

# Supporting Carers at Work Guidance

Document Control

<b>Approval Date</b>	24 June 2024
<b>Implementation Date</b>	24 June 2024
<b>Guidance Version</b>	1
<b>Author(s) and Owner</b>	Kirsty George – Author Luci Camilli - Author Isla Newcombe - Owner
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Staff Governance Committee
<b>Scheduled Review</b>	Annually
<b>Changes</b>	

## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
	Purpose of the Guidance	4
	Inclusivity Statement	4
	Responsibility of Managers	4
	Responsibility of Employees	4
<b>2</b>	<b>Supporting Carers</b>	<b>5</b>
	Identification of Carers	5
<b>3</b>	<b>Key Points to Consider in Relation to Supporting Carers</b>	<b>6</b>
	Smarter Working	6
<b>4</b>	<b>Carers Leave and Special Leave</b>	<b>7</b>
	Carers Leave	7
	Special Leave	7
	Time off for dependants/family emergencies	7
	Compassionate Leave	7
	Career Break	8
	Authorised Unpaid Leave	8
	Time Off for Appointments	8
<b>5</b>	<b>Other Support Options for carers</b>	<b>9</b>
	Purchase of Additional Annual Leave	9
	Converting Annual Leave into Hours	9
	Timing and Location of Work related events	9
	Access to Mobile Phones	10
	Employee Assistance Service	10
<b>6</b>	<b>Relevant Policy and Guidance</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Further Support</b>	<b>11</b>

## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **Purpose of the Guidance**

Undertaking a caring responsibility can be challenging, and may result in carers having to give up their employment because they are unable to manage both roles. The Council and its managers can help carers to remain in work, by creating a working environment in which carers feel valued and supported and at the same time ensuring that operational requirements are met. By supporting carers who work for Aberdeen City Council, the organisation retains skilled and experienced individuals.

This guidance provides managers with the core information and considerations when supporting carers within their team(s) and encourages the development of a positive working environment for these employees. Additionally this guidance provides clarity on the support available to carers who work for Aberdeen City Council (ACC).

### **Inclusivity statement**

This guidance is applicable to any employee who has a caring responsibility out with the workplace. The gender, sexual orientation, age or any other characteristics are irrelevant in the application of any of our family friendly policies.

### **Responsibility of Managers**

Managers should ensure that they are familiar with this provision and supportive of any individual seeking to request support in their caring responsibilities.

Where a manager is supporting an employee who has caring responsibilities, they should recognise that these caring demands may change. As such there should be regular opportunities for the employee to share any changes and reach agreements on what reasonable support can be given to enable them to continue their caring responsibilities.

Managers are required create an environment where employees feel supported and able to disclose their caring responsibilities. Managers should seek to provide opportunities for conversations which allow an employee who is a carer to share their situation. It can be daunting discussing elements of our personal life in the workplace, so managers must do all they can to build a trusting and open relationship with their staff.

Managers should also maintain an awareness of the possibility that where an employee is experiencing difficulties at work this may be linked to a caring responsibility that they have yet to disclose to their manager.

### **Responsibility of Employees**

Employees should ensure that they are familiar with this guidance and engage with Managers when considering how the guidance could support them and their caring responsibilities.

## SECTION 2: SUPPORTING CARERS

### Identification of Carers

An employee is a carer if they are responsible for the care and support of a dependant including a disabled, elderly or sick partner, relative or friend, who is unable to care for them self.

Specifically, dependants are:

- The employee's partner;
- The employee's child, or child they are a guardian of;
- The employee's parent;
- A person who lives in the employee's household (excluding tenants, lodgers, boarders and employees);
- Any other person who reasonably relies on the employee for assistance in the event of an accident or illness or to make arrangements for care in the event of an illness or injury, for example an elderly neighbour; and
- In relation to the disruption or termination of care for a dependant, any other person who reasonably relies on the employee to make arrangements for the provision of care.

The activities carers undertake are wide-ranging, including help with personal care, help with mobility, managing medication, practical household tasks, emotional support, and help with financial matters or paperwork. Carers may also need to attend meetings or appointments with, or on behalf of, the dependant, some of which may be planned and others at short notice.

Managers should ensure that their teams are aware of the support offered to carers; directing them to this guidance and special leave in the first instance.

Employees with caring responsibilities cannot always plan when they will require time off. Accidents and illnesses can occur without warning, and care arrangements can break down unexpectedly. The ability to take leave in an emergency is important for carers, who may be called upon at short notice.

It should be noted that employees have a statutory right to take unpaid, reasonable time off work to deal with unforeseen and emergency matters regarding a dependant.

## SECTION 3: Key Points to Consider in Relation to Supporting Carers

No two situations will be the same, and managers should ensure that a carer's situation is treated sensitively, fairly and confidentially. All requests from employees for support should be considered based on an understanding of the situation and its impact on the employee. Furthermore, no employee should be unfairly discriminated against because of their caring responsibilities.

Throughout this guidance the term "reasonable" is often used to indicate the amount of time off that can be granted. What will be considered as "reasonable" will depend on:

- The specific circumstances the carer is experiencing
- The demands of the service, and service delivery
- What other measures can be put in place, such as changing working patterns.

The following provides details of policy and guidance provisions relevant to supporting employees who are carers:-

### **Smarter Working**

It may be beneficial for an employee with caring responsibilities to explore the use of a flexible working option. This could include remote or home working or adopting a different work pattern. If working on a rota basis, all due consideration should be given, where the employee. Managers should also be aware that the employee's working times may need to be amended at short notice if they are required to respond to an emergency in relation to their caring responsibility. Further information on a range of flexible working options can be found in the [Flexible Working Guidance](#) on People Anytime and is also available from line managers.

Further to this, an employee who is a carer may also feel that reducing their contracted hours may benefit them and their dependant. This could be either on a permanent or temporary basis and managers should consider any request for this from the employee, taking into account the requirements of the service.

Employees are entitled to make 2 formal flexible working requests in a 12 month period.

## **SECTION 4: Carers Leave and Special Leave**

### **Carers Leave**

Employees who are caring for a dependent with a long-term care need are entitled to a week of unpaid flexible leave per year.

This right to carers leave applies from the first day of work, and can be used to give or to arrange care for a dependant who needs long-term care.

Employees can take up to 1 week of carer's leave a year, and can choose to take leave as:

- half days – this is the minimum they can take
- full days
- a whole week

An employee is entitled to a period of leave that is equal to their usual working week. For example, if someone works 3 days a week, they can take 3 days of carer's leave.

### **Special Leave**

Managers can also consider, where appropriate, granting special leave such as 'compassionate leave' or agreeing with the employee that any time off required is taken as annual or flexi leave or that hours lost are made up at a later point.

It is important to understand that a carer's situation may not remain as constant and could be subject to change at any time. This means that any supporting provisions in place for the carer may require to be reviewed and amended. It is advisable that the manager maintains regular contact with the employee to discuss their caring situation and that the employee is encouraged to inform their manager of any problems.

### **Time off for dependants/family emergencies**

This is a statutory right to unpaid reasonable time off to deal with unforeseen and emergency matters regarding a dependant. A dependant can be either a spouse, partner, child, parent or someone who depends on the employee for care. This time off can be granted in the following circumstances:

- To deal with a breakdown in a dependant's care arrangements.
- To put in place longer term care for a child or elderly relative.
- When a dependant falls ill or is taken to hospital.
- To make funeral arrangements. (See section on Compassionate circumstances).

### **Compassionate Leave**

if there is an event which has led to a serious / critical family situation it may be appropriate to manage it as compassionate leave.

Paid compassionate leave may be granted where an employee is faced with a serious/critical family situation, for example where a close relative, partner or dependant has a serious illness, becomes critically ill, injured or is missing.

Service Managers may grant compassionate leave with pay following assessment of an employee's individual circumstances; this will not normally exceed 10 days (pro-rated for part-time employees). If a longer period of time off is required and deemed appropriate, the Service Manager and employee should discuss and agree additional provisions that may be more suitable such as unpaid leave, temporary reduction in hours, use of TOIL /Flexi leave where appropriate etc.

This provision is not intended to include time off to look after children in the event of sickness due to difficulties in making childcare arrangements. These are covered by other provisions such as Time off for Dependants/family emergencies

### **Career Break**

An employee with a caring responsibility, and with more than 2 years continuous service with Aberdeen City Council can apply for a career break if they feel that they require an extended period away from employment due to their caring responsibility. In most cases career breaks will be between 6 months to 2 years. See the Career Break policy for full details.

Different career break provisions apply to those employed under SNCT terms and conditions.

### **Authorised Unpaid Leave**

An employee may make a request through their Service Manager for unpaid leave of absence providing this period does not exceed one consecutive calendar month. If a longer period of unpaid leave is requested, a request must be submitted in writing and approved by the relevant Chief Officer.

### **Time Off for Appointments**

Managers should consider, where possible, granting reasonable unpaid time off for employees who need to accompany a dependant to a medical or other appointment. An employee may also wish to consider using annual leave or a flexible working arrangement or making lost hours up at a later point (with management agreement) to cover these instances.



## **SECTION 5: Other Support Options for Carers**

### **Purchase of Additional Annual Leave**

An employee with a caring responsibility may wish to consider the purchase of additional annual leave to assist them to achieve a better work-life balance.

Under the salary sacrifice scheme, employees can apply to purchase additional annual leave, subject to the exigencies of service delivery.

When applying to purchase additional leave, consideration should be given to the number of days that can reasonably be taken in the current holiday year. Additional annual leave over an employee's contractual leave should not result in a total annual leave provision for a single year exceeding 40 days (for a full time employee).

Requests to purchase leave or carry forward leave leading to an overall provision exceeding 40 days, will require an exemption approval from an employee's line manager, demonstrating that the request can be accommodated by the service.

An employee cannot purchase annual leave if this will result in their salary reducing below Local Government Living Wage level; if they have any concerns regarding affordability, resources are available on the Financial Wellbeing page.

There is a specific window, usually in December, when additional annual leave can be purchased to be taken the following calendar year. Full details of the salary sacrifice scheme can be found on the PeopleAnytime pages.

Where employees have missed the annual leave purchase window, they can discuss with their Line Manager if they can request any unpaid leave, and how this will be deducted from their salary.

The purchase of additional annual leave is not applicable to those employed under SNCT terms and conditions.

### **Converting Annual Leave into Hours**

Where an employee's annual leave entitlement is currently calculated in days, consideration can be given to allowing the employee to convert annual leave into hours, where this can be practically accommodated. This may be appropriate where an employee needs flexibility but due to the restraints of their caring responsibilities it is difficult for them to make up any lost time. This would allow them to use one or more hours' of leave at a time, rather than full or half days, operational requirements permitting.

### **Timing and Location of Work related meetings and events**

Where a manager is aware of times that may or may not suit the employee due to their caring responsibilities, these should be taken into account where possible when arranging meetings, training or other work events. Additionally it may be appropriate to review

locations, and/or format of meetings to ensure it is made as easy as possible for those with carer roles to attend. Many carers may find it difficult to manage their caring responsibilities with work demands which can require them to travel out with their normal place of work on an ad hoc basis.

### **Access to Mobile Phones**

Where employees are not normally permitted to carry and use personal mobile phones during working hours, consideration should be given to waiving this rule and allowing those with caring responsibilities to carry and use (in relation to their caring role) their own mobile phones during working hours. This will enable the employee to be easily contactable in emergency situations relating to their dependant. In certain circumstances, employees who are carers may benefit from access to the Internet (for example to track the location of a dependant with dementia), so consideration should be given to smart phone or computer access for this where appropriate and practicable.

### **Employee Assistance Programme**

The Employee Assistance Programme is the Council's counselling service which provides psychological guidance and emotional support to employees experiencing personal difficulties and may be of particular relevance to those in a caring role. It operates for 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. The service is free, confidential and available to all employees and family members living in the household and over the age of 16. Contact details are on the People Anytime pages or available from line managers.

## SECTION 6: CARERS – RELEVANT POLICY & GUIDANCE

Annual Leave Purchase Scheme [Annual Leave \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Career Break Policy [PeopleAnytime - Career-Break-policy.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Provision of Special Leave [PeopleAnytime - Special Leave Sept 23.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Smarter Working [Smarter Working \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

[Corporate ICT Acceptable Use Policy](#)

[Risk, Safety and Resilience - ICT Acceptable Use Policy POL-C-0004.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

## SECTION 7: FURTHER SUPPORT

Carers Trust [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)

This organisation provides support and advice for carers and offers help in finding local support groups.

Carers UK [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

This organisation can provide help, support and guidance to carers whilst also connecting them with each other and providing details of local carer support groups.

Quarriers Aberdeen Carers Support Scheme

This is an organisation that offers help, advice and guidance to carers.

*Address:* 37 Albert Street, Aberdeen, AB25 1XU

*Telephone:* 01224 914036

*Email:* [aberdeencarers@quarriers.org.uk](mailto:aberdeencarers@quarriers.org.uk)

Working Families [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

This is an organisation which helps parents and carers achieve work-life balance.