

# Supporting Employees Who Are Caring for an Older Relative or Friend

1st November 2020

It may not be obvious to you in your role as a manager, but it's likely that many of the employees you supervise are caring for an older relative or friend. Providing care is time-consuming and stressful and it has an impact on employee health, productivity and wellbeing. In this article you'll find helpful suggestions on how to offer resources and support to the people you manage who may be caring for an older relative or friend.

## Millions of employees are carers

Consider these facts from [Carers UK](#):

Over three million people juggle care with work. However, the demands of caring mean that 1 in 5 carers are forced to give up work altogether.

42% of carers are men. Men are more likely than women to keep their caregiving responsibilities to themselves and not share this with their supervisor or colleagues, a study by MetLife found.

Employees of all ages can be carers, including the youngest employees in the workforce.

## Ways to support employees with care responsibilities

There are several steps managers can take to offer support to employees and boost productivity, employee engagement and wellbeing. These include:

Make sure employees are aware of the assistance programme. Encourage employees to take advantage of it. Research shows carers need information on managing stress, keeping a loved one safe, balancing work and family and finding resources, services and support. The assistance programme offers assistance with these and many other issues. The free-phone number to reach a consultant is on the website home page.

Get to know employees. Without being intrusive, take an interest in people's lives outside of work so that employees feel comfortable enough to share information about a care challenge they may be facing.

Offer flexibility to support employees in performing their jobs to the best of their

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ability. Become familiar with the flexible work options your organisation offers and what you need to do to request an arrangement for an employee. That might mean temporarily agreeing to adjust an employee's schedule or hours, or use sick leave to care for a family member who is ill.

If an employee needs additional time off to handle care responsibilities or deal with an emergency, consult HR. Employers are required to provide employees with leave, also known as time off for dependants, see [Gov.UK](https://www.gov.uk). The Employment Rights Act 1996 gives all employees the right to take a 'reasonable' amount of time off work to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. Whether this time off is paid is at the discretion of the employer.