

A working carer is someone who is managing both paid work and unpaid caring responsibilities. Carers play an important role in families, communities and broader society by supporting others to have a better quality of life. While caring can be extremely rewarding, it can also be stressful and isolating if carers don't get the support they need.

Supporting carers is simply the right thing to do. From a business perspective, supporting working carers is likely to enhance your reputation in the eyes of employees as well as your customers and clients. It will help you to attract and, importantly, retain staff.

The Carer's Leave Act 2023 makes provisions for employees with caring responsibilities. Any employee who balances work with unpaid care is now entitled to up to five working days within any 12-month period, to care for, or arrange care for, a dependant with long-term care needs. The leave is unpaid, and is a day one right, so there is no minimum service requirement to be eligible.

Create a culture of support. Ensuring your business has a clear and supportive policy could encourage carers to seek support when needed. Identifying carers and understanding their circumstances could be done via staff induction, appraisals or employee surveys.

Employers may want to create a 'carers' register', where employees who have indicated they're carers are listed, enabling access to carers' leave and other benefits. A voluntary carers' passport scheme, where employees hold an individual plan detailing their needs and working arrangements is also an option.

People managers should be familiar with policies and guidance for supporting workplace carers. They should be comfortable having sensitive conversations with working carers and finding out what support they need. They should ensure all employees are aware of the company's approach and understand their own responsibilities in relation to it.

Employees who are carers should be encouraged to talk to their manager or HR contact if they need support. Together they can explore and agree what support options are possible and suitable. Staff should be educated on what it feels like to be a working carer and how they can support their colleagues with caring responsibilities.

Flexible working can be a great support for carers. Caring responsibilities can be sudden and unpredictable, so it's important to provide informal as well as formal options of flexible working. Hire flexibly wherever possible, be creative and empower managers! Provide information to carers and look at peer-to-peer support.

If you're unsure about how to implement any of these strategies or need HR advice and support reach out to natalie@hr2goconsultancy.co.uk 07779 508972 01279 771098