

## Welcome from Carers UK's Chair

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I am sure that you'll agree with me when I say that your people are your greatest asset and that if you look after them, they will look after your customers and your business. In the current economic climate, it's more important than ever that we attract new talent into the workforce and retain skilled and experienced employees to increase customer satisfaction, improve productivity and cost effectiveness.

Alongside this we have an ageing population and workforce which means that there are more people who need constant personal support and more family members and friends caring for them while also in paid work. Even before COVID-19, one in seven employees were caring for an older, disabled or seriously ill family member or friend. However, this figure has grown since the pandemic, with many employers now talking about one in four or one in five of their staff being carers.

Recent research showed that we have a 50:50 chance of caring by the age of 50 – long before most of us reach retirement age. But it isn't until caring happens that you realise how hard it can be. Caring is unpredictable; it can happen overnight or gradually, and it can be short or long term. Without the right support at the right time carers will be under pressure and something will have to give – and it is often their job. A recent public poll found that a staggering 2.6 million people had left work to care - 600 a day over the last couple of years.

Policies and practices that support carers are therefore crucial to the resilience and success of your organisation. However, this need not be complicated or costly. It's about knowing your employees and working flexibly with them to find solutions. A small change in working hours or simple things like permission to make personal calls can make all the difference both to a carer and their organisation. Ultimately it makes business sense to care for carers.

But it's not only carers who need support, managers need to be informed about the issues that employees may face, and what help may be available in the workplace and externally.

That's where Employers for Carers can help. We came together in 2009 as employers large and small, private and public sector, who believe that supporting carers is good for business. I know this to have been absolutely the case over the last few years at British Gas as does my former colleague, Ian Peters, who has also played a fantastic role as EfC Chair from 2013 – November 2020. Thanks to the trailblazing work of Ian, and also Caroline Waters (formerly BT and EfC Chair from 2009 – 2013), the

landscape of carers and employment has changed irrevocably over the last two decades.

Our growing number of Employers for Carers members have also led the way in promoting effective workplace practice to support staff with caring responsibilities – demonstrating the real business benefits of better engaged people, lower recruitment costs and turnover, and retention of talent and experience.

Now looking to the future there is much that we must – and can - do to realise and build on this legacy. Employers for Carers can help your organisation to identify the needs of carers in the workplace, provide practical and sustainable ways in which you can support them and their managers, and reap the business benefits of doing so.

I hope you will join us as we continue to explore ways to support and engage with the ever- growing number of carers in our workforce.

**Nick Baird, Chair, Carers UK**