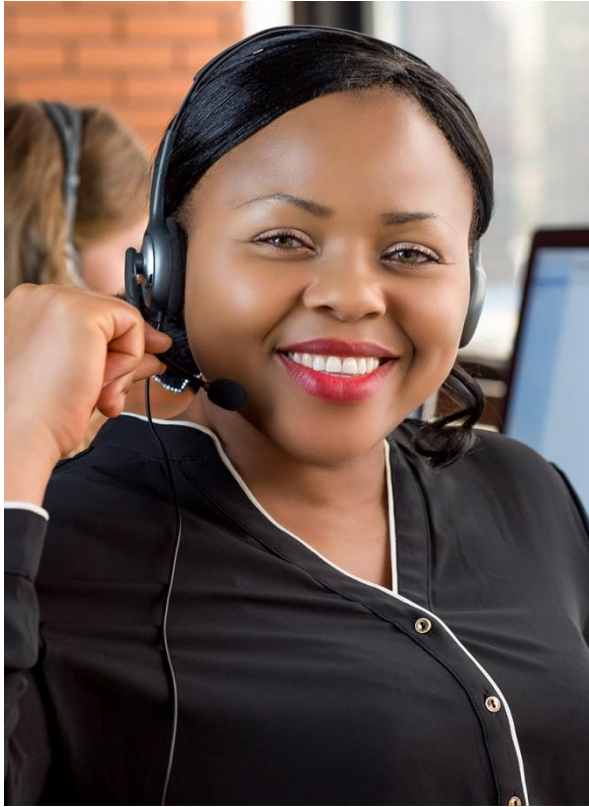


# Toolkit



## Carer Champions

### About carers in the workplace

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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

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

- Understand what a carer champion is and their role within an organisation
- Learn how to shape the carer champion role to reap the key benefits
- Support your carer champions at the beginning of and during their role

### What is a carer champion?

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A carer champion is the vital link between the support that your organisation provides and your employees who are caring and will receive that support. There is no set remit for the role of a carer champion, and this can vary across different organisations. However, in general, the main responsibility of a carer champion is to communicate and promote the policies and provisions that are in place at your organisation to those who need it most, and signpost them to where they can find that information.

In recent research where EFC member organisations completed a survey about [\*The Role of Carer Champions in the Workplace\*](#), the top three skills required or desirable of a carer champion were reported to be good communication skills, empathy and good

listening skills. Other skills mentioned included a willingness to assist promotion of support and to have a good understanding both of what being a carer includes and the rights of a carer.

The responsibilities of a carer champion may include:

- Awareness raising about the definition and role of a carer and promoting engagement of carers to increase identification.
- Being a point of contact for carers when they have an enquiry about the support available in your organisation.
- Signposting carers to relevant information, whether that be internal or external.
- Networking and collaborating with other champions across your organisation.
- Drawing attention to any local or national developments relevant to supporting carers.
- Informing carers of their workplace and wider rights and entitlements and having knowledge on how they can access those rights.

## **Getting the best out of your carer champions**

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Here are some ways that you can really utilise your carer champions so that your carers can receive the best support:

- Carer champions are there to promote the support that you have in place at your organisation, but they need avenues to be able to do this. The top ways that our EFC members are using carer champions to promote the different types of support are through carer awareness raising activities, diversity and inclusion/wellbeing awareness raising activities, emails to staff and workshop sessions for managers.
- If you are a bigger organisation, you may find it beneficial to have more than one carer champion to cover different areas of the organisation. This will ensure that carers are being reached across the whole organisation, they can be identified and your organisation will have a clearer picture of how many carers are in your workforce.
- As well as having more than one carer champion, you may wish to have carer champions that cover different employment levels, for example some carer champions at employee level and some at management and director level. This can ensure that carer champions can be influential at all levels.

- When carving out the role of a carer champion, your organisation may like to shape the objectives around increasing the identification of carers and carers' needs.
- When either trying to recruit or promote carer champions in the workplace, according to EfC members, the best ways to do this are through your organisation's intranet, communications such as e-bulletins and emails and awareness raising events.
- If your organisation has other networks in place such as a Women's Network, a BAME Network or an LGBTQ+ Network, carer champions can use intersectionality (i.e. recognise that individuals may have more than one identity and that these identities may overlap) to share good practice and awareness about caring further afield. There may be employees in different networks who are also caring and therefore if carer champions liaise with other champions and networks in the organisation, information and support can be provided to those who may not identify as a carer.

## Training and support for carer champions

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Providing support for your carer champions at the beginning of their role is helpful to make sure they are equipped to carry out the responsibilities mapped out in your role description. Employers should consider:

- Providing carer awareness training (including using EfC resources where applicable).
- Providing information on carers rights and entitlements in the workplace.
- It is also helpful to provide such information more broadly in the workplace (eg within staff induction and manager training) to help raise awareness of caring more widely.

During their role, carer champions may need continued support and as an organisation you may like to monitor the role and change and progress the role description as you see fit.

- Regular mentoring sessions and specific educational training and workshops are some of the ways that your organisation can support carer champions.
- These sessions and training could be provided by HR, Diversity and Inclusion teams or the carers network, however your organisation finds it appropriate to offer this support.

If a carer champion is taking on the role in addition to their day job, employers should think about whether they will offer a specific time allotment for this during the working week/month. While this may need to be adjusted in the future, it can provide an initial

guide on how much time should be spent on the role and help to manage expectations so that employees do not struggle with workload.

## **Benefits of a carer champion**

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EfC member organisations have reported that having carer champions in place at their organisation has benefitted them in different ways. They have found that employees have felt more comfortable identifying themselves as a carer and there have been more discussions around carers' needs. Carer champions have created more understanding of carers amongst other employees at their organisation and finally, because of the work that carer champions are continuing to do, more carers have come forward to access support that is relevant to them.

## **Good practice points**

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Here are some ways in which EfC member organisations, large and smaller, have been developing and using the role of carer champions to raise awareness of caring in the workplace and promote carer support:

- Providing carer awareness training when a carer champion begins their role so that they are equipped to fulfil it. This training could include information about the roles and responsibilities that carers may have and their statutory rights.
- Providing carer champions with a resource pack to help them begin their role and throughout. A resource pack could include information about the rights and responsibilities around caring, how to promote support in the workplace and how to engage and encourage carers to identify themselves.
- Offering regular catch-up meetings with carer champions to discuss any challenges or new initiatives to encourage carers to identify themselves or join the workplace carers network or support group.
- Encouraging a senior representative to become an executive sponsor to increase exposure and gain support.
- Working with the workplace carers network or support group to promote the carer champion role.
- Actively promoting the carer champion role through the organisation's intranet.

## Contact Employers for Carers

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