



Civil Service HR

Supporting our Carers in the Civil Service

June 2021

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1. Foreword

Dear Colleagues

As I reflect on the last year, so much has changed around us. However, our commitment to support carers and the amazing job they do both at home and at work remains a key priority.

Our ambition is to make the Civil Service the most inclusive employer in the UK. We want carers in the Civil Service to have the same opportunities as non-carers to develop, progress and fulfil their career aspirations. That means we need to create workplaces where all of our people feel they belong in their organisation, have a voice and the opportunity to speak up, and can be their authentic selves at work.

The visibility of carers has certainly been important over the past year and, as a society, we have become much more aware of their massive contribution. In the Civil Service today, an estimated 1 in 5 have caring responsibilities. Events have seen many of us moving into new caring roles or changing the caring roles we already had. I know this has not been easy. I am extremely proud of the way civil servants have adapted and changed their ways of working to support each other and the public. Thank you from me and all the senior leadership team.

Last year, we launched the Civil Service Carers' Strategy which set out our vision and strategic priorities for carers over the next 5 years. In June 2020, we published a progress report with our actions for the next 12 months.

We are making good progress in implementing the Strategy. I am delighted that 12 departments now have Carer Confident accreditation, acknowledging the comprehensive carers support they provide for staff in their departments. Our overall work for carers was recognised in last year's Personnel Today awards where the Civil Service won Family Friendly Employer of the Year.

This report sets out our achievements over the last 12 months and our plans going forward. My aim, as the Civil Service Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Inclusion Champion for Carers, is to ensure that we learn from the different ways of working which we have experienced over the last year. In this way, we can continue to ensure our carers are able to give of their best in both in their caring role and at work.



Alex Chisholm
Civil Service COO & Inclusion Champion for Carers

2. What support is available to our carers in the Civil Service?

The following initiatives help civil servants to combine work with caring responsibilities.

- Departmental **Carers' Charters** signpost carers and their managers to information and policies on such topics as flexible working, special leave, career breaks and parental leave.
- The **Civil Service Carer's passport** is drawn up in discussion between a carer and their manager as a record of the support being provided to help the carer combine work and caring.
- The **Carer's Passport video** helps people to fill in a carer's passport. It features a number of civil servants talking about how they have used a passport to make their lives easier.
- **Special Leave** guidance encourages managers to look sympathetically at requests to provide special leave to support carers.
- **The Civil Service Carers' Network** (CSCN) brings together representatives from over 40 carers' networks across the Civil Service to share experiences and help develop guidance and support.
- **Departmental Carer Networks** provide support for staff in their department who have caring responsibilities.
- **The Civil Service Inclusion Champion for Carers (Alex Chisholm) and Departmental Carer Champions** provide leadership to create and embed a carer-inclusive culture within the Civil Service and individual departments.
- **The Charity for Civil Servants** offers support and has set up a dedicated site for civil servants. Individuals can **log into the Charity for Civil Servants' website** using their work email address.
- Many departments are members of **Employers for Carers**. Their resources include learning materials for managers to help them understand the issues carers face. Look out for your departmental code enabling you to access their resources.

2. What support is available to our carers in the Civil Service?

In addition, all civil servants, including carers, have access to the following wellbeing services.

- **Employee Assistance Programme (or equivalent):** Externally provided EAP services are available 24/7, 365 days a year. They can provide telephone access to trained counsellors and source information and support. Confidentiality is guaranteed. EAP services are also there to support managers. They can, for example, coach them on how best to approach sensitive situations, provide information on mental health conditions and advise if the situation is impacting their health.
- **Mental Health First Aiders (or equivalent):** These are colleagues who are trained to listen, reassure and respond in a crisis, and are able to signpost someone to the help they require.
- **Occupational Health:** They will provide medical advice and advise about assessments and workplace adjustment requirements.
- **Human Resources:** This could be the HR Casework team, HR Business Partner or HR team which can support with individual HR issues.
- **Departmental Workplace Adjustment Team or Civil Service Workplace Adjustment Service:** These teams have experience of providing adjustments and may be able to offer solutions or draw on experience.
- The **A-Z of Wellbeing** was created by civil servants from a number of different departments. It brings together lots of wellbeing resources in one place, including links to printable guides, activities to engage teams and top tips from other civil servants on looking after your wellbeing.
- The Learning Platform for Government has free online courses available on [wellbeing](#), [stress](#) and [resilience](#).

3. What is happening in departments to support carers?

The section below sets out some of the initiatives being taken by a number of Civil Service departments.

BEIS

- A Carers' Information Pack helps people to identify themselves as carers. It provides information about the Carers' Network, the Carer's Passport, managing stress as a carer and other useful resources. The Carers' Network has also developed an Information Pack for managers of those with caring responsibilities.
- The Carers' Network holds fortnightly 'Care for a Cuppa' sessions, currently online, to provide peer-to-peer support to its members. They also have a dedicated mailbox, intranet page and MS Teams Channel for members which enables them to share information about events in BEIS and more widely which may be of interest to members.

Cabinet Office

- Guidance has been launched to support carers in response to COVID-19. This includes a greater use of home working and adjusting working times and hours.
- During Carers' Week 2020, the Cabinet Office Carer Champion, Gareth Rhys Williams, launched a video highlighting the issues faced by carers during the pandemic.
- The Carers' Network has shared case studies to highlight the issues faced by young carers. [The Cabinet Office Champion launched a blog](#) on Young Carers' Action Day on the challenges faced by young carers and how civil servants can reach out to support them.

Companies House

- A virtual group chat was set up to reassure carers affected by lockdown that they had somewhere to seek support, stay in contact with other carers and share information.
- "Supporting line managers and carers in the workplace" learning was carried out to raise line manager understanding.
- Regular events, "Carers Get Together Sessions", are held to raise awareness, provide a safe space to ask questions and receive support including from external experts.

3. What do we know about carers in the Civil Service?

Crown Commercial

- The Carers' Network focuses on sharing lived experiences to encourage conversations around caring and how to offer and receive support.
- Podcasts and blogs are used to share personal insights to demystify the support and help available.
- A comprehensive Carers' Charter acts as a single point of useful information and guidance.
- The focus in Carers' Week 2021 is on encouraging people to complete the carer's passport.

DHSC

- The Carers' Network and HR have jointly created guides for carers and their managers focusing on how to start conversations and avenues of support.
- A COVID questionnaire was issued to understand the benefits and challenges COVID working brought to carers.
- There have been a series of blogs and events as part of Carers' Week, Carers' Rights Day and Young Carers' Action Day.
- COVID quick guides have been issued for line managers of carers.

DWP

- A dedicated Carers' Hub has been set up on their Intranet to bring together the guidance, support products, good practice and stories relating to those with caring responsibilities.
- Formal recording of carer information through their HR system has been introduced as part of the response to the pandemic.
- The Special Leave Policy has been reviewed to encourage managers to consider providing special leave for non-emergency carer appointments.
- Carer Advocates have been piloted in the Child Maintenance Group. The aim is to provide a safe space for carers to share concerns and receive guidance as well as providing a valuable source of information for line managers. DWP plans to roll these out across the whole department.
- DWP's monthly departmental pulse survey includes specific questions on how the pandemic has impacted carers.

4. The Civil Service Carers' Network - a message from the Network Chairs

The Civil Service Carers' Network (CSCN) exists to support the networks which provide direct support to carers in Civil Service departments and other public bodies.

This year, the demands on our networks have been greater than ever before. Many of our colleagues have become carers for the first time. Existing carers have faced substantial increases in their responsibilities or have faced the loss of their loved ones.

When the Civil Service Carers' Strategy was launched, senior leaders committed to creating a carer-inclusive Civil Service. Civil Service HR's central policy teams showed that commitment from the start of the pandemic, working closely with the CSCN throughout to understand our carers' changing needs and to reflect that in central guidance. Our networks tell us that this guidance made a real difference when implemented by their organisations.

Beyond the demands of the pandemic, the CSCN has worked to:

- help colleagues to identify themselves as carers and find the support they need through events and communications for Carers' Week, Young Carers' Action Day and Carers' Rights Day
- highlight the unique challenges our young adult carers face with a Young Carers' Action Day event
- recognise the wonderful individuals and teams who provide exemplary support to our carers through our Carers' Champion awards
- facilitate carer focus groups to support discussions on how policy and practice can be enhanced to deliver a carer-inclusive Civil Service.

As we move out of lockdown, we are more committed than ever to our agreed areas of work:

- to create a forum for the networks to work together to share knowledge, experience, and resources
- to collectively share practical tips and experience for use by our members
- to promote a positive workplace culture for carers across the Civil Service
- to raise awareness of the business benefits of supporting carers in the workplace
- to act as a critical friend to help the Civil Service develop and improve the support it provides to our civil servants who are carers.

5. The experience of Young Carers

This year, the Civil Service Carers' Network ran a special event highlighting the issues faced by young adult carers.

Many of their challenges have been exacerbated by the pandemic. It is really important that we understand the issues young carers face and provide resources to support them. Here are some of the experiences of our young carers.

Jacob - Caring for my younger brother

I have never really known what it is like not to be a carer. My younger brother has learning disabilities, autism, epilepsy and severe food allergies. From being quite young, I learnt how to communicate with him despite the fact he can't really speak.

I learnt how to manage his very challenging behaviour. As a carer for someone with complex and varied needs, hospital and other appointments are an omnipresent fact of life. With that, comes the need to explain to many people why you need to be elsewhere. The Carer's Passport is such an important tool. If you are a carer, please do take the time to complete one.



Ellie - My caring responsibilities

My role as a young carer steamrollered during the pandemic. My mum's dementia crept up on us.

Navigating the complex nature of her condition whilst balancing work commitments seemed an impossible task. It was made all the more difficult by the pace of my previous job.

When I applied for a job with the Civil Service Fast Stream. I wondered why they were asking whether I was a carer. My suspicions were silenced when I received my welcome letter.

I was immediately reassured that the motivation was one of support. The mechanisms in place have allowed me to have open conversations with my line manager about my needs and how they can be met. Caring is an intrinsic part of my identity and the steps taken by the Civil Service have helped me to see that those commitments no longer have to exist in tension with my professional aspirations.



6. What does the 2020 People Survey tell us about our carers?

Every year, civil servants fill out a questionnaire asking them about their work experiences. This People Survey helps us to understand the characteristics of carers in our workforce. The results help us to develop our carer provision and priorities for the coming year which are set out in section 8 below.

In autumn 2020, **319,935** people, from 106 Civil Service organisations, completed the survey giving an overall response rate of **66%**. The results for carers were as follows.

- **20% (65,546)** of respondents said they were a **carer**. This rose from 67,539 in 2018 to 85,074 in 2019 and has now dropped back to around the 2018 level.
- **56%** (36,614) identified as **females** compared to **35%** (22,629) as **males**.
- The **age group** with the highest number of carers were **45 to 54** year olds followed by those aged **55 plus**.
- **33%** (21,623) of carers said that they had a **long-term health condition or illness**.
- More carers **work full-time 49,046 (75%)** than **part-time 15,823 (24%)**.
- The **Employee Engagement Index** for carers was **63% in 2020**. This is up four percentage points since 2019 (59%) but lower than for non-carers (65%).

The 2020 People Survey saw the introduction of three new questions for carers.

- **Carer's passport: 11%** of carers said they had a carer's passport, **67%** said they did not and **22%** said that they did not know what this was or how to get one.
- **74%** of carers responded positively to the question - **I feel supported by my manager to balance my work and caring responsibilities**.
- **62%** of carers responded **positively** to the question - **As a carer, I know where to access information and support in my organisation**.

7. What has been delivered over the last 12 months?

In early 2020, we launched our Civil Service Carers' Strategy setting out our plans for improving Civil Service carer provision over the next 5 years. A copy of this strategy can be found in [Annex A](#).

Last summer, we issued [‘Building a Carer Inclusive Civil Service - Our Story’](#) which outlined the work we had already done to implement the Strategy and also our forward priorities.

A major focus over the past 12 months has been supporting our carers through the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures include flexibility on working hours, paid special leave where carers were unable to work due to their caring responsibilities and wellbeing support to help carers cope with new responsibilities and challenges. In addition, we have made the following progress on the other priorities we identified in last year's report.

- **Improving HR Policies** - We promised to work with the Civil Service Carers' Network to see where changes might be needed to HR policies to improve the support offered to carers. In autumn 2020, we carried out a number of focus groups with carers from various departments. These have helped shape the priorities for the next 12 months set out in the next section.
- **Collecting carer data** - We promised to consult with departments and other stakeholders to identify best practice in capturing carer data in HR systems. Following extensive consultation, we have developed proposals to introduce a new approach for collecting organisational level data on carers in our workforce.
- **Raising awareness** - We promised a communications campaign to show that anyone might become a carer at any point in their working life. We issued two blogs during National Inclusion Week 2020 about the COVID experiences of [Tony](#) and [Mina](#) and used [Young Carers' Action Day in March 2021](#) to highlight the experiences of our young carers.
- **Linking to external support** - We promised to issue guidance to help HR teams and managers make effective use of the resources provided through membership of Employers for Carers. We provided departments with text to put on their intranet sites highlighting the learning and other resources provided by both Employers for Carers and the Charity for Civil Servants.

7. What has been delivered over the last 12 months?

- **Learning from others** - We promised to meet with a range of external organisations to learn from their best practice. We held meetings with both Nationwide and Centrica and were impressed with the initiatives they have taken to achieve the top level of Carer Confident accreditation.
- **Pushing the boundaries and gaining recognition** - We promised to support those departments which had achieved Level 2 Carer Confident accreditation to progress to Level 3, the highest level in the scheme. We have worked with a number of departments and hope they will progress to level 3 later in the year. The Intellectual Property Office and Companies House achieved Carer Confident accreditation in November 2020 and the Cabinet Office moved from Level 1 to Level 2.
- **Strengthening leadership of the carers' agenda** - We promised to appoint a Civil Service Carers' Champion. Alex Chisholm, Civil Service Chief Operating Officer, was delighted to take on this role in spring 2021.
- **Celebrating carer support** - We promised to introduce a new 'Age and Carers' category in the Civil Service Diversity Awards. The Civil Service Carers' Network were announced as the winners of the first award in autumn 2020.

8. How will we progress the Carer Agenda over the next 12 months?

Over the next 12 months, we will take the following actions.

- Encourage a more **consistent approach** to the use of **special leave** to support carers.
- Promote the use of the **carer's passport** and its speedy completion by managers.
- Support the **Civil Service inclusion Champion for Carers** and **departmental Carers' Champions** to implement this Strategy including developing a hub to enable departments to collaborate and share resources. Appoint a **Deputy Civil Service Inclusion Champion for Carers**.
- Recognise the potential benefits for carers of the new **hybrid working** arrangements being introduced in the Civil Service while ensuring their needs are considered during its detailed implementation.
- Raise **manager capability** by producing a **video** showing the benefits for managers of the carer's passport, working with the **Civil Service Carers' Network** to develop a **line managers' toolkit** and considering ways of improving the **Civil Service Learning** offer for carers and their managers.
- Promote the recording of diversity data by carers and continue to analyse the **data** from the annual Civil Service People Surveys. Pursue a uniform approach to collecting carer data on **HR systems** to understand the demographics of our carers and address any barriers to inclusion.
- Highlight the challenges faced by **Young Carers** and the practical support available.
- Celebrate the special **skills, life experience and insight** that carers contribute to the work of the Civil Service.
- Continue to **communicate** regularly with employees about available carer support, using case studies, senior leader, carer and **champion messaging** and highlighting key events.
- Maintain strong working relationships with the Civil Service Carers' Network to ensure the progress on the **HR policies review** reflects the needs of carers in the workplace.
- Encourage and support departments to apply for **Carer Confident accreditation** and help departments progress to **Level 3**, the highest level in the scheme.

We will continue to engage with departmental Carers' Champions, the Civil Service Carers' Network and with the members of our Cross-Government Group on Carers so that carer concerns and issues are taken on board in our evolving agenda. We will publish another progress report in Carers' Week 2022.

Annex A Civil Service Carers' Strategy

Making the Civil Service a great place to work

Vision:

In the Civil Service, we want to build an inclusive culture where carers not only have the right support available but also have a sense of belonging, are able to be their authentic selves and feel that they have a voice. 66,000 civil servants have identified themselves as carers. Our aim is to be a best practice employer by providing the right culture and support to enable carers to combine a successful working life with their caring role.

Culture:

The Civil Service recognises the importance of providing a supportive workplace. People should be able to feel engaged and supported in their work whilst undertaking their caring responsibilities.

Priority 1. Create a culture where people feel supported in combining work and caring:

leaders at all levels will be visible in raising awareness of carers' issues and the practical support offered to them; steps will be taken to raise employee and manager awareness of carers' issues; messaging will include recognition that employees at all grades may be carers.

Actions

- Departments to appoint a departmental Carers' Champion and support staff who wish to set up and run a carers' network.
- Civil Service HR (CSHR) to support those involved in promoting the carers' agenda in departments and to engage them in the development of the strategic agenda.
- Consider how a future Civil Service Carers' Champion's role aligns with other Civil Service champions and aim to appoint one in 2020/2021.
- All to take responsibility, including Champions and leaders, to message on the importance of supporting carers and practical ways to achieve this including in Carers' Week and on Carers' Rights Day.
- Departments and CSHR to consider how best to capture data on carers in HR systems and then to consider how best to use this data to understand their issues.
- CSHR to integrate carers more fully into the Civil Service approach to diversity and inclusion.
- Departments to create a working environment that promotes learning and development opportunities to enable those with caring responsibilities to progress.
- Departmental champions and CSHR to monitor implementation of this strategy and report progress.

Annex A Civil Service Carers' Strategy

Priority 2. Engage with carers to improve how HR policy takes account of their needs: the Civil Service will involve carers in considering how relevant HR policies address carer issues.

Actions

- Departments and CSHR to engage with carers, including through the Civil Service Carers' Network, to improve how HR policy takes account of their needs.
- Departments and CSHR to encourage other network groups to identify issues of concern to carers and to propose actions to address these.
- Departments and CSHR to analyse relevant People Survey data and consider the implications for policy development in collaboration with their Carers' Network.

Support:

To become the most inclusive employer, the Civil Service will promote take up of the practical support available to help carers and develop this further to reflect best practice.

Priority 3. Promote the take up of new and existing carer provision: the Civil Service will continue to encourage departments, managers and employees to make use of new and existing caring provision.

Actions

- CSHR to encourage further take-up by departments and agencies of the carers' charter.
- Departments and CSHR to promote take up of the carer's passport including through the use of the video developed by CSHR.
- Departments, supported by CSHR, to ensure managers and employees are clear how special leave and other forms of statutory leave can be used to support carers.
- Departments to promote the wider use of supportive manager materials including those provided by Employers for Carers and the Charity for Civil Servants.
- Departments to provide information on their provision for carers in their induction and manager training.

Priority 4. Develop and recognise departmental provision: departments will be supported to develop their provision and achieve accreditation.

Actions

- CSHR to support departments to achieve Carer Confident accreditation.
- CSHR to support departments to move to a higher level of accreditation where they wish to do so.
- Departments to support their agencies to achieve accreditation.
- CSHR to work with Employers for Carers, the Charity for Civil Servants and other organisations to identify and communicate best practice in supporting carers.
- Departments to consider participating in other accreditation schemes which recognise carer provision.