



Does your company have a policy or arrangement in place that allows for carers to balance work with their care responsibilities?

Question developed with [Carers UK](#)

Rationale for question

As a result of changing demographics, such as an ageing population, increasing numbers of individuals will become carers. In the UK, three in five individuals will care for someone at some point in their lives. Four million people of working age are carers yet despite their increasing numbers, carers continue to suffer disadvantage in the workplace. Research from the Equal Opportunities Commission indicated that one in five carers have had to give up their paid positions. As a result, many find themselves in situations of long-term financial and social disadvantage.

Since April 2007 carers in the UK have the [right to request](#) flexible working, but there is no obligation on the employer to provide it. However, retaining carers through supportive policies and arrangements can bring significant benefits to a company. The loss of carers from the workforce is harmful: as the peak age for caring is 45 to 64 years old, companies lose experienced employees, often from senior positions, who are difficult to replace. Companies can incur considerable costs in recruiting and training new employees. Having a good policy and suitable arrangements within a company will enable businesses to play a key role in addressing the challenges of long-term financial and social disadvantage

that face many carers. It demonstrates company care and consideration for its workforce and is good for staff morale and commitment.

Arrangements to support carers usually need to be regularly reviewed and be tailored to fit their individual requirements. In order to determine the best response, employers should assess carers' circumstances, the level of support needed from work and the impact of the situation on the business and co-workers. This could be done through a workplace audit or focus groups in larger companies, or one-to-one discussion in smaller organisations. Support options may include offering flexible working arrangements, paid leave or a sabbatical so that carers may balance their responsibilities. If it is judged to be a long-term problem, it might be necessary to consider a job move or a job share. Beyond this, employers should also develop a plan for emergency situations, particularly since these are relevant to all workers, not simply those that are carers.

Defining terms

The basic definition of a 'carer' is a person who, without being paid, cares for someone in need of support due to long-term illness, disability or old age.

Companies may decide to amend or clarify the definition as needed. Some employers state that the carer need not be related or living with the individual receiving care. Some employers also specify that the definition of carers excludes people looking after children who do not have disability or long-term illness. Others would say that any worker that has a child is a 'carer'.

Primary and Secondary answer requirements

ANSWERING YES

Companies must:

1. describe the policies or arrangements they have in place to support carers;
2. show how they have assessed the needs of employees who are carers;
3. explain how they determined the best response, taking into consideration the implications for colleagues;
4. state what provision exists for emergency situations; and
5. explain how often the policies or arrangements are reassessed.

Companies may:

1. describe the impact of their policies or arrangements.

ANSWERING NO

Companies must:

1. explain why they do not or cannot answer YES to this question, listing the business reasons, any mitigating circumstances or other reasons that apply.

Companies may:

1. describe any applicable practices, even if they were not developed specifically to meet the needs of carers; and
2. mention any future intentions regarding this issue.

ANSWERING NOT APPLICABLE

Companies must:

1. confirm that they are made up of directors only and have no employees.

DON'T KNOW is not a permissible answer to this question.

NO ANSWER YET is only permissible under extraordinary circumstances and then for only a limited period.