



Two hats...too hard

Project Summary

The working carers' project began in 2011 and was developed by the Southern Services Reform Group (SSRG), Carer Issues Workgroup. A resource was developed to raise awareness in the workplace about working carers and where carers can access services to better manage their caring role. The resource package was aimed at both employer and employee, consisting of a power point, DVD, employer information booklet and employee information brochure and poster. The DVD was a contribution from Carer Support and consisted of interviews with working carers which validated the message. A pre and post survey tool was used to gauge the success of the information package which was delivered to three organisations – City of Onkaparinga (2 sites), Resthaven Community respite and ECH. The data was examined externally and comparisons analysed between pre and post surveys.

Background

Carers in the workplace are often unaware they are carers (hidden carers). The research suggests that predominantly middle aged women (skilled and experienced workers) are shouldering most of the aged care plus there is pressure for them to stay in the workforce to alleviate the skilled workforce shortage. They are facing the issue of juggling paid employment with their caring responsibilities.

The desired outcomes of the project were the following:

- Self-identification of working carers in the workplace
- Knowledge about carer services and support
- Employers to be supportive and understanding of working carers
- Co-workers to be supportive and understanding of working carers
- Adherence / demonstrating a proactive approach to the Carers Charter and National Carer Legislation

Evaluation surveys were completed by staff before introducing the working carers information into the workplace and then again twelve months later.

Results

The demographic data revealed that little had changed between the two surveys. The majority of respondents were female, and most were older than 45 years of age. Part time employment was the main employment type. Males reported more full time employment than females, who conversely reported greater part time and casual employment. There were marginally more females than males over the age of 45 in the post survey.

32 (32.3%) of the 99 who responded in the post evaluation stated they were a carer, which is a 33% increase over the number that reported this in the pre evaluation. The majority of working carers were females over the age of 45 and employed in part time positions. No respondents under the age of 35 reported being a carer initially; however in the post survey 3 younger respondents stated being a carer. A possible reason for this could be attributed to the education process as workers were conceivably made more aware of the description of a working carer. This is a pleasing result but the increase in identified working carers from 24 to 32 is not statistically significant.

Workplace	Number of working carers	% of working carers employed by employer	Number of working carers	% of working carers employed by employer
EFS	8	29.6	13	59.1
OFS	6	20.7	6	26.1
ONS	2	6.5	5	21.7
RS	8	42.1	8	34.8

Although it cannot be said that attitudes about working carers changed significantly between the two surveys, there was an identified positive trend. All working carers responding in the post evaluation felt supported and were happy to discuss their caring role.

	Pre or Post	N	Mean
I am comfortable telling others in the workplace that I am a carer.	Pre	24	7.5
	Post	32	7.2
I feel supported by my team.	Pre	24	6.6
	Post	32	7.0
I feel supported by my manager.	Pre	24	6.8
	Post	32	7.2

The following chart is showing the pre and post results of changed attitudes within the workplace. Overall attitudes were not altered by the intervention, but there were some successes at the individual workplace level, most notably at EFS.

Employer		Pre or Post	N	Mean
RS	I am comfortable telling others in the workplace that I am a carer.	Pre	8	7.88*
		Post	8	5.38**
	I feel supported by my team.	Pre	8	7.00

		Post	8	5.38
	I feel supported by my manager.	Pre	8	7.88
		Post	8	5.63
EFS	I am comfortable telling others in the workplace that I am a carer.	Pre	8	6.63a
		Post	13	8.38b
	I feel supported by my team.	Pre	8	6.13a
		Post	13	8.15b
	I feel supported by my manager.	Pre	8	5.50a
		Post	13	8.08b
ONS	I am comfortable telling others in the workplace that I am a carer.	Pre	2	9.00
		Post	5	7.40
	I feel supported by my team.	Pre	2	8.00
		Post	5	7.60
	I feel supported by my manager.	Pre	2	7.00
		Post	5	7.80
OFS	I am comfortable telling others in the workplace that I am a carer.	Pre	6	7.67
		Post	6	6.67
	I feel supported by my team.	Pre	6	6.33
		Post	6	6.33
	I feel supported by my manager.	Pre	6	7.17
		Post	6	6.83

Statements with a different letter within the same employer are significantly different ($p < 0.05$).

Statements with a different * within the same employer are significantly different ($p < 0.1$).

The "pre" figures shown here differ from those previously reported – they are now higher, reflecting a less pessimistic view of workers.

All respondents were asked whether they knew if any of their co-workers were carers. The 'not sure' response was prominent across all workplaces and the 'Yes' response improved in two of the workplaces.

Employer	Response	Pre		Post	
		n	%	n	%
EFS	Yes	8	29.6	10	45.5
	No	9	33.3	3	13.6
	Not sure	10	37.0	9	40.9
OFS	Yes	9	30.0	9	29.0
	No	7	23.3	9	29.0
	Not sure	14	46.7	13	42.0
ONS	Yes	10	33.3	15	65.2
	No	5	16.7	4	17.4
	Not sure	15	50.0	4	17.4
RS	Yes	11	57.9	11	47.8

	No	2	10.5	3	13.0
	Not sure	6	31.6	9	39.1

All respondents were asked whether their work had been impacted upon by a co-worker who was a carer. 104 valid responses were received pre and 97 post. Only a small percentage of respondents in both surveys answered "Yes".

	Pre*		Post*	
	n	%	n	%
Has your work been impacted upon by a co-worker who is a carer?				
Yes	8	7.7	10	10.1
No	77	74.0	63	63.6
Not Sure	19	19.3	24	24.2

The final questions related to whether respondents thought that they would become carers in the next 10 years and whether they were aware of support services available to carers in their workplace and the wider environment.

There was a reduction in both the numbers and percentage post evaluation; however the result was not statistically significant. There is no way to identify exactly why the reduction occurred. A possible explanation could be that the education process created an initial awareness and over time it diminished.

Do you expect to become a carer in the next 10 years?

	Pre		Post	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	37	35.2	25	25.8
No	30	28.6	31	32.0
Unsure	38	36.2	41	42.2

96 pre evaluation and 98 post evaluation responses were received in relation to the 2 questions about support services. There was an increase (but not significant) in the number of people who were aware of support services available in the community and there was also an increase in reported knowledge about services available within each organisation. This increase was statistically significant, indicating that the education process may have produced better knowledge of services available to working carers in the workplace.

Are you aware of support available for carers within your organisation?

Employer		Pre		Post	
		n	%	n	%
RS	Yes	14	73.7	11	50.0
	No	3	15.8	5	22.7
	Unsure	2	10.5	6	27.3
EFS	Yes	5a	19.2	13b	59.1
	No	8a	30.8	1b	4.5

	Unsure	13	50.0	8	36.4
ONS	Yes	8a	25.8	13b	56.5
	No	20a	64.5	6b	26.1
	Unsure	3	9.7	4	17.4
OFS	Yes	4	14.8	5	16.1
	No	16	59.3	19	61.3
	Unsure	7	25.9	7	22.6

Responses with a different letter within the same employer are significantly different ($p < 0.05$)

Conclusion

There were no significant differences in the attitudes and opinions of workers pre and post intervention, however some trends were observed. Generally the views of workers in the post survey were more optimistic than previously reported and at individual organisations there was evidence that the introduction of the resource package may have changed attitudes and opinions. The low level of responses to some of the questions would indicate that ongoing education about issues associated with caring and working is required to provide staff with a better understanding about working carers and appropriate support. However, there was evidence to support that there was an increase in knowledge of services available for working carers at an organisational level.

The resource has been handed over to the Carer Organisations, Carer Support and Carers SA, to use in their programs as required. The information is also available on the SSRG website for any interested party to download and utilise in their workplace or organisation.

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