

1. INTRODUCTION

The company recognises that our employees are the organisation's most valuable asset and understands that staff have a life and responsibilities outside of work.

This guidance has been put together to help support the needs of staff with caring responsibilities. Its aim is to:

- Offer guidance in order for employees to balance their working and caring commitments effectively.
- Outline the support the company will offer to employees that have caring responsibilities.
- Provide guidance to managers so that they can effectively support their staff.

It should be read in conjunction with related policies and procedures such as the Flexible Working Policy and Procedure, Miscellaneous Leave Policy and Career Break Scheme.

2. WHO IS A CARER?

A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend due to their disability, physical or mental health condition, frailty, addiction or other health and care need. If an employee is looking after a child, including their own child, who has special physical or mental health support needs, then they are also a carer.

According to Carers UK, it is estimated that over 10.5 million people nationally (or one in five or 20%) support an elderly, disabled, or seriously ill relative or other loved one with an illness or long-term disability. Research by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) states that one fifth of carers stop work in order to fulfil their caring role, and on average, carers retire 8 years early.

Carers tasks vary widely and may include but are not limited to any of the following:

- Personal care such as washing, dressing, getting in and out of bed or to the toilet.
- Support to access activities, shopping, and community
- Support to manage finances, bills, property and household management tasks.
- Emotional support

Many carers balance their caring role alongside employment, education and/or family life which can be stressful and impact on the health and wellbeing of the carer.

3. TYPES OF CARE ARRANGEMENT

New care: An employee who has just become a carer may need time and flexibility to set up the caring arrangements, and this may be accommodated through carer's leave or annual leave arrangements.

Short term care: An employee with temporary or provisional care responsibilities may need to take time off at certain intervals, and this may be accommodated through flexible working arrangements, carer's leave or annual leave arrangements.

Long term care: An increase in caring responsibilities will mean a change in personal circumstances and potentially a request for more flexibility or a change to flexible working arrangements.

Immediate or emergency care: Such circumstances require immediate support at short notice to cover a short period of time and, this may be accommodated through family leave for an emergency, carer's leave or annual leave arrangements.

4. WORKING CARERS PASSPORT

The purpose of the Working Carer Passport is to enable a carer and their manager to hold a supportive conversation and document flexibilities needed to support the carer in balancing care and work. It is designed to be a living document, to be reviewed regularly and will identify and record any changes in the nature or impact of an employee's caring responsibilities.

The aim is to minimise the need to re-negotiate these flexibilities every time an employee moves post, moves between roles or departments, or is assigned a new manager. This document belongs to the employee and their manager should retain a copy on the employee's file.

5. HOW THE EMPLOYER SUPPORTS CARERS

The physical, emotional, and psychological demands of caring can be demanding and stressful and result in carer stress. Caring can take a toll on carers' education and employment opportunities, including career development, promotions and pay rises, as well as impacting on carers' ability to work at all. Many are forced to give up work altogether or take early retirement or reduced hours.

The caring role can have a negative impact on the carers physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing, with carers twice as likely to suffer from ill health as noncarers.

Employees with caring responsibilities are encouraged to complete a Working Carer Passport. A Working Carer Passport will identify them as a carer and can help frame discussions with the employee and line manager, which might include conversations around flexible working, mental and physical health support, and other services available.

The below policies are also available to support employees with caring responsibilities:

Flexible Working Policy

This policy sets out the opportunities that are available for staff and includes facilities for reduced hours, flexible working hours, and hybrid working locations where practicable. Flexible working can be defined as any pattern of work that differs from the originally agreed working arrangements.

INCLUDE ANY ADDITIONAL COMPANY POLICIES HERE

USE THIS AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO NEGOTIATE BETTER THAN THE STATUTORY POSITION – ARGUMENTS TO USE AS BELOW:

As the number of unpaid carers in the UK continues to rise—with over 5 million people providing care to family or friends—employers should consider how they can support this important part of their workforce. Enhancing carer leave beyond statutory requirements is not only a moral imperative but can be a good strategic business decision that can boost retention, productivity, and reduce operational costs and legal risks.

Employers should consider retention.

Problem: Many carers are forced to leave their jobs due to insufficient flexibility or support.

Opportunity: Enhanced carer leave can significantly reduce attrition. The average cost to replace an employee is over **£30,000**. Retaining experienced staff preserves institutional knowledge and avoids recruitment and training costs.

Increased Productivity and Reduced Absenteeism

Problem: Unsupported carers can experience stress and burnout, which naturally leads to higher absenteeism.

Opportunity: Offering more leave helps employees manage their responsibilities, improving focus and productivity when at work. This leads to fewer unplanned absences and a more engaged workforce.

Supports Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Problem: Carers are disproportionately women and employees from certain ethnic backgrounds, who may face career stagnation.

Opportunity: Flexible carer support aligns with EDI policies and reduces gender and racial disparities in career progression creating a more inclusive culture.

Legal position

Problem: Carers of disabled people are protected under the Equality Act 2010 and failure to accommodate can lead to discrimination claims, but litigation should not have to be sought.

Opportunity: Proactively offering extended leave demonstrates compliance, reduces the risk of tribunal claims and avoids reputational damage.