regularly updated with [key information on the coronavirus situation](#) as well as [answers to some FAQs from carers](#) and a page for carers on [looking after their own mental wellbeing](#).

Contact Employers for Carers

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