

Welcome from Carers UK's Chair

I am sure that you'll agree with me when I say that your people are your greatest asset and that if you look after them, they will look after your customers and your business. In the current environment, it's more important than ever that we attract new talent into the workforce and retain skilled employees to increase customer satisfaction, improve productivity and cost effectiveness.

Alongside this our ageing population and workforce means that there are more people who need regular personal support and more family members and friends caring for them while also in paid work. At least one in seven employees are now caring for an older, disabled or seriously ill family member or friend and in some organisations this ratio is higher.



Research shows, however, that it takes two years on average for someone to identify as a carer. Many people see themselves primarily as a family member or friend rather than as a carer and can therefore miss out on vital support. Caring is also unpredictable; it can happen overnight or gradually, and it can be short or long term. Without the right support at the right time carers will be under pressure and something will have to give – and it is often their job, with around 600 people a day in the UK leaving work to care.

Policies and practices that support carers are therefore crucial to the resilience and success of your organisation. However, this need not be complicated or costly. It's about knowing your employees and working flexibly with them to find solutions. A small change in working hours or simple things like permission to make personal calls can make all the difference both to a carer and their organisation.

But it's not only carers who need support, managers need to be informed about the issues that employees may face, and what help may be available in the workplace and externally.

The Carer's Leave Act was a vital step forward in providing a legal entitlement to one week's unpaid leave per year for employees caring for someone with a long-term care need. It's prompting employers to identify working carers and explore further support for them. But we know there's still much to be done to raise awareness more widely to reach, support and retain carers in the workplace.

That's where Employers for Carers can help. We came together in 2009 as employers large and small, from a range of sectors, who believe that supporting carers is good for business. I know this to have been absolutely the case when working for Centrica, as I know also do other employers who have joined us over the years. Thanks to the

good work of our member organisations, the landscape of carers and employment has changed irrevocably over the last two decades.

Our growing number of EfC members have also led the way in promoting effective workplace practice to support staff with caring responsibilities – demonstrating the tangible business benefits of better engaged people, lower recruitment costs and turnover, and retention of talent and skills.

Looking to the future there is much that we can do to build on this legacy. Employers for Carers can help your organisation to identify carers and their needs in the workplace, provide practical and sustainable ways in which you can support them and their managers, and reap the business benefits of doing so.

I hope you will join us as we continue to explore ways to support the ever-growing number of carers in our workforce – ultimately, it makes business sense to care for carers.

Nick Baird, Chair, Carers UK