

## **Case Study: Lincolnshire County Council's Umbrella EfC Membership in partnership with Every-One**

Lincolnshire County Council commission a Carers and Employment Project, which is delivered by charities Carers FIRST and Every-One. As part of their work, Every-One support organisations in Lincolnshire to be more carer aware and friendly in the workplace. They also support Lincolnshire County Council by promoting the sign up of Employers for Carers.

### **1. How did you engage with SMEs/Health Partners?**

- Information on how team works with council and local groups, what strategy do you have?
- What you have done with Social Media – do you promote the EfC membership on Twitter, Facebook etc. Do you use your own comms channels or the council's?
- Have you used local newsletters and mailing lists?

Our role is to act on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council to engage and encourage organisations around the county to become members of Employers for Carers (we are subcontracted by Carers FIRST to deliver part of the carers & employment project, which Lincolnshire County Council commission through the iBCF).

We promote the EfC membership through our own organisation's social media channels (Facebook and Twitter) and on LinkedIn and our website (where we highlight which organisations have already signed up).

We also created our own videos that we put on social media, which explain what Employers for Carers is and how people can get involved.

We have managed to get articles about Employers for Carers in the Lincolnshire Echo, including their Business Supplement. We also utilise partner communications to promote Employers for Carers, through their various online newsletters. Business Podcast.

### **2. Who did you engage with?**

- Have you engaged with HR at Lincolnshire Council?
- Do you find it easier to engage with SMEs or health partners?
- What groups and networks do you target?

It's a lot easier to engage with our health partners, I think mainly because they already have a greater understanding of who unpaid carers are and the support they need. The SME's that sign up generally tend to be those who have leaders who have some prior knowledge of unpaid carers – for example, they or a family member have been an unpaid carer themselves.

In September 2019 we held an 'Employers for Carers' event, in which colleagues from Lincolnshire County Council, City of Lincoln Council and North Kesteven District Council attended. Attendees were a mix of HR professionals and managers/line managers. We were also very fortunate in that Katherine Wilson, Head of EfC at Carers UK, attended the event to deliver a presentation. As a result of the event, all three councils have agreed to undertaking the Lincolnshire Carers Quality Award, staff Carer Awareness Training and promoting sign up of Employers for Carers in their organisations. We also hope to do a 'follow on' event in the near future to engage the other 5 district councils and share good practice.

We target various groups/networks – these have included local business networking meetings and business meetings such as those hosted by the Federation of Small Businesses. We also delivered a presentation at the Lincolnshire CIPD (Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development) Conference. We also attend various business events locally such as expos and HR specific events.

We also look to approach businesses who have won or been put forward for various local business awards as these can be seen to be more proactive organisations.

The biggest 'quick win' for us is being able to approach organisations that are already involved with another project we deliver (commissioned through the iBCF at Lincolnshire County Council) – the Lincolnshire Carers Quality Award. It is now part of the process when working with organisations to become accredited with the quality award as a step they can take to show they identify, support and value unpaid carers. We have also incorporated Employers for Carers in the Carer Awareness Training we deliver to organisations.

### **3. What did you do to encourage sign up?**

- Do you encourage the SMEs/health partners to sign up in front of you during meetings, or is it as a result of mailings and promotional activity?
- How do you 'sell' the membership to these SMEs? What materials (from us?) do you use?

In terms of the way we sign up organisations it's a bit of both. With our health partners we tend to sign them up there and then when we are with them as we found leaving them the code and going away didn't work.

Predominately with SME's, we issue information and posters electronically and have them sign up by themselves.

To encourage organisations to sign up we go to various meetings/events and have exhibitor stands / deliver presentations to explain what Employers for Carers is and how people can get involved – for these we use the posters provided by Carers UK, national facts & figures etc.

### **4. What feedback have you had from organisations, what impact does the membership make?**

- Are you aware of any activities going on amongst SMEs after the initial registration process? Are any SMEs developing a carers policy as a result, for example?

For most organisations that have signed up, for the most part it's given them a better overall awareness and understanding of who carers are, the challenges they face and how they can better support them in the workplace. The most important thing is just having the awareness and starting those conversations and getting people to self-identify. By presenting at various meetings/events we're supporting in raising the profile of unpaid carers.

Many SME's share information about carers/Employers for Carers through staff meetings, internal comms, notice boards etc.

Some, such as the City of Lincoln Council, have created 'carer champions' with the staff in the organisation that were already health and wellbeing champions and it is their role to continue to ensure carers are involved, supported and recognised.

We issue a monthly e-bulletin to all organisations signed up to Employers for Carers, providing them with information they can share with their colleagues, and also ideas on what they can do particularly around national campaigns such as carers week and carers rights day.

### **5. What challenges did you come across? How did you overcome them?**

The main challenge with engaging SME's is that their sole focus is not on unpaid carers, and so initially they sometimes do not feel that they need support in terms of resources or looking at what they can do to better support their employees who may have caring responsibilities.

It's also a lot harder to engage SME's than it is larger organisations because larger organisations have more scope and ability to implement change (for example, they're more likely to have health & wellbeing strategies), whereas SME's are less likely to be able to invest time and resource into supporting staff outside of their statutory duties to do so.

To try and overcome this, we talk to organisations a lot about the small adjustments they can make, reiterating that it's not about spending lots of time and resource, but that they can do simple things like allowing staff to have mobile phones on them, coffee mornings etc. and just generally improving the culture in the organisation to make it open and normal to talk about caring.

We also worked with the Lincolnshire Open Research and Innovation Centre (LORIC) who produced a calculator that shows the benefit of supporting carers at work. Using open data as the basis of the calculations, the tool visualises the negative monetary impact that not aiding carers has on a business. This is a great tool because businesses are obviously motivated by money and if we can show savings etc. by putting in supportive measures, then they're more open to involvement. We showcase the tool at events/meetings.

**6. What additional materials/support do you think would make it easier for you to promote the membership amongst SMEs/health partners?**

Videos/testimonials from various SME's would be useful to help encourage other SME's to become members of Employers for Carers. There is nothing more powerful than having organisations involved endorsing the resources and highlighting the importance of being more carer aware in the workplace and I think being able to share these videos on social media / websites etc. would help get a bigger 'buy in' from other organisations.