

**Supporting young
adult carers in
the workplace:
A guide for employers**

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Learning and Work Institute (L&W) is an independent policy and research organisation dedicated to promoting lifelong learning, full employment and inclusion. We strive for a fair society in which learning and work helps people realise their ambitions and potential throughout life. We do this by researching what works, influencing policy and implementing new ways to improve people's experiences of learning and employment. We believe a better skilled workforce, in better paid jobs, is good for business, good for the economy, and good for society.

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INTRODUCTION

This guide aims to help employers provide support for young adult carers to gain and stay in work. It includes practical information, resources and case studies which demonstrate the types of support employers can offer to young adult carers.

This resource is complemented by Carers Trust's Getting into work: A Guide for Young Adult Carers in England.

https://www.carers.org/sites/default/files/employment_booklet_a5_leaflet_version_4_final.pdf

This guide was developed by the Learning and Work Institute (L&W). L&W is leading the way in raising awareness of the challenges faced by young adult carers, aged 16-24, in accessing learning and work. We're working with learning providers, employers and carers services to support this group of young people to make the most of their opportunities and achieve their potential.

For more information about L&W's work on young adult carers, please contact Nicola Aylward at nicola.aylward@learningandwork.org.uk.

L&W would like to thank the following organisations for their support in developing this guide:

- Carers Trust
- Deloitte
- Employers for Carers
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Leicester City Council
- Imago
- NHS Employers
- Openworks Foundation

ABOUT YOUNG ADULT CARERS

Young adult carers are young people aged 16-24 who provide unpaid care to someone, usually a member of their family, on a regular basis. They may care for a parent, sibling, grandparent or other relative who has a disability, long-term illness, mental health problem or other condition which results in a need for care, support or supervision.

According to the 2011 census, there are more than 314,000 young adult carers aged 16-24 in England and Wales. However, the actual number of young adult carers will be much higher as many do not consider themselves to be carers or have the confidence to tell others about their caring role.

Having a caring role can seriously affect young people's ability to find and stay in work. Their caring responsibilities can mean that they are occasionally late or need to leave work at short notice. They may also feel tired,

frustrated or anxious at work, leading to a lack of concentration. Because of their caring commitments, many young adult carers also find it difficult to attend social activities outside of work and build relationships with their colleagues. This can lead to them feeling 'different' or even being bullied by their peers.

This guide can help you to support young adult carers to overcome the challenges they may face in the workplace, improving their productivity, morale and confidence to carry out their role.



WHY EMPLOYERS SHOULD SUPPORT YOUNG ADULT CARERS

Here are just some of the reasons why you should support young adult carers to gain and stay in work:

It makes good business sense

In the UK there are 6.5 million carers – these are your customers and potential customers. Providing good support to young adult carers will improve your public profile and enable you to empathise and engage with a large section of your customer base, while simultaneously helping these employees to be productive, confident and happy in their jobs.

It helps you capture and retain the best talent for your business

Young adult carers gain a huge range of transferable skills from their caring role. These may include:

- Being more mature, empathetic and responsible than their peers;
- Having strong communication, time management and budgeting skills;
- Being self-motivated and able to work independently; and
- Increased self-worth, self-esteem and confidence from making a difference.

All of these skills and competencies mean that young adult carers can be excellent employees in any setting. Over 5% of young people in England and Wales are young adult carers, so providing effective support to this group opens up your recruitment to a substantial number of young people, developing a strong talent pipeline for your business.

It improves support for other employees and customers

Many of the changes we suggest in this guide could benefit all of your employees at one time or another, as caring responsibilities can affect anyone at short notice. Having this support in place will mean that all employees with caring responsibilities, not just young people, are able to positively manage their work and caring commitments.

It keeps you up to date with legislation

This guide can also help you to ensure that your practice is in line with current legislation, which requires employers to protect carers from unfavourable treatment in the workplace. Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful for employers to discriminate against employees because of their association with an elderly or disabled person. By supporting young adult carers to stay in work, you can make sure that you are not unintentionally discriminating against this group.

The rest of this guide demonstrates the types of support that you can put in place for young adult carers to successfully manage their caring and work commitments.



Over 5% of young people in England and Wales are young adult carers



HINTS AND TIPS FOR SUPPORTING YOUNG ADULT CARERS

This section gives some hints and tips for employers to support young adult carers at each stage of employment: recruitment and selection, induction, ongoing support and progression. These recommendations are based on the things young adult carers have told us make a difference to their working lives.

These suggestions are exactly that, and you can pick and choose the ones which suit your workplace. You don't have to put all of this in place to support a young adult carer, and not all of these tips are appropriate for every employer.

If you're new to supporting young adult carers and would like to talk about these options, please contact Nicola Aylward at nicola.aylward@learningandwork.org.uk.

Recruitment and selection

1. Make it clear that you welcome applications from young adult carers

Young adult carers may be reluctant to declare their caring responsibilities in an application if they think it will stop them from getting a job. You can encourage young adult carers to declare their caring role by including a statement that you welcome applications from carers of any age in job adverts and application forms.

2. Provide dates for interviews and assessments well in advance

Young adult carers' responsibilities can change on a daily basis, depending on the type of support the person they care for requires. Providing them with dates and times for assessments and interviews well in advance can help them to put alternative support arrangements in place, reducing the likelihood of them being unable to attend on the day.

3. Provide a named contact on recruitment materials

Occasionally, young adult carers may need to deal with an emergency involving the person they care for. Providing a named contact on recruitment materials will enable a young adult carer to contact you if this occurs on the day of their interview or assessment for a job.

4. Check your policies and procedures

Before recruiting a young adult carer, you may need to review your policies and procedures to ensure that they will have access to support, should they need it. This includes general day-to-day support as well as support for emergency situations. For example, you may want to consider developing a policy which offers a certain amount of paid time off for employees to provide emergency unpaid care for dependents.

Leicester City Council's carers' champions

The council has identified carers' champions across the different departments of the organisation. These colleagues act as a main point of contact for employees and their line managers, and can advise on the types of support available to help employees manage their caring and work commitments. They can also act as mentors to employees with caring responsibilities, providing them with additional support in their role.

Induction

5. Encourage declaration

Make sure there are systems in place, both formal and informal, that will enable and encourage a young adult carer to declare their caring role at any point during their employment. Having a carers' champion or key contact for carers to go to for support can encourage young adult carers to declare their responsibilities and ask for help.

It's also important that carers are visible in the workplace. You may want to put up posters or other materials which demonstrate your commitment to supporting carers and signpost young adult carers to staff who can provide support. You could also run events during Carers Week (normally held in June each year). These activities will help young adult carers to feel that their needs are important, and that they are likely to receive the support they need.

6. Speak to the young adult carer about the support they may need

The young adult carer is the expert on their own situation and the difficulties they experience. With your guidance, they are best placed to know what support they need. Be empathetic, approachable and understanding. Make sure you provide opportunities for a young adult carer to talk about their caring role and the impact that it has on them, their work and learning. But don't pressurise them to talk – it's important to find the right balance.

Leicester City Council's Carer's Passport

Leicester City Council is committed to ensuring that employees who have caring responsibilities are supported in the workplace. Their Carer's Passport takes an employee-centred approach to identifying the support they need to positively manage their work and caring commitments. The Passport enables line managers and caring employees to discuss:

- the employee's caring responsibilities;
- how caring might impact on their work role;
- the support that would help the employee; and
- emergency contact arrangements.

The contents of the Passport are entirely confidential, enabling the employee to be honest about their situation and support needs. The Passport is accompanied by a guide which sets out the support that the council offers to caring employees, ensuring that all carers are aware of the full range of support available to them.

The Carer's Passport has been hugely successful in raising awareness and understanding of the challenges faced by caring employees across the council. As a result, line managers are more comfortable speaking to carers about their caring responsibilities, enabling carers to access personalised and tailored support which reduces the impact of caring on their work role.

7. Offer support with travel and parking

Providing support with travel, for example by paying for a travelcard through salary sacrifice or introducing the Bike to Work scheme [link to: <http://www.bike2workscheme.co.uk/>], can help reduce a young adult carer's concerns about paying to get to work. Providing a parking space can also help to cut down travel time and reassure a young adult carer that they can get home quickly if they need to.

8. Flexible working

All employees have a statutory right to request flexible working. This can be a formal or informal arrangement and can have many benefits for employers as well as employees. As a result, many employers offer flexible working as a matter of course. For carers, flexible working can be particularly important in helping them to balance the demands of work and caring. However, all caring situations are different. Talk to the individual young adult carer and find out how flexible working could help them. Make sure that you know the process for requesting flexible working in your organisation so you can support the young adult carer if they wish to formally request this arrangement.

Imago's apprenticeships for young adult carers

Imago runs three young carers services in East Sussex, Kent and Southwark. In 2012, Kent Young Carers developed an apprenticeship programme to support young adult carers to gain valuable work experience. The programme follows the same structure as a standard Intermediate Apprenticeship and combines on-the-job training with day release at college. However, the service has built flexible working into their apprenticeship, allowing young adult carers to fit their caring responsibilities around their work and learning.

So far, the flexibility of Kent Young Carer's apprenticeship has enabled two young adult carers to complete the programme, and a third apprentice has just started with the service. As a result, Kent Young Carers has gained two enthusiastic employees who fully understand the need of their service users, placing young adult carers at the heart of their offer.

Ongoing support and progression

9. Promote a positive and supportive working environment

Many young adult carers are reluctant to ask for support if they feel that their line manager is not approachable or interested in helping them. Make it clear to your managers and employees that you want staff to feel comfortable raising issues or support needs, that you and other managers will take these seriously and, where possible, put support arrangements in place. This will help all staff, not just young adult carers, to feel supported and valued in the workplace.

10. Be discreet

Some young adult carers may be open and vocal about their caring role, but many will not. This may be because they consider it to be private, or because they feel uncomfortable. Many young adult carers report being bullied or discriminated against because of their caring responsibilities. It's therefore not surprising that they may not want their personal situation to be public knowledge. Think about who needs to know in order to support them, for example HR, their supervisor and/or their colleagues.

11. Let the young adult carer have access to their mobile phone

Many young adult carers often feel guilty about leaving the person they care for. Allowing a young adult carer to leave their mobile phone on at work can help to alleviate some of these concerns as it means they can be contacted quickly in an emergency.

"I think it's important for employees to know that they can go and talk to their managers or whoever is in charge at that particular time if they need to. Because if you're too scared to talk to someone about it then you're not going to get the support you need, which might stop you from doing your job. If someone's scared to ask for support then they're just going to struggle without it."

(Young adult carer)

12. Give the young adult carer their rota or shifts well in advance

If your young adult carer works shifts then speak to them about the best times for them on particular work patterns or shifts may help them to fit their caring responsibilities around their job. It would also be useful for the young person to be provided with information about their rota or shifts well in advance – at least two weeks if at all possible. This can help them to put alternative support arrangements in place for the person they care for, reducing the likelihood of them being unable to work a shift.

If your young adult carer is on a zero hours contract, try to provide them with as much stability and certainty as possible. Regular hours and shifts can help a young adult carer to balance the demands of working and caring more effectively. You should also be understanding if and when a young adult carer turns down the hours you offer them. This should not be seen as a sign that they are not committed to the job.



Young adult carers gain a huge range of transferable skills from their caring role.



13. Give the young adult carer the option to work from home , where appropriate

Having the resources and materials to work from home can enable a young adult carer to continue working if they need to leave at short notice. Access to a PC or laptop can greatly help a young adult carer to work from home. Ask your young adult carer whether they have access to a PC or laptop at home. If not, find out whether your organisation could provide one on a temporary basis.

14. Develop peer support networks and groups

Young adult carers often feel very alone and isolated. Contact with other young adult carers can help them to realise that there are other young people in a similar situation to them. Simply knowing that they are not alone can be a big confidence boost. Many young adult carers are more likely to talk frankly and honestly to their peers. Concerns about the person they care for, the uncertainty of their role, what will happen if the person they care for dies, their own future – these are all emotive and difficult issues that many young carers feel more comfortable talking to other young adult carers about. You could set up a general carers group or try and facilitate young adult carers across the organisation to make contact with each other. You may also wish to support a young adult carer to make contact with their local carers' service. Many carers' services run groups for young adults with caring responsibilities and can provide specialist and personalised support.

Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust's carers groups

The trust has three carers groups which meet on a monthly basis, and it is these which have driven the development of their support for carers. Many attendees of the groups are both employees and service users, and this led the trust to create a carers strategy which took into account both groups of people. Their strategy for carers has been backed up by an organisational commitment to supporting carers, led by a senior board level champion. The needs of carers, and how best to support them are now taken into account through admissions and discharge procedures as well as by managers.

15. Provide effective one-to-one support

Regular one-to-one meetings with their line manager or mentor can give a young adult carer plenty of opportunities to discuss any difficulties they may be experiencing and for managers to identify any additional support needs. These meetings may also enable you to put some wider support in place to enable a young adult carer to cope with the emotional and practical demands of caring. This could include anger management sessions, gym membership, group support or one-to-one counselling sessions. Talk to the individual young adult carer about the difficulties they are experiencing, the impact on their lives, future consequences and what you could do to help.

16. Provide personalised and holistic support (or signpost to relevant services)

Young adult carers often lead complex lives and regularly juggle a range of responsibilities and pressures – such as managing household finances, communicating with formal services, dealing with housing and benefits issues, sorting out medication and respite care, health and emotional difficulties. Personalised and holistic support is fundamental in enabling a young adult carer to overcome both practical and emotional barriers to work. You can signpost young adult carers to the organisations and websites included in the 'Further support and useful resources' section of this guide.

17. Run awareness raising or training sessions with all staff

Increasing awareness of the needs of employees who are carers amongst all staff can help to develop a supportive culture in the workplace. This could be achieved through informal Lunch and Learn sessions which give staff information about the issues related to caring, or by offering a more structured training programme for employees, such as the e-learning package offered by OpenLearn Works (see the 'Further support and useful resources' section of this guide).

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust's lunch and learn sessions

The trust has done a lot of work with managers across the organisation to build a culture where carers' needs are treated as an equal priority as working parents. It is vital that this key group of staff understands the legal and organisational issues connected with caring, and the employer's obligations towards employees who are carers. Additionally an annual programme of Lunch and Learn sessions for carers and managers has been promoted to all staff. The response amongst managers to these sessions has been particularly positive with one manager stating that the learning session has "exceeded expectations". The addition of managers to these sessions has served a dual purpose of maximising support for carers as well as helping to create a positive, 'carer friendly' culture.

FURTHER SUPPORT AND USEFUL RESOURCES

This section includes links to websites and online resources which will help you support young adult carers in the workplace. Although many of these resources are aimed discuss support for carers of all ages. Most of these resources provide generic advice about supporting carers of all ages in the workplace, but much of the information will be relevant or can be tailored to young adult carers.

Carers Trust

Carers Trust's website has a guidance page on how employers can support young adult carers in employment. This covers:

- Creating a carers policy for your workplace
- Be aware of your duties under the Equality Act 2010
- Raise awareness of young adult carers in your workplace
- Engage with local carers services
- Links to further support and guidance

Carers Trust also has a webpage on 'who are young adult carers?' and the challenges that young adult carers face in employment, including:

- Being vulnerable to unemployment
- The need for flexible work
- Case studies of young adult carers

Link:

How you can support young adult carers in employment: <https://professionals.carers.org/how-you-can-support-young-adult-carers-employment>

Challenges young adult carers face in employment: <https://professionals.carers.org/young-adult-carers-employment-and-training>

Who are young adult carers: <https://professionals.carers.org/who-are-young-adult-carers>

Employers for Carers

A group of employers committed to supporting working carers and helping employers retain employees who care. The group offers a range of guides and "toolkits" for employers as well as examples of best practice in supporting carers in the workplace.

Link: <http://www.employersforcarers.org/>

Equal Partners in Care

A joint project between NHS Education for Scotland and the Scottish Social Services Council to implement the Scottish carers strategy. They offer practical guidance for employers to help them develop a working culture which values carers and case studies on successful outcomes arising from following this guidance.

Link: <http://www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/home/portals-and-topics/equal-partners-in-care/practice-guidance.aspx>

OpenLearn Works

This organisation offers a free online course called 'Caring Counts in the Workplace'. Aimed at managers and policy makers, it focuses on supporting working carers. The course covers:

- The business case for supporting carers
- Identifying carers' skills, qualities and attributes
- Supporting carers in the workforce
- Creating an action plan

Link: <http://www.open.edu/openlearnworks/course/view.php?id=2111>

Skills for Care

An employer-led workforce development body for adult social care in England. They have developed a free guide called 'Carers in Your Workforce Matter'. It is aimed at employers in the health and social care sector, but much of the advice is transferable to other sectors and applicable to supporting young adult carers in the workplace.

Link: <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Document-library/Skills/Carers/Carers-in-your-workforce-matter---complete-pack.pdf>

We Are Macmillan

A charity which supports individuals who have been diagnosed with cancer and provide information and resources for health and social care professionals. Their website provides information for employers and small businesses on how to support an employee who is caring for someone with cancer. This includes:

- Time off for carers
- Flexible working
- Supporting carers during bereavement

Link: <http://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/organising/work-and-cancer/if-youre-an-employer/supporting-carers.html#44821>

Working Families

An organisation which helps employers consider the support they can offer to employees who are parents and carers. Their website includes case studies, guides, toolkits and model policies.

Link: <http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk/employers/>



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