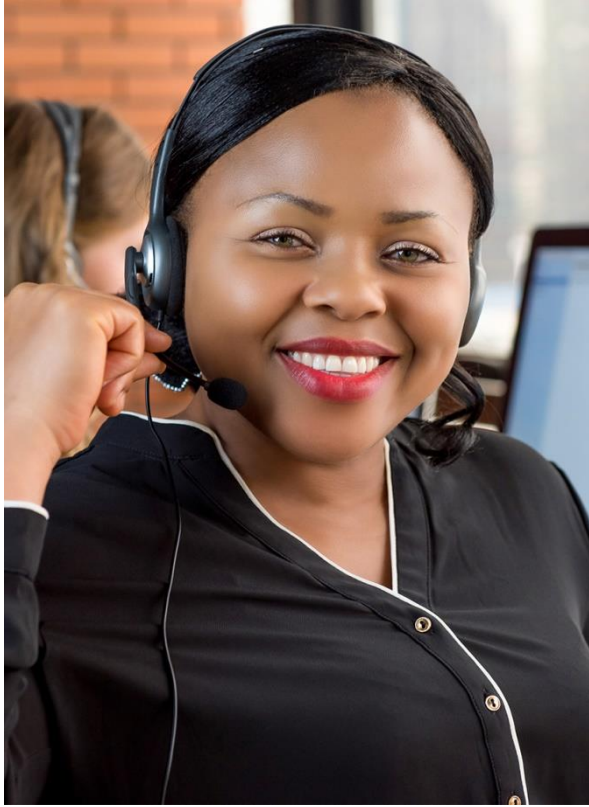


Toolkit



CARER PASSPORT

About carers in the workplace

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

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

- Understand what an employer (workplace) Carer Passport is and how to introduce one in your organisation
- Learn about potential challenges and solutions around implementing a Carer Passport in your workplace
- Promote your Carer Passport scheme

What is an employer Carer Passport scheme?

A growing number of employers in all sectors are running Carer Passport schemes to help identify and support carers and ultimately avoid losing valuable employees from their workforce.

A Carer Passport is essentially a record of (and tool to facilitate) a conversation about the flexibility and support needed to combine work and care. This conversation will typically address details of an employee's current caring situation and how it affects their work and vice versa. It will also usually cover any statutory and organisational flexible working and

leave provisions, any other support currently in place and considerations to address additional needs.

A carers passport provides a straightforward way to document flexibility and support. It also promotes consistency of support as it can be carried into an employee's future roles, without having to repeat the same conversations.

Many carers have had to leave work altogether because of their caring responsibilities, with some being forced to choose between work and caring. A Carer Passport can help create a supportive working culture where staff feel that they have 'permission' to talk about their circumstances in a safe environment. It can also help communicate existing workplace support for carers and encourage managers to apply policies more consistently across the organisation.

You can find employer tools and resources on the [Carer Passport website](#), including a template Carer Passport log, a leaflet to promote the scheme and a sample letter from a director.

Introducing and implementing a Carer Passport

What are the benefits of a Carer Passport?

Employers currently using a Carer Passport scheme report the benefits of having a practical tool which values and recognises people. The Carer Passport allows a constructive conversation to be held, and recorded, between employee and line manager, where adjustments can be made to better support the employee. A Carer Passport helps avoid a delay in the conversation where a situation may have already reached crisis point.

Introducing a Carers Passport can also help to ensure that workplaces address the reality of caring within their workforce in a timely and consistent way so that the employer has the opportunity to agree any working adjustments for an employee as issues arise, minimising impact on essential business operations.

The scheme provides an opportunity to retain skills and knowledge within the workplace, helping to avoid the recruitment and other costs associated with high staff turnover and staff absence.

Consistency

Even where supportive workplace policies and provisions exist, they are not always promoted effectively and consistently by all line managers across the organisation.

Therefore, when employees move to a different team or when a line manager changes, they often find themselves having to explain their caring situation several times which can be very challenging. A change in line manager can make a difference between a situation where carers feel supported to combine work and caring with one where they are potentially at risk of having to reduce hours or leave their job altogether. The Carer Passport should be kept as a 'live document' because caring situations can change at any time. Ensuring the Carer Passport is promoted consistently across the whole organisation can make a big difference to employees with caring responsibilities.

Communication

Many carers struggle to communicate their circumstances to their colleagues and line manager. They may fear a negative response and feel unsure about when they can talk about their caring role and any adjustments they may need. A Carer Passport can be used as a tool by employees to 'break the ice' with their line manager to communicate their caring situation. It permits a controlled, structured conversation between employee and line manager where relevant support can be recorded, provided and promoted consistently within the organisation.

Things to consider when introducing a Carer Passport

When implementing a Carer Passport scheme, it is helpful to be aware of some issues that may arise during the process and think about how you will address them:

- Firstly, it is important to be clear about the status of the Passport and how it is to be used. The Passport can be kept as an informal communication between an employee and line manager and not held or acknowledged centrally. There could potentially, however, be organisational reluctance or confusion about applying it due to concerns about whether it is a change to the employee's contract/formal request for flexible working rather than a more informal adjustment. On the other hand, a less formal Passport may encourage greater take up among carers who may be warier of a document that is recorded centrally. There are therefore both pros and cons to both approaches, but either way the important thing is to be clear about the Passport's status and how it is to be used as this will encourage a more consistent application by line managers.
- Employees may also generally be reluctant to identify themselves as a carer over fears it becomes a label. Therefore, the way the Passport is used within the workplace needs

to respond to this concern by respecting the employee's wishes, and by offering a level of protection to choose the way in which they 'present' (or don't present) their role as a carer to colleagues.

- Where workplaces have established a wider culture which is relatively inflexible, and quite formal in the management of staff, for example managers having limited capacity to agree flexibility, the scheme can sit less comfortably. However, a Carer Passport can provide a mechanism to increase flexibility in these cases and can easily fit into conversations that may already be happening. It should be part of a wider approach to carers as a scheme alone cannot provide a 'fix all' if done in isolation.

Promoting the Carers Passport

The take-up of the Carer Passport by an employee is a voluntary process so requires a strong internal promotion. To ensure this, here are some steps your organisation can take:

- The Passport should be championed by senior management and, in larger organisations, by departmental heads, the HR department, and the Staff Carers Group if there is one.
- Existing communications such as an internal intranet, departmental noticeboards and/or staff briefing sessions should be utilised to promote the Carer Passport
- The Carer Passport can be promoted during all stages of the employee's journey within the organisation. It can be included as part of an induction for new staff, yearly appraisals, or where staff move within the organisation due to promotion, change of role or restructuring. This leads to normalisation of the Passport and becomes a practice that is embedded within the organisation.
- Employees who are in caring roles play an enormous part in promoting the scheme. Their knowledge and insights are key to the development of policy and practice around the Carer Passport. Working carers can also play a significant part in helping to build employee confidence in the scheme.

Employer examples

TSB

At TSB we're continually working on ways we can build an inclusive workplace, where all colleagues have a range of support available to help them be their best at work and grow

their careers with us. TSB's Carers Policy provides paid leave of up to 70 hours per year, helping Carers to juggle work with their caring responsibility.

We recognise that there cannot be a 'one size fits all' approach towards supporting Carers at work. Through our research we understood that Carers may find it difficult to talk openly about their caring responsibilities for fear of being excluded in some way. That's why during National UK Carers Week 2020, introducing the Carers Passport was an important part of our commitment to supporting Carers at TSB.

Since its launch, we have already seen benefits the Carers Passport has brought to both Carers and Managers. It's removed barriers for Carers, providing an easy tool to talk openly in a safe way with their manager and colleagues about what being a Carer means to them and how this may impact their ability to focus on or be at work at times. Managers have been listening and considering how with flexibility and working together, an individual solution that suits everyone can be mutually agreed and captured using the Passport.

TSB colleagues have welcomed that the Passport is a voluntary agreement between them and their Manager, it's available when they need it and can be used as a great conversation starter. As careers grow, or when moving to a new manager, Carers are reassured to know that their Passport moves with them meaning there's no need to explain their caring circumstances each time.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Our internal Carers network continues to grow and promotion of the Passport through sharing of individual experiences has encouraged others to explore how it could support them. The Carers at TSB intranet portal provides information Carers need to know and we continue to explore ways to promote, encourage and make caring visible at TSB.

CMS Cameron McKenna Nabarro Olswang

This year, carers have been and continue to be under more pressure than ever. CMS chose to implement the carers passport to help carers speak to their line manager about their role as a carer and agree how they can best be supported by the firm. CMS wants our carers to feel they can share the challenges they are facing so we can understand and talk about how we can help. The carer passport has made caring responsibilities more visible, both to line managers and other colleagues and has provided a tool to approach what could be viewed as a difficult conversation.

The carer passport was launched during carers week on the Firm's intranet page. Since then, the HR team have been liaising with our teams internationally to ensure employees

and Partners are aware of the passport and its purpose. The carers passport was also promoted as part of our Wellbeing Ambassador scheme as another tool to point employees to if they are struggling with their caring responsibilities.

West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership

[West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership](#) (WY&H HCP) (also known as an integrated care system) includes eight councils, [six acute hospital trusts](#), three mental health trusts and two community trusts, as well as social enterprises and thousands of voluntary and community organisation partners. One in five of staff working in health and care is balancing work whilst providing unpaid care for a loved one. We knew that juggling work and caring can be difficult, emotional and stressful. [Carers UK's research](#) found that it impacts on their health, finances and wellbeing and many left employment because of it.

We know our workforce is our greatest strength and we knew that we had to do something about caring for those who are unpaid carers.

One of our first steps was to engage hospital CEOs as they have a large workforce working around the clock 365 days a year. We did this through presenting at various board meetings and working with Trust HR Directors.

Each hospital appointed a representative to lead, who alongside the project manager from WY&H HCP formed the Working Carers Project Team.

Wanting to ensure we took the best advice we utilised Carers UK and their Employers for Carers forum to seek out how to make this project successful. The EFC membership platform at www.efcdigital.org has lots of advice and guidance on how to not only implement a working carer's passport but also create a culture which is fully supportive of working carers. It also has lots of really useful example resources that we could adapt and utilise. Using these resources we put together a plan. Each hospital trust then formed their own small project team made up of someone from each department that would be needed to roll this out successfully; one from HR, recruitment, the communications team, health and wellbeing team and IT.

Each hospital team worked within their own trust with guidance from the WY&H HCP Working Carers Project Team. We met regularly, shared good practice and overcame barriers together. It was actually relatively easy.

Within two months the first trust was ready to launch and others very soon followed. The trusts that implemented earlier started feeding back positive case stories from working

carers that had been helped by the working carers passport. This reinforced the message that this was the right thing to do and spurred on other trusts.

Head to the [Carer Passport page](#) to read West Yorkshire and Harrogate Health and Care Partnership's full case study and more of our member case studies. There is also a link to the Carer Passport website where you can find more information and resources.

Contact Employers for Carers

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