



Belfast Health and
Social Care Trust

caring supporting improving together



framework for staff *with a caring role*

Directorate of Human Resources
and Organisational Development



Introduction

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust employs over 22,000 staff, across a diverse number of job roles covering a wide range of professions. Our staff are employed on a variety of working practices and patterns, across a range of health and social care settings. We know that modern life at times can be demanding. It can be difficult to balance the various social and economic pressures we experience outside of work on a daily basis including caring, parenting and our own personal and health issues. In addition, working in a health and social care environment whilst often rewarding, can frequently be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. As a Bronze Accredited Investor in People Employer, we aim to be exemplary in improving the working lives of our people, helping them to become champions of their own wellbeing, and that of their families and the wider community we serve. Through its overarching People Strategy, the Trust is committed to supporting staff and in so doing lead the Trust into the top 20% of high performing NHS Trusts and recognised as a world class health provider and all round great place to work.

The demands of reconciling work and care for adult family members are becoming increasingly important. According to 2011 Census data, one in nine workers in the UK has informal caring responsibilities. Eighty per cent of UK carers are of working age, and nearly half undertake paid work as well as providing unpaid care.





Introduction

For many individuals, reconciling work and care is difficult; over a quarter of carers of working age report that caring responsibilities affect their ability to take up or remain in employment. Over two million people have given up work at some point to care for family, and three million have reduced working hours.

The demand for care and support will increase considerably over the next 30 years, and a growing group of unpaid carers will have multiple caring responsibilities. A common pattern is for people between the ages of 50 and 64 to assume caring responsibilities for older relatives as well as grandchildren at the same time as they have the greatest labour market value because of their cumulative skills and experience. (Evaluation of the Carers in Employment Project, Final report 2018)

One in five UK adults with caring responsibilities surveyed by Carers UK felt that their work was negatively affected because of their caring responsibilities

The Trust is aware of the substantial costs to individuals and families, when carers reduce their earnings through reducing working hours or moving into lower-paid work, or if they give up paid work entirely. Carers who drop out of work create vacancies that often the Trust finds challenging to recruit and replace. Those carers who remain in work can struggle to balance the demands of working and caring.

315,000 adults below State Pension Age are estimated to be unemployed after leaving work due to caring responsibilities. (Evaluation of the Carers in Employment Project, Final report 2018)



Carers Framework Strategy

The Carers Framework Strategy supports the Trust's Corporate Management Plan (2018-23) and the Trust's People Strategy of "caring, supporting, improving, together", where our people are at the core of everything we do for the benefit of the communities we serve. We aim to ensure that a culture of health and wellbeing becomes a priority for our diverse workforce and supports our five corporate themes:

Safety, Quality and Experience

- Working collaboratively and in partnership with internal and external stakeholders to use innovative ways to promote our carer initiatives, policies and support.

Service Delivery

- Looking at our carer initiatives and interventions, their impact and how we can raise the bar even higher.

Strategy and Partnerships

- Encouraging managers to engage effectively with Carers Organisations and Carers Support Groups, Occupational Health, Human Resources, Health Improvement, Health and Safety, Chaplancy and other

People and Culture

- Educating our people about how to identify and seek support and actively seeking their feedback about how we can further support them to improve their health and wellbeing and balance their commitments as a Trust employee and a carer.

Resources

- Refining our strategies for supporting staff with caring responsibilities.

The Carers Framework enables the Trust to proactively engage with staff as carers to enhance their health and wellbeing.





Introduction

The Case for Action

Over 2 million people across the UK have given up work at some point to care for loved ones, 3 million have reduced working hours. Carers UK and YouGov (2013) as part of *Caring & Family Finances Inquiry UK Report (2014) Carers UK*

In a recent Carers UK survey, 65% of respondents reported that they gave up work due to the stress of combining work and care
Carers UK 2015

In 2013, the Carers in Employment Task and Finish Group Report, Supporting Working Carers: The Benefits to Families, Business and the Economy¹² included the specific recommendation that:
'The Department of Health should work with key stakeholders in a number of local authority areas to explore ways in which people can be supported to combine work and care and the market for care and support services can be stimulated to grow to encompass their needs'

Carers NI State of Caring report 2018
based on State of Caring survey results 2018: 18% working carers reduced their hours; 8% took less qualified job or turned down promotion to fit around caring; 32% felt stressed or anxious at work due to combining caring and work.

'Working carers report that work provides respite from caring and makes them come alive'
Carers in Employment
Carers UK 2015

Evidence suggests that caring begins to have *'an adverse effect on an employee's ability to remain in the workplace'* once caring activities demand more than five hours per week. *Age UK and Carers UK 2015*



Current Position

The Trust has a range of initiatives that support our staff as carers. Through a collaborative and partnership approach, across services and with Trade Unions and external stakeholders, we have a significant number of key policies, support services and initiatives to support staff as carers and to ensure their health and wellbeing.

Policies and Guidance	Support Services	Initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers • Work Life Balance • Family Friendly • BWell Strategy • Childcare Strategy • Stress, Health and Wellbeing • Management of Attendance • Alcohol and Drugs • Disability Equality • Equal Opportunities • BWell Strategy • Childcare Strategy • Stress, Health and Wellbeing • Management of Attendance • Alcohol and Drugs • Disability Equality • Equal Opportunities • Health and Safety • Domestic Violence and Abuse • Working Well Together • Harassment • Harmonious Working Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers Network • BWell Health Fairs for staff including internal and external exhibitors A multidisciplinary Occupational Health Service including Fast Track Physiotherapy, Conditions Management Programme and Clinical Psychology and Medical, Nursing and OT Services • Staff Care 24/7 Confidential Staff Counselling Service • Health Improvement Team • Improving Working Lives Team • Domestic Abuse Support Service • Employee Networks (Disability-LGBT-International Nursing) • Bullying and Harassment Support • Maternity Information Sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind Ur Mind Toolkit • Belfast Recovery college • Mental Health Charter • Carers Recognition Event • HR Drop In Clients • Participations with external partners ie. Carers NI, Parenting NI and Employers for Childcare • Range of resources on Bwell App and Website • Age Focus Groups • Self help Guides • Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Training Guide • Drink, Work and Me campaign • Here 4 U classes, events, advice and support • Health Improvement Training Programmes on Nutrition, Physical Activity, Oral Health • Participation with external spot • Bereavement Guidance • On-boarding • Mindfulness Programmes • Stress Focus Group • Free 12 week Smoking Cessation • Annual Childcare Scheme • Childcare Vouchers • Cycle to Work Scheme



Current Position

As an employer, the Trust recognises that the impact of caring can sometimes adversely affect individuals' own personal health and wellbeing. It is important that staff take care of their own health, even if they are busy looking after someone else's health.

Caring for somebody can be very demanding on an individual's time and energy. Dealing with medical professionals, arranging finances and claiming benefits as well as worrying about the person you care for is stressful.



Finding time to keep regular medical appointments, meet up with friends or simply relaxing can feel like an impossibility when caring for someone. Added to this, nearly half of people with caring responsibilities, juggle their role with working or volunteering either full or part-time. Looking after themselves when caring for somebody who may have significant needs is no easy task especially if an individual already has or develops their own disability, illness or health condition.

The Trust is cognisant of the fact that many working carers, including some with significant caring commitments, reported that work can provide a respite from caring and makes them feel alive. Staff may not be willing to reduce their hours or spend less time working as potentially this could impact on their independence and social contact.

The Trust's Bwell app and website www.bwellbelfast.hscni.net is one single, overarching brand that unifies the entire suite of employee health and wellbeing support. These two interactive tools for staff are free of charge and can be accessed on any smart phone or pc in any location, internal or external to the Trust.

The Bwell programme is of fantastic benefit to all staff and their families and a particularly useful resource for staff as carers. We continue to review and evaluate all of the Bwell services and benchmark ourselves against best practice to meet the challenge of continually improving the working lives and wellbeing of our staff. There is a wide range of health and wellbeing issues, set out in five key themes:





Current Position

Social Isolation

New research from Carers UK shows more action is needed to support unpaid carers who feel isolated and lonely. Greater understanding from friends and colleagues, are all needed to combat a 'silent epidemic' of loneliness affecting those providing support to ill, older or disabled loved ones.

More than 8 in 10 (81%) surveyed unpaid carers described themselves as 'lonely or socially isolated due to their caring responsibilities, with those affected facing a potentially damaging impact on their mental and physical wellbeing. The report suggests that current carers who have not felt lonely were less likely to suffer mental (42%) and physical (35%) ill-health compared to those who did. Carers who had felt lonely or isolated were almost twice as likely to report worsened mental (77%) and physical (67%) health. 32% of those surveyed felt "isolated" at work due to care responsibilities.

Societal Pressures

In the UK there are an estimated 7 million unpaid carers, providing support and care for people with physical and mental illnesses. Their care means there is far less stress on our healthcare system, and it also lets many people stay within their own homes, rather than entering the care system. While this can be a better scenario for those that need care, it can often mean a far more challenging daily routine for those caring. (Carers UK)

Almost half of the 7 million estimated carers have to balance their care obligations alongside a job, and 1 in 5 people providing care will have to quit their job in order to continue doing so. Unpaid care contributes over £130 billion into the UK economy enough for a second NHS. (Carers UK)

Sandwich Generation

The term 'sandwich generation' is often used to refer to those looking after young children at the same time as caring for older parents. It can also be used much more broadly to describe a variety of multiple caring responsibilities for people in different generations. With an ageing population, and where people are starting families later, 'sandwich caring' responsibilities are on the rise and it is women who are more likely to face the pressure of simultaneously shouldering responsibility for young and old. A recent Carers UK study found women were four times more likely than men to have given up work due to multiple caring responsibilities.

Sickness Absence

Sickness absence within the Trust costs in the region of £30 million each year. This figure does not include the costs of providing cover or the impact on colleagues and managers. Employees with caring responsibilities may be more susceptible to stress and wellbeing problems. The Trust focuses on staff wellbeing through Bwell and improving working live initiatives ie. HR Drop in Clinics, Bwell health fairs, Here 4 U activities and leaflet for staff members with a caring role provides employees with support and information on a wide range of health and wellbeing issues.

Ageing Workforce

In a sector where the workforce is ageing and there are challenging recruitment and retention issues, there is the need to retain skilled experienced staff. There has never been a more important time to focus on the benefits of retaining skilled workers - and supporting our employees to work healthily and productively - rather than incurring the costs of recruiting and retraining new staff. Changing demographics and an ageing population mean that 3 in 5 people will end up caring for someone at some point in their lives. This is an issue none of us can afford to ignore. We are continuing to review flexible retirement options for staff and develop a range of initiatives to support our aging colleagues regarding their continuous employment.



Drivers for Change

Already 90% of working carers are aged 30 plus i.e. employees in their 'prime' employment years. The peak age for caring is also 45-64 when many employees will have gained valuable skills and experience. With fewer young people entering the job market, there has never been a more important time for the Trust to focus on the benefits of retaining our skilled staff rather than incurring the challenges, including skills shortages and costs, of recruiting and retraining new staff.

The Trust recognises the business need to support working carers. We believe that adapting a flexible working approach to when supporting carers to remain in work makes good business sense and:

- Attracts and retains staff
- Reduces stress
- Reduces recruitment and training costs
- Increases resilience and productivity
- Reduces sickness absence
- Improves service delivery
- Improves people management
- Increases staff morale
- Improves work life balance

'The number of carers in the UK set to rise from 6 million to 9 million over the next 30 years, the proportion of carers in our workforce is also likely to increase significantly'.

Carers UK 2015



How we plan to do this

The Trust has developed this framework to support us to build on our progress to date and develop a more integrated approach to supporting and enabling staff with caring commitments to remain in work whilst simultaneously safeguarding their health and wellbeing. This is in line with our Organisation Development aim of supporting the delivery of safe, high quality and compassionate care by increasing our capability and capacity for innovation, research and continuous learning, and using collective leadership to deliver decision making and improvement closer to the point of care - positively influencing behaviour and culture change leading to a more engaged workforce.

The model illustrated below has four keys strands which support the delivery of our objectives over the next five years:





Key Outcome Measures

We will continue to review and monitor this Framework in conjunction with our BWell, Childcare and People Strategies. We will focus on the four key strands of our model for delivery; A Flexible Workplace, Improving Working Lives, Better Relationships, Learning and Development.

We will continue to collate data and feedback information via surveys, focus groups, HR Drop in Clinics and evaluations of our interventions and initiatives. Our staff engagement scores, staff survey results, turnover, absence levels and uptake of Carer and health and wellbeing initiatives will provide useful indicators. We have developed some key outcome measures which will be monitored and shared on an annual basis through the production of Trust and Directorate dashboards and scorecards. These are as follows:

Measures of Success	Policies and Guidance
Increased availability of good quality information, advice and support for carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a Network for Carers • Attendance at Trust Bwell health fairs • Information sessions by Trust Carer Coordinators
Increased awareness for staff with caring responsibilities and access to the health and wellbeing and specialist support initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managers promoting health and wellbeing events and initiatives • Increased hits on Bwell app and website. • Increased attendance at Trust health fairs and uptake of Here4U activities • Improved Staff Engagement Scores - NHS Staff Survey, Pulse surveys
Increased uptake of health and wellbeing support for staff with caring responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased hits on Bwell app and website • Attendance at Trust health fairs • Uptake of Here4U activities
Improved feedback from employees and Trade Union colleagues about the work environments across our Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased staff engagement and wellbeing scores • Increased numbers of employees completing a range of surveys including; NHS Staff Survey, ONS4, Pulse surveys • Increased numbers of staff attending the Trust's Network for Carers
Improved staff engagement and satisfaction scores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased staff engagement and wellbeing scores • Increased numbers of employees completing a range of surveys and demonstrating greater job satisfaction and higher morale
Reduced levels of sickness absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly absence dashboard reports • Internal Audit - improved manager compliance with protocol



Effective marketing and promotion are central to ensuring that all Carer themed activities, initiatives and activities that can benefit staff who are carers are brought to the attention and awareness of all Trust staff. In partnership with Adult Social and Primary Care and Corporate Communication colleagues we will ensure a comprehensive Marketing and Communication Plan for this Carer's Framework which will include:

- Increased visibility of Carer Framework via the HUB, Corporate induction and Health Fairs with specific Bwell information / stands on each theme
- Actively promote this Framework at pre-boarding and on-boarding to attract and retain staff and through on-boarding, we will enable all new employees commencing their employment with the Trust, to have immediate access to the entire range of carer and employee health and wellbeing support available
- Case studies and podcasts from employees and their managers showcasing how the Trust's initiatives enabled them to improve their health and wellbeing
- A calendar of scheduled events and utilisation of staff conferences, senior management meetings, team meetings, staff induction and Links magazine to cascade information to all staff
- Continued participation in local and national awards schemes which showcase and highlight the work and achievements to date.

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