

CARERS' POLICY – BEST PRACTICE TEMPLATE

Summary

[insert Employer's name] recognises and values employees who have an unpaid caring role and the contribution they make to the health and wellbeing of the people they care for. We wish to support, as best as we are able, employees who are also providing unpaid care to a family member or friend.

How we define a carer

A Carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who due to illness, disability, a mental health issue or an addiction cannot cope without their support.

About carers

There are around 6 million unpaid carers across the UK providing care to someone who couldn't cope without their support. Three million of them are in full or part-time employment. It means that 1 in 7 people in any workplace are likely to have a caring role. Having to give up employment to care for someone else is a loss to employers, families, the UK and local economies. It is crucial that we identify, involve and support carers in the workplace setting to ensure that we provide them with the best support that we are able to provide.

Aims

This policy aims to increase the likelihood of this organisation retaining qualified and experienced staff who may otherwise have to leave our employment or reduce the hours they can work for us because of the demands of their caring role. Staff who are carers will be more likely to be able to continue their caring role and not have to give up employment. We aim to do this by setting out clear guidelines and good supporting practices for them within the workplace.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of **[insert Employer's name]**.

Related Policies

This policy is fully supported by and integrated with other relevant policies such as:

- Flexible Working Policy
- Leave Policy
- Diversity and Equality Policy
- Parental Leave Policy
- Dependents Leave Policy
- Emergency Leave Policy
- Compassionate Leave Policy

Our Commitment to Employees with a Caring Role

[insert Employer's name] will support employees with a caring role by:

- Supporting and encouraging employees with caring roles to identify themselves if they choose to
- Recognising that a caring role can begin at any point in an employee's time with us
- We will provide regular opportunities for employees to tell us if they have a caring role e.g. application forms, supervisions, appraisals, return to work interviews etc.
- Monitoring the number of employees with a caring role and regularly evaluating the organisation's response to requests for support
- Making sure that line managers undertake carer awareness training or have completed an eLearning Carer Awareness course
- Ensuring that all staff are aware of this policy, the challenges employees with a caring role face and why it is important that we support staff with a caring role
- Signposting wherever possible employees with a caring role to external support organisations such as the local carers centre
- Encouraging employees with a caring role to form an informal peer support network
- Being as responsive as we can to requests for flexible working for employees with a caring role

- Giving staff who have a caring role a Carers Passport so that they do not have to repeat information about their caring role to different managers or ask again for already agreed changes to their work pattern
- Consulting with staff on the development and reviews of this policy

Once an employee has identified him/herself as having a caring role and is being supported by this organisation the employee must notify his/her line manager if there are any changes in the nature of the caring role e.g. bereavement of the cared for person or a change in the nature of the caring role.

Our Statutory Obligations

This policy is designed to complement our statutory obligations which are outlined below. All employees who have 26 weeks or more service are entitled to make one **Flexible Working** request per year. Flexible working can mean reduced hours, flexitime, home working, job shares, shift swapping, compressed hours, annualised hours, job sharing, term-time working, part time working, flexible holidays and career breaks etc. For further information, please refer the Flexible Working Policy. **[or insert details of your Flexible Working Policy]**

All employees have the right to take a reasonable amount of **Time Off for Dependants** to deal with emergencies. A dependant is defined “as someone who depends on an employee for care.” For further information, please refer to the Leave Policies. **[or insert details of your Leave Policies]**

All employees are entitled to have **Parental Leave** if they have worked for **[insert Employer’s name]** for at least one year and have legal parental responsibility for a child. Employees can take up to 18 weeks’ leave for each child, up until their 18th birthday. A maximum of four weeks can be taken in one year for each qualifying child. Parental leave is unpaid unless the employee contract state otherwise. Employees have to take parental leave in blocks of a week, unless the employee has a disabled child when the employee can take it a day at a time. The employee should give 21 days’ notice to take Parental Leave. For further information, please refer to the Parental Leave Policy or Workforce/Collective Agreement.

Under the Equality Act 2010, people who look after another person who is elderly or disabled are protected against direct discrimination or harassment. Carers are protected by law as they are classed as being ‘associated’ with someone who has special **Protection from Discrimination**. **[insert Employer’s name]** is committed to supporting, developing and promoting diversity and equality in all of its employment practices and activities and aims to establish an inclusive culture free from discrimination and based on the values of fairness, dignity and respect. For further information, please refer to the **Diversity and Equality Policy**.

SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICE

1.14. **Carers Leave:** In addition to statutory obligations **[insert Employer's name]** will also consider up to X additional days paid/unpaid leave in exceptional circumstances for employees who have caring responsibilities. This must be agreed **[insert senior manager/management level]** on a case by case basis. For further information, please refer the Leave Policies. **[or insert details of your Leave Policies]**

1.15. **Splitting leave entitlements into hourly blocks:** **[insert Employer's name]** recognises that carers need only an hour or less for an appointment, however, often have to take half a day's leave to accommodate the appointments. **[insert Employer's name]** allows employees with caring responsibilities can split X days of their leave days into hourly blocks, meaning that one or two hours can be taken instead of full or half days. **[insert details of the entitlement or your Leave Policies]**

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR CARERS

1.17. **[insert Employer's name]** offer to all employees an **Employee Support & Assistance Package Scheme** to support employees with every day issues (counselling, legal advice etc.). Details of our scheme can be found at: **[or insert Employee Assistance Scheme details]**

1.18. As an additional **Workplace Support [insert Employer's name]** encourages peer-support for carers. **[insert how do you support carers i.e. have an internal Carer support group and/or Carer Champion]** Details of the Carers' Policy, support group etc. are also given during the Induction process.

1.19. **Telephone calls:** **[insert Employer's name]** understands the difficulty that some carers face in needing to be available to support their cared-for, therefore carers are entitled to have their personal phones close by and take calls if needed at work in connection with their role as a carer.

1.20. **Staff Car Parking:** **[insert Employer's name]** provides reserved parking close to the exit of the building for unpaid carers who are likely to have to leave suddenly in an emergency.

Further information

The following pieces of legislation are relevant to Carers in the workplace.

- **The Children and Families Act 2014** gives all employees with at least 26 weeks' continuous employment the right to request flexible working.
- **The Employment Relations Act 1999** gives employees the right to take 'reasonable' time off to deal with unexpected situations involving a dependant.
- **The Equality Act 2010** brings together anti-discrimination law acts and regulations including The Disability Discrimination Act 1995. States that employers and

employees have a responsibility to create and be part of a fair work environment which complies with the law.

- **The Care Act 2015** gives carers additional rights. One of these is that local authorities must offer **Carer's Needs Assessments** to all carers on the appearance of need. Assessments look into the wellbeing of carers, the support carers need to continue in their caring role, the impact caring is having on their own life particularly in terms of work, education and training and quality of life. For further information, please contact your local authority.

Appendix

Useful contacts

- Local Carer Centre:
- Adult Social Services:
- Carers UK www.carersuk.org
- Free phone helpline 0808 808 7777 (10am-4pm)
- Carers Trust www.carerstrust.org