

# The Hidden Leaders in Your Workforce

## And How to Get the Best from Them

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Created by Kirsten Hurley and presented by Build Your Edge.



## Watch the full episode

This handout complements Kirsten's "Build Your Edge" episode, "Who Cares?" Start by listening to the conversation, as it brings these ideas to life and provides the context to get the most value from this guide.

Build Your Edge 

Episode 18

Who Cares?

How carers quietly build resilience, empathy, and clarity: the real markers of great leaders.

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# What Carers Wish Their Employers Knew, and How to Help

Caring is one of the most demanding roles a person can undertake, yet it's rarely acknowledged at work and seldom discussed openly. Millions of people in the UK are caring for children, ageing parents, partners with sudden health needs, siblings with long-term conditions, or loved ones who simply can't get through the day without extra support. Many don't even realise they are carers. They just get on with it.

They bring all that experience into the workplace.

Carers are often the calmest people in the room. They've built resilience by living with uncertainty. They make decisions under pressure, listen attentively, juggle competing demands, and stay focused when things become challenging. These are leadership skills; hard-won, and too often overlooked.

Yet most workplaces aren't designed with carers in mind. The load they carry is invisible unless someone makes space for it. And that invisibility is costly: for the individual, for their team, and for the organisation that risks losing a talented, committed person who could thrive with the proper support.

This guide exists to change that. It distils the core lessons from **Kirsten Hurley's** conversation on *Build Your Edge* and turns them into clear, practical actions any employer can take. Whether you lead a team or shape company policy, these insights will help you recognise carers, support them, and unlock the strength they bring.

Because when carers are supported, everyone wins – the individual, the company, and the culture you're building.

# 1. Caring is often invisible.

Most carers stay quiet, worried about judgment, career impact, or being seen as less committed.

## How employers can help:

- Create a culture where sharing personal circumstances feels safe and comfortable.
- Normalise caring in internal comms, leadership messages, and team rituals.

# 2. Caring responsibilities can change overnight—for everyone and anyone.

A crisis can arrive out of nowhere and reshape anyone's capacity, energy, and schedule.

## How employers can help:

- Build flexibility into your policies and your mindset.
- Offer emergency support and adjust expectations when life shifts suddenly.

# 3. Carers carry a heavy emotional and mental load.

It's not just time. It's worry, admin, decision fatigue, and emotional strain.

## How employers can help:

- Encourage well-being conversations before things reach breaking point.
- Provide access to mental health support and train managers to respond with empathy and understanding.

## 4. Caring is not a performance issue.

Carers are often high performers; ambitious, capable, and deeply committed.

### How employers can help:

- Avoid assumptions.
- Focus on outcomes, not hours.
- Celebrate results and impact.

## 5. Flexibility makes a huge difference.

Carers don't always need time off. They need autonomy; early starts, late finishes, remote days, and short-notice adjustments.

### How employers can help:

- Make flexible working the default.
- Let carers design schedules that support sustainable performance.

## 6. Clear policies matter, but culture matters more.

A policy no one feels safe to use isn't support.

### How employers can help:

- Review policies for clarity and practicality.
- Communicate them clearly.
- Train managers to apply them consistently and without judgment.

## 7. Carers need to feel seen and valued.

Many carers feel they're holding everything together with very little recognition.

### How employers can help:

- Acknowledge their contribution.
- Include carers' voices in conversations on wellbeing and inclusion.
- Recognise the resilience and perspective they bring.

## 8. Connection prevents isolation.

Carers can often feel isolated, even within a busy organisation.

### How employers can help:

- Create peer networks or ERGs for carers.
- Provide safe spaces to connect, share experiences, and access support without stigma.