



Civil Service HR

Ensuring Support for our Carers

June 2023



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Foreword

We are now more than halfway through implementing our five-year Civil Service Carers' Strategy. Around a fifth of civil servants identify themselves as carers. They form an important part of our workforce and our aim is to ensure that they can successfully combine their work serving the nation with their role as a carer for their loved ones.

Over the past three years, we have made a range of products available to enable departments to support carers. These include the Carers' Charter, the Civil Service carer's passport, our line manager toolkit and guidance on the use of special leave. We have improved data collection by adding questions to the Civil Service People Survey and to departmental HR systems.

Our focus over the last 12 months has been on ensuring that these products are fully available across the Civil Service. Departments have confirmed this to be the case. Sessions for staff and managers on the passport and the line manager toolkit have been taking place across the Civil Service raising awareness and understanding.

In recognition of the work taking place across the Civil Service, 18 departments have now achieved Carer Confident accreditation and more are in the pipeline. This accreditation recognises the support being provided through a range of relevant HR policies, through training and through the work of the carer networks. We are grateful to the many staff who support this work.

Our priorities over the next two years are to ensure that carers continue to have access to the support they need. We are also pleased to see the passage through Parliament of the Carers Leave Act and, if enacted, we will progress its implementation in the Civil Service.



Alex Chisholm and Rebecca Sudworth
Civil Service Permanent Secretary and Deputy Leads
for Carers - June 2023

Support for Carers across the Civil Service

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

- Departmental **Carer 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.
- **Line Manager Toolkit** - provides managers with the tools and guidance to help them support the carers in their teams.
- **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 Permanent Secretary and Deputy Leads for Carers (Alex Chisholm and Rebecca Sudworth) 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 who are carers. Individuals can log into the Charity for Civil Servants' website using their work email address.
- Many departments are members of **Employers for Carers (EfC)**. 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.

Support for Carers across 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 Charity for Civil Servants

The **Charity for Civil Servants** offers a range of support for **carers**.

- The **Carer's Passport and Carer's Statement Digital Tool** enables carers to consider how their caring impacts their working lives, before completing their Civil Service carer's passport, and provides them with a Carer's Statement for use outside the workplace
- The Charity also offers financial assistance, health and wellbeing support, a dementia support service and a Carer's Emergency Plan
- The Charity has teamed up with Thrive: Mental Wellbeing to provide the award winning and NHS-approved Thrive: Mental Health App. The App supports the prevention, early detection and self-management of common mental health conditions. Complimentary **access to the App** is available through the Charity's website
- Civil servants can access the **Carer's Digital Resource** via the 'Our Carer's Digital Resource' site and register for an account; resources include:
 - information on all aspects of caring, such as benefits, assessments, technology and looking after yourself.
 - e-learning on 'You and your wellbeing', 'Young adult carers' and 'Working and caring'.
 - access to the Carers UK 24/7 Carers Forum.
 - access to the Jointly app, for free (also available in Welsh).
- The Charity also offers carers:
 - **relationship** support.
 - the **Grief Works** app.
 - **webinars** for carers.
 - **dementia support**, in partnership with Dementia UK.

Supporting line managers

The role of line managers is crucial in ensuring that carers are able to combine their work and caring roles. This year, working jointly with the Civil Service Carers' Network, we have issued a line manager toolkit to support them in their role and have provided a series of cross-Civil Service online sessions to promote the toolkit. The following case studies provide examples of the work being done in three departments to raise manager awareness and capability.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)

Within DWP, we held a series of listening circles to identify the issues and challenges that carers were facing in the workplace. Using insight from these listening circles and our People Survey, we identified the need to increase awareness of the support available to carers, including the Line Manager Toolkit and the Carer's Passport.



We developed a DWP Carers' Support and Line Manager awareness session with the first session taking place on Carers Rights Day.

These sessions include an overview of the carer's passport and how this can support conversations with managers to discuss any flexibilities needed. They also cover the line manager toolkit which includes lots of information and signposting to the support available. There is also an opportunity to ask questions at the end of each session.

The sessions have proved a huge success and have so far been delivered to over 2,000 colleagues across DWP. Feedback includes, "Excellent session – this should be mandatory for all line managers" and "I have learnt so much on how to support carers in my team". We also included a poll which demonstrated how effective they were in ensuring carers and managers knew how to access information and support.

We shared feedback on these sessions which resulted in us collaborating with colleagues in Civil Service HR to deliver them across the wider Civil Service.

DWP colleagues who had developed and delivered these sessions were recognised with a Civil Service Carers Advocate Award in November 2022. Insight from our latest People Survey has shown an increase in colleagues feeling supported by their manager, and a significant increase in carers using the carer's passport.

Supporting line managers

The Department for Education (DfE)

Significant progress has been made by DfE in the past year as we have rolled out a number of initiatives to support our Carer Confident Level 2 status. One objective we have given specific focus to is the upskilling of line managers, as lack of line manager awareness is a regular theme in our conversations with our carers.



Department
for Education

The Line Manager Toolkit has proved to be an excellent resource. Since its launch, we have championed its use holding an open event during DfE Carers' Month and then smaller sessions requested by individual directorates. These events have been well received. Line managers have told us that the toolkit really helps them navigate what can be complicated situations, bringing the best conclusion for all parties. We have also covered the guidance and worked examples which show managers how to decide when special leave is appropriate. Special leave can be a difficult area to deal with and managers have told us that the guidance really helps them decide the appropriate leave.

We have continued to champion the Line Manager Toolkit as part of our Carer Confident Campaign rollout. Here we are delivering workshops to each DfE group promoting our Carers' Network, the toolkit and the carer's passport, amongst other things. We will also be delivering further line manager awareness sessions and workshops as part of our Carers' Week activities.

Ministry of Justice (MoJ)

Feedback from carers in MoJ showed the vital importance of manager support in allowing carers to remain in the workplace while caring for a loved one. Carers' Awareness Workshops for managers have been designed in the HM Courts and Tribunals Service to develop managers' confidence in supporting their team members who are carers. These have covered the Line Manager Toolkit. We piloted these workshops in the South West and have now begun to roll them out nationally. The workshops were well received. Managers said that they were more aware of who was considered a carer, could signpost team members to the support available to them as carers, and understood the benefits of proactively supporting carers.



Ministry
of Justice

The Carer Support page on the Intranet includes links to the Toolkit to ensure it is accessible to all. There are also links to Employers for Carers' resources for both managers and carers. A Supporting Carers' Guide has recently been launched in the HM Prison and Probation Service. This brings together in one document information about the support available to carers both internally and externally. The Line Manager Toolkit forms part of this document. The Guide gives frontline staff easy access to information for carers and managers.

A message from the Civil Service Carers' Network (CSCN)

What do we want to achieve by 2025?

In June 2022, we set three objectives and committed to working with the Civil Service and our networks to achieve them by 2025:

- a Civil Service that truly understands who and where its carers are
- that carers feel as engaged, as included, as valued and as safe at work as non-carers
- that every carer has access to the support of a carers' network.

We're delighted that seven networks have joined us, so that our membership has grown to forty-nine. Many of our new member networks have been formed this year and represent small organisations which have recognised the need to support their caring colleagues. By joining us, these new networks have been able to provide their members with immediate access to resources and offer additional support.

With the support of our networks, we have increased the number of planned events provided. This has allowed us to support the Year of Implementation's objectives and to connect Civil Service carers to the support, knowledge and experience of their colleagues. Caring can be incredibly difficult, and the emotional and physical impact on the carers is often underestimated.

Our events are open to all and many tell us they have connected for the first time, identifying as carers, going on to join networks and engaging with their managers about their caring responsibilities. These may seem like small steps but every connection helps our caring colleagues to manage their work, life and caring balance, and remain an active part of the Civil Service.

Our data sub-group has been working with Civil Service Human Resources (CSHR) to understand the 2021 and 2022 People Survey data, which is helping us to shape our own plans in addition to the priorities for 2023 to 2025 outlined in this strategy update.

We remain fully committed to realising the vision of a carer-inclusive Civil Service and look forward to engaging with Civil Service colleagues as we work towards it.



Insights from the 2022 Civil Service People Survey

Every year, civil servants fill out a questionnaire asking them about their work experiences.

The Civil Service 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.

In autumn 2022, 346,957 people, from 102 Civil Service organisations, completed the survey giving an overall response rate of 65%. The results for carers, based on those who completed the survey, were as follows.

- **20%** of respondents said they were a **carer**.
- **63%** of carers identified as **females** compared to **37%** of carers identifying as **males**.
- The **age group** with the highest number of carers was **50-59** year olds (**39%**) followed by those aged **40-49 (23%)**.
- **27%** of carers said that they had a **long-term condition or illness** compared to **64%** of carers who do not.
- More carers work **full-time (77%)** than **part-time (23%)**.
- The **Employee Engagement Index** for carers was **60%** compared to **62%** for those without caring responsibilities.
- **75%** of carers responded **positively** to the question - *I feel supported by my manager to balance my work and caring responsibilities.*
- **61%** of carers responded **positively** to the question - *As a carer, I know where to access information and support in my organisation.*
- **16%** of carers said they had a **carer's passport**, **67%** said they did not and **17%** said that they did not know what this was or how to get one.

Correction: in last year's [update](#), two statements relating to the 2021 Civil Service People Survey should have read:

- The **age group** with the highest number of carers was **50-59 (39%)** year-olds followed by those aged **40-49 (23%)**.
- **24%** of carers said that they had a **long-term condition or illness** compared to **66%** of carers who do not.

What we have delivered

June 2022 - May 2023

In early 2020, we launched our Civil Service **Carers' Strategy** setting out our plans for improving Civil Service carer provision over the following 5 years.

We have made the following progress on the priorities we identified in last year's report.

- **Ensure that the carer's passport and supporting video are readily accessible:** Departments have confirmed that the passport is available to their staff. We have taken further steps to promote the accompanying video.
- **Ensure managers across the Civil Service have access to the line manager toolkit:** Departments have taken active steps over the past year to promote the line manager toolkit including webinars and face-to-face sessions. We have also run a series of cross-Civil Service awareness sessions.
- **Encourage the use of special leave to support carers across the Civil Service.** We have continued to promote the model guidance on special leave.
- **Undertake a monitoring exercise to ensure all employees in departments and agencies have access to the full suite of centrally-produced carer support products.** We issued a questionnaire to departments on implementation and used this to inform our implementation of the other actions listed here.
- **Ensure that the needs of carers are taken into account in developing arrangements for hybrid working.** We have continued to monitor the impact of hybrid working on carers encouraging the completion of the carer's passport to ensure carers' needs are taken into account in the new arrangements.
- **Promote the new arrangements for recording employees' carer status on departmental HR systems.** Departments which have implemented the new arrangements have been encouraging their employees to record whether they are a carer and whether they have a carer's passport. We have been encouraging further departments to adopt these new arrangements.
- **Continue the work on HR policies to ensure these reflect the needs of carers in the workplace.** Our focus this year has been on encouraging the use of the model special leave guidance.
- **Support the work of carer networks and encourage the formation of new networks.** The number of carer networks affiliated to the Civil Service Carers' Network has grown this year from 42 to 49. We have worked closely with the networks in implementing this year's priorities.

What we have delivered

June 2022 - May 2023

- **Encourage the development of local initiatives to support carers, and share departmental and external best practice.** We continue to share best practice through our Carers Community Hub which is accessed by HR and Diversity and Inclusion teams and carer networks across the Civil Service.
- **Encourage coverage of carer provision in induction materials.** We have issued guidance to departments on issues to cover on carers in their induction materials.
- **Support departments to apply for Carer Confident accreditation and to progress to level 3.** The following organisations have achieved Carer Confident accreditation or have renewed their accreditation over the past year: the Department for Education, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Group, the Department for Transport, the Food Standards Agency, HM Revenue and Customs, HM Treasury, the Intellectual Property Office, the Ministry of Justice, the UK Health Security Agency and the Customer Services section of the Home Office.
- **Encourage larger departments to buddy up with smaller organisations to help them develop and promote their carer provision.** We have encouraged departments and agencies to support each other in developing their provision to achieve Carer Confident accreditation.
- **Carry out a deep dive analysis of Civil Service People Survey results to identify any issues affecting carers which need addressing.** We have looked in detail at the results for carers in both the 2021 and 2022 People Surveys. This has helped to inform the priorities we have developed for 2023/25.
- **Encourage departments to provide opportunities for carers under the Going Forward into Employment scheme.** A number of carers have now joined the Civil Service under the Going Forward into Employment scheme.
- **Support the Civil Service Permanent Secretary Lead for Carers, the Deputy Lead and departmental Carer Champions to implement this Strategy.** We have held a number of meetings of departmental Carer Champions to monitor implementation of these priorities. Alex Chisholm and Rebecca Sudworth spoke about progress and future work at the annual Celebrating Carers' event organised by the Civil Service Carers' Network in November 2022.



Our plans for June 2023 - May 2025

The Civil Service Carers' Strategy runs from 2020-2025. We have made significant progress in implementing its various recommendations. The focus going forward will be on ensuring that the momentum in supporting our carers continues and that we embed best practice and consistency.

Over the next 24 months, we will take the following actions.

- Continue to ensure carers, managers and leaders across the Civil Service are aware of and have access to the various centrally-produced **carer products** such as the carer's passport.
- Sense check whether we have the right **support package** available, building on user feedback, and fill in any gaps identified.
- Support departments to share **best practice**.
- Consider what more can be done to support carers with the **emotional impact** of caring.
- Support the development of **collaborative tools** for use across Civil Service carer networks.
- Work with the Young Adult Carers' Network to ensure the right support is being provided to **young adult carers**.
- Work with departments to prepare guidance to implement the provisions of the **Carers Leave Bill** and the **Flexible Working Bill** if enacted.
- Continue to promote the arrangements for **recording** employees' carer status on departmental HR systems and consider potential uses of this data.
- Support departments to apply for **Carer Confident accreditation** and to progress to level 3, implementing the commitment in the Civil Service Diversity and Inclusion Strategy: 2022 to 2025.
- Encourage departments to provide opportunities for carers under the **Going Forward into Employment** scheme.
- Support the Civil Service Permanent Secretary Lead for Carers, the Civil Service Deputy Lead and departmental Carer Champions to **implement** these actions and to respond to the need for further actions.

We will continue to engage with departmental Carer 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 a further progress report in Carers' Week 2025 which will also set out our future plans for supporting carers.