

# Supporting Unpaid Carers at Work through Coaching

March 13<sup>th</sup> 2024



**Our vision is a world where no-one need give up what's important to them to care for someone else.**

**Our mission is to coach unpaid carers to live a life they choose.**



# Working Carers The Reality



2.5 million people combine work with unpaid care - 9% of the total UK workforce

- 75% worry about continuing to juggle work and care
- 65% have given up opportunities at work because of caring
- 1 in 3 do not disclose caring role at work
- Many more would work if the right support was available

*But every year:*

- 2.6 million give up work - 2 million reduce working hours
- 2 million more become carers
- Growing number: 6 million to 9 million in next 30 years

(Carers UK/Employers for Carers/CIPD)

# The cost for working carers

(Carers UK, Health Foundation)

- Stress, tiredness, overwhelm, burn-out – 77% worry about impact on health
- Loneliness and isolation – 1 in 5 feel socially isolated; 74% no life outside of caring
- Financial difficulties - 4 in 10 struggle; 68% worry about being able to save for the future
- Unpredictability of care – 23% need better support to return to or maintain paid work.
- Loss of confidence and self-belief – only 9% say needs and aspirations recognised

BUT

- Employers do not routinely monitor caring responsibilities of their workforce
- Carers “hiding in plain sight” fearful, reluctant to disclose caring role at work

## The wider costs of not supporting working carers adequately

### *Organisational risk*

- Loss of valued, experienced staff
- Increased recruitment costs
- Lower staff resilience, engagement and productivity

### *Economic risk*

- Lost tax revenue
- Rising benefit bill
- Increased costs of care to replace the £193bn that unpaid care contributes

### *Social risk*

- Exploiting carers' willingness to care
- A more unequal society
- It could be you!

# Caring as an EDI issue?



“ ... an effective EDI strategy should go beyond legal compliance and take an intersectional approach to EDI, which will add value to an organisation, contribute to the wellbeing and equality of outcomes and impact on all employees”

CIPD. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the workplace.

“Carers are a hugely diverse group – both in terms of who they are and who they care for – but policy and services do not always reflect this diversity”

Caring in a Complex World, Kings Fund, May 2023

“Caring (...) intersects with a wide range of social and structural inequalities and has a powerful capacity to amplify pre-existing disadvantage”

Family Carers and Caring Milne and Larkin 2023

## What support do working carers need?

Research by Carers UK and others identifies the things that working carers identify as most important to them

recognition and validation of their role and its challenges

supportive and flexible working arrangements

opportunities to offer and receive support at work

having understanding managers and colleagues

support that

- is appropriate, accessible
- is tailored to and informed by their situation
- does not create extra work for them
- sustains them and prevents breakdown, not just when they are in a crisis

# Why Coaching?

## **Coaching is uniquely suited to help carers**

- work out what help and support they need
  - build the confidence to access it
  - while addressing the things that get in the way
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## **Coaching is**

- flexible, takes account of time poverty
  - empowering, builds self-esteem, self-efficacy and validation
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## **Coaching can provide**

- + a safe place to explore difficult, emotional issues to do with work
- + encouragement to articulate a vision and make plans for a flourishing career
- + help with managing stress, overwhelm, frustration

## We also know ....

### **Changes people make through coaching can lead to lasting positive change**

- Sustaining new ways of thinking, strategies, routines and activities
- Using tools and techniques from coaching
- Feeling confident, hopeful, a sense of agency and validation.

### **Carers hugely appreciate**

- a coach who really understands what it is like
- Support at a time and frequency that suits them and doesn't increase pressure

### **Carers respond well to**

- approaches that encourage changes in thinking and feeling and help focus on the present moment and what is going well
- approaches such as: strengths-based, compassion-focused, cognitive-behavioural, acceptance and commitment coaching



# Benefits



## Carers' view

- Reflection and perspective
- Space and time to adjust to change
- Seeing themselves differently, more positively
- Time to talk about difficulties and take the first steps towards feeling better
- Having practical things to try out and come back to
- A lifeline when feeling really alone and fearful
- less anxious and self-critical, less guilty about focusing on themselves
- more supported, optimistic and less alone

## Employers' view

### Staff who are

- better equipped to cope with working and caring
- able to make sustainable changes
- more confident about asking for help
- more motivated to do something different

Enhanced reputation, stability, staff retention

Real benefits of a diverse and inclusive workforce

# Case Studies

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“I have a toolkit for reframing difficult/negative thinking. This helps me to cope with my emotional stress response to difficult situations when caring and impacts on my day-to-day wellbeing and focus at work. If I am dealing with my caring responsibilities better at home, I am better able to concentrate on my work”

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“I don't feel like drowning anymore. I feel more in control and more balanced. I have gained confidence at work, I am taking part in projects and training, I have been allocated new responsibilities with the knowledge that if things get more difficult at home, I can drop out of those. I have had open discussions at work and feel supported. I even applied for a job, which I would have never done six months ago”

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“A real lifeline for me, at a time when I felt really alone in my struggles and fearful that I was losing control of being able to work full-time and manage my home-life situation and not sure what to try next to feel better. It has given me encouragement and hope that I can tackle the situation and continue to achieve in my career despite it all.”

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“Able to see that I need to look after my own needs as well as my family's. Feeling less resentful of the burden of my caring responsibilities.”



# Case study University of Nottingham

Isobel O'Neil Associate Professor in Entrepreneurship  
at the Nottingham University Business School

in conversation with

Katharine Collins, Co-Director, Coaching for Unpaid  
Carers CIC, Coach and Therapist

about

- the benefits of introducing carer coaching
- her experience of coaching as a working carer

# Other people we have worked with

**Karen Taylor, Founding Director at Wellness Cloud,** comments:

“Unpaid carers are so often overlooked when it comes to company support.

We felt it was essential that we incorporate coaching and group support for unpaid carers into our offering to help those within our partner organisations.

Our users find it super helpful (to) learn coping tools and how to balance their different roles in a supportive environment.”

**Dr Alisoun Milne, Professor Emeritus of Social Gerontology and Social Work, University of Kent,** in an evaluation of Coaching for Unpaid Carers concluded

“There can be little doubt about the positive impact of coaching on carers’ lives and wellbeing. ...

Coaching has significant potential to improve the lives, wellbeing and health, particularly mental health, of more carers more of the time”

## Final thoughts...



“Supporting working carers is a pivotal economic and social issue, and one that needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Although considerable progress has been made, much remains to be done if we are to .... secure a brighter future for working carers, employers and the economy.”

*The business case for employers supporting carers, Peters and Wilson (2017)*



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*Coaching for Carers: Pilot Evaluation Milne, Mikelyte& Zhang, (2023)*



## Thoughts, Questions, Comments?

- Where is your organisation in terms of supporting carers?
- What could you be doing in your workplace to better support unpaid carers?
- Have we made the case for offering coaching for working carers?
- As a Coach – might you consider Coaching for Carers as an addition to your offer?
- As a Working Carer, how well supported to do you feel at work? What would make the biggest difference for you?



# Resources



- *Coaching for Carers: Pilot Evaluation*, Coaching for Carers West Sussex, Milne, A., Mikelyte, R., Zhang, W. (2023)
- *Family Carers and Caring*, Milne, A. & Larkin, M. Emerald Publishing (2023)
- *Understanding unpaid carers and their access to support*, Health Foundation (May 2023) <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/understanding-unpaid-carers-and-their-access-to-support>
- *Caring in a complex world*, Kings Fund (May 2023) <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/reports/unpaid-carers-caring-complex-world>
- The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) guidance to support employers to create a carer-friendly workplace (see <https://www.cipd.org/uk/knowledge/guides/carer-friendly-workplace/> )
- Employers for Carers (part of Carers UK) benchmarking scheme, the Carer Confident framework (<https://www.employersforcarers.org/carer-confident/carer-confident-criteria/>),
- Carers UK: Carers' employment rights today, tomorrow and in the future, provides the most up to date picture on caring and employment. [https://www.carersuk.org/media/hiekwx0p/carers-uk-crd-employment-report-2023\\_final.pdf](https://www.carersuk.org/media/hiekwx0p/carers-uk-crd-employment-report-2023_final.pdf)
- The business case for employers supporting carers: reflecting on a UK model. Peters, I. and Wilson, K. (2017) ", *International Journal of Care and Caring*, 1(3): 415–20,



# Thank you for listening



If you would like to find out more, you can contact us at:

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