

How to support carers in your workplace - advice from Kelly Harris

(People & Legal Director)

Carers Week 7-13 June 2021



(a thread)



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For managers:

Really listen to your employee's situation (assuming you've encouraged them to share with you and they're happy to do so) and ask them regularly how they are doing outside work. It can be very difficult to talk about caring challenges and/or to ask for help so creating a safe and trusting space is really important.

Ensure your organisation has a Carer's policy and family friendly policies in place (like parental leave & dependent leave) and that leadership is promoting and encouraging people to make use of these.

One size doesn't fit all – each person's circumstances are different so explore what your employee needs and ensure you've agreed flexible working arrangements. If you spot a pattern like someone is "late" to work a lot or taking time off at short notice, discuss that in a supportive way with them – many carers have already done 2-3 hours "work" getting their dependent ready for the day before they even arrive with you. Medical appointments are also unpredictable and employees may appreciate clear guidance on taking time off in work hours to attend these.

Ensure you have medical and mental health support for carers in place.

Form a Carer's support group in work, many people are now facing the double challenge of looking after children and elderly parents so supporting each other through challenges and raising awareness with colleagues can be very beneficial.

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For employees:

Communicate openly with your manager and don't be afraid to ask for help. If your organisation isn't supportive, it might not be the right environment for you as a carer.

Circumstances change much more frequently than those of non-carers and you may need to ask for flexible working arrangements which change over time as your dependent's needs change.

It's easy to say but hard to do - try to make time for self care by setting small goals like ten minutes a day to read, meditate, exercise or listen to music. If time or cover is a challenge, there are online apps and support for your own mental health and fitness which can help.

The Citizens Advice Unit can help with access to benefits, many of which are not means tested so are available to working and non-working carers. Ensure you're accessing what you're entitled to as the financial demands of additional care can be substantial.

