

Staff Carer Networks

A Guide for Employers



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Every-One is a Lincolnshire based charity that aims to work inclusively with people to ensure that every one Carer and people that are cared for are at the centre of their own wellbeing. We do this by developing and delivering a range of person-centred services and projects that work towards **making wellbeing personal**.

A primary focus of the support we provide involves raising awareness of unpaid Carers within the workplace and working with organisations to develop Carer friendly practice and policies. This is through the **Carers Quality Award** and/or the **Employers for Carers project**.

‘An unpaid Carer is someone who looks after a relative or friend who due to ill health, physical or mental illness, disability, frailty or addiction cannot manage without support’

Source: Lincolnshire County Council

Why support Carers?

There are many reasons to support Carers. As well as the **ethical reasons** for supporting Carers, there are also **practical reasons** for businesses or organisations to support them.

A commonly overlooked area of workplace support and wellbeing involves supporting your **employees** who have caring responsibilities.

Supporting employees who are also Carers may give your business or organisation the following benefits:

- Increase in staff morale
- Reduced absenteeism
- Enhance brand reputation
- Retaining valuable and experienced staff members
- Increase resilience and productivity
- It could help transform the business as the network may better represent the customer base
- A network of staff with caring responsibilities will be an asset to help develop customer insight
- Help improve the psychological contract between employer and employee

1 in 7 of your workforce will be caring for someone who is older, disabled or seriously ill. In the current economic climate it is an important time to retain skilled workers rather than recruit and retrain new staff.

How can you support Carers in your workplace?

There are many ways you can support Carers in your workplace. Signing up to the Carers Quality Award and Employers for Carers is a good start. You may also decide to set up a **Staff Carer Network**.

A Staff Carer Network is an internal network within your workplace that is set up to support the employees who are Carers. A Staff Carer Network can be both a source of information for Carers as well as a way to improve their wellbeing and provide an opportunity for peer support.

How do you start a Staff Carer Network?

To be able to provide a Staff Carer Network you will need to appoint a person within your workplace as a **Carer Champion**. This person does not necessarily need to be a Carer themselves but they will need to have an understanding of what defines a Carer. The Carer Champion will coordinate the Staff Carer Network as well as disseminate information and updates to their colleagues with caring responsibilities.

A Carer Champion can begin by asking Carers within the workforce what they would prefer in terms of a Carer Network. Each Staff Carer Network can be different and depends on what is feasible for your organisation or business combined with people's preferences. It may be useful to find out how many staff are Carers within your organisation which can be something that is included in an annual staff survey.

We recommend notifying your colleagues that it is your intention to provide a Carer Network and invite them to take part in shaping it.

Every-One can support you in your role as a Carer Champion by providing you with Carer Champion training and ongoing support and advice.

Your line manager should also have an understanding of what your role as a Carer Champion involves and the extra responsibilities you will be required to undertake.

Staff Carer Networks may include:

- Meeting for a coffee for 20 minutes at a convenient time
- A virtual network on your internal network platform
- The use of a messaging app such as 'Teams'
- Part of a formal agenda for workplace meetings

Your Carers policy could encompass all of the above.

Resources to help you set up a Staff Carer Network:

Employers For Carers

The Employers For Carers online resource provides guidance on setting up Staff Carer Networks. It provides examples of how other organisations have set up and provided their networks for staff who are Carers through the online platform called EFC digital.



The platform also hosts downloadable toolkits such as; Developing a Carers' Policy Toolkit, Engaging Carers in Your Workforce Toolkit, Managing Bereavement Toolkit, Starting and Sustaining a Carers' Network Toolkit, Dementia Toolkit, Workplace Contingency Management toolkits.

Peer Support

Carers networks - workplace examples and tips

Carers networks - tips from EFC members

Employers For Carers can be accessed for free if you are a small to medium enterprise in Lincolnshire by contacting Every-One.

Resources to help you set up a Staff Carer Network cntd:

Every-One provides a number of training packages that can help your staff to improve the support provided to Carers in your workforce.

Carer Awareness Training

Every-One provides Carer Awareness Training that focuses on helping organisations to explore and learn about ways that they can **pro-actively engage** with, and **increase identification**, referral and support of unpaid Carers. This is provided free to organisations in Lincolnshire.

Carer Champion Training

Carer Champion Training provides the information needed for someone to act as a **voice for Carers** within an organisation. They act as a key point of contact for Carer information within the organisation in which they work and will be equipped with the knowledge needed to begin **starting conversations** with staff who are Carers.

Supporting Carers In The Workplace Workshops

The Supporting Carers In the Workplace workshops focus on supporting organisations to develop their support to unpaid Carers in the workplace, helping them develop and implement **Carer friendly** policies and practice. This workshop is useful for Team Leaders and Line Managers who may want to find out how they can better support their staff.

There are a lot of options for setting up a Staff Carers Network and Every-One can help you. The important thing is to start somewhere and begin supporting those employees who are Carers.

Examples of how two organisations have implemented Staff Carer Networks in Lincolnshire

Bishop Grosseteste University

The staff Carer Network at Bishop Grosseteste University consists of a number of methods that aim to engage, involve and inform staff who are Carers. A quarterly newsletter is developed by the Carer Champion which is sent to all staff with Caring responsibilities. Alongside this there is a bimonthly Carers Café that takes place for staff members to meet face to face and provide peer support, share information and take part in discussion.



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UNIVERSITY**

Longhurst Group

The staff Carer Network at Longhurst is a virtual network that involves the use of a monthly staff briefing that includes a range of information and support for staff, including staff with Caring responsibilities. Longhurst group have a dedicated email address for Carers to contact, this means that there is one point of contact for staff with Caring responsibilities and they can get the support they need quickly.

Contact Every-One on: 01522 811582

or email: hello@every-one.org.uk for more information or support