

Recruitment

Introduction

Carers typically have the required skills, experience or attitude that employers are looking for and are often an overlooked talent pool. This is partly because carers are not one homogeneous group and there has not been a standard general definition of a carer. Applicants may also not recognise themselves as being a 'carer', which can result in difficulties when an employer aims to attract them.

Carers may find it difficult to imagine balancing work and caring responsibilities. In today's ever demanding and competitive environment, small steps taken by employers can provide access to opportunities for employment for this untapped pool of talent.

Having a recruitment plan

There are many actions you can take as an employer to attract carers into your organisation (and retain them), ranging from a change in focus of your advertising, actively promoting an open and inclusive workplace culture, and having a visible flexible working or carers policy in place.

Your recruitment strategy should **identify** carers as a potential resource pool and thereafter you can develop a plan to reach and attract them as part of this strategy. The plan should include a number of complementary recruitment solutions because carers are not one identifiable group and there will be varying levels of work experience and skills amongst them, whether they are already in employment or looking for work.

Your plan can include **options** to work with different external organisations or charities who have links in the community. These can be the interface between you and carers who may be seeking employment.

Advertising

If you are actively seeking to attract carers your advertising should include a **direct** reference to candidates who may have caring responsibilities and be placed in specific media which are applicable to carers or the local community.

This will mean considering placing your adverts in media other than your standard recruitment papers or job sections, and looking for **alternatives** such as:

- community centres
- surgeries
- nurseries
- hospitals
- Jobcentre Plus
- local carers centres.

Your adverts need to include a reference to being an equal opportunities employer and give some examples of the **flexible** opportunities your organisation offers.

If your organisation has successfully been accredited [Carer Confident](#), you may want to include this in your advertisements to show you are a positive and inclusive workplace where carers are recognised, respected and supported.

Barriers

Carers may face or perceive multiple barriers to employment, whether full-time or part-time, which will prevent them from applying or even simply considering the employment opportunities within your organisation. For example, your current adverts may include a reference to a Curriculum Vitae (CV), which may not encourage carers to apply if they have not recently been in employment or do not have the opportunity to produce a CV.

You could include **additional steps** in your current recruitment process to help carers overcome some of the barriers or prepare in more detail for the interview process. For example, an open day at your workplace, an information brochure or telephone application, may provide carers with the opportunity to establish if employment with your organisation could be appropriate for them.

It may also be useful to give some consideration to your existing recruitment process and **criteria**. Many carers will have skills or expertise that you need but may not identify these readily, especially if they have not been in employment for some time. You could therefore amend your current process so that carers have alternative ways to demonstrate their competence or suitability. For example, if at the interview stage, you are asking about a current or last job, it may be more effective to ask for relevant situations where someone has demonstrated certain skills.

Check if your minimum criteria automatically exclude carers, such as a reference to current or similar work experience.

Working environment

It is important to consider your internal and external image and employer brand, and the impact this has on recruitment, in particular the recruitment of carers. You will need to ensure that your recruitment process and working environment are aligned and that they are appropriate for potential employees with caring responsibilities.

There are many steps you can take to enhance your image as an employer, especially externally. For example, if you are aiming to attract carers from the local community you could use local press releases with **case studies** of your existing employees with caring responsibilities, rather than placing a recruitment advert in a paper.

Case studies of your existing employees could showcase good practice examples such as:

- An employee who has just become a carer and been allowed to work flexibly to have the time to set up care and support arrangements
- An employee who has interim or fluctuating caring responsibilities and needs time to fulfil these at certain intervals, which has been accommodated by adjusting work patterns or through holiday arrangements
- An employee who has experienced a caring emergency resulting in the need for time off at short notice, which has required an understanding from managers and colleagues

It is also important to:

- Maintain a two-way dialogue with your existing employees to address any support needs they may have as carers. This will help to align your working environment with your recruitment process for new employees who may have caring responsibilities.
- Be aware that potential and existing employees may experience an increase in caring responsibilities, changing their personal circumstances. They may therefore need more flexibility or a change in work patterns, whether this is on a short or long-term basis.
- Recognise that caring responsibilities may vary enormously and that potential and existing employees may need support for a new or existing caring situation, short term or long term care, immediate/emergency care or a fluctuating care situation. Different types of support may also be required depending on the nature of the care involved.

This will help indicate the **likely impact** on work and what **support options** may be most appropriate for you to provide. To help you identify where your employees may be on their caring journey, Efc have created [the caring and employment journey maps](#) which show the different stages of caring and significant changes carers may endure and the opportunities that employers/line managers/HR can use to support carers throughout their working life.

The types of support you provide your employees are important for recruitment and retention of carers. The support carers may require will vary depending both on the nature of their caring role and the options which are reasonably practical or available within your working environment.

However, based on the experience of Efc members, here are some suggestions for support options that could enhance your working environment for carers:

- active promotion and awareness of [carers policies](#) throughout the organisation, including flexible working and leave arrangements
- occupational health or HR support specifically in relation to carers' issues

- information and guidance for managers and their employees with caring responsibilities
- a carers network or support group within the organisation
- implementing a [Carer Passport](#)
- Employee Assistance Programmes and wellbeing support