

CARERS CHARTER IN MERTON (ALL EMPLOYEES)

1. Who the Charter Applies to

- 1.1 The Charter applies to all Council employees who have substantial caring responsibilities.

2. Definition of a Carer

- 2.1 A carer is someone who provides substantial support and regular care to a dependant family member, civil partner, friend or neighbour who is frail, ill and or mentally or physically disabled. Although it is not possible to define substantial in terms of hours or days of care provided, the employee who is a carer will be the first and main point of contact. As the sole carer, they will have responsibilities for the individual at all times including emergencies.

3. Purpose of the Charter

- 3.1 The purpose of this Charter is to support the Council in ensuring that all employees who are carers are given the necessary support to enable them to carry out their work commitments, whilst also caring for a dependant.
- 3.2 This Charter fully supports the principles of the Carers and Disabled Children's Act 2000 and the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004, particularly as it was introduced by the government to support carers in their caring roles and to help them maintain their own health and well being.

4. The Council's Vision for Carers

- 4.1 Merton Council recognises the sacrifices of carers, and the need to ensure that quality of life is maintained for people who need help to remain at work. Merton Council is committed to enhance the range of support it provides to assist carers to care, whilst also considering the needs of the service.
- 4.2 The Council also recognises that a number of it's employees have substantial and regular caring responsibilities, and would therefore wish to support them to continue to care in a way that ensures a high quality of life for both themselves and their dependants (**based on UN Charter of Human Rights 1991**).

5. Carers Employment and Financial security

- 5.1 Many carers combine caring with paid employment. Some carers choose to give up part or all of their employment and take up caring full time. Parent Carers also experience difficulties in the workplace whilst trying to combine work with caring duties. Promotion of flexible

working practices, benefit entitlements and assistance to stay in paid employment are essential to preserve the quality of life for carers.

6. **Work, Life balance/Family Support Provisions**

6.1 The Council supports work/life balance and has a “Family Support Provision” (**link to be included**) (that, details the options available to staff who have caring responsibilities. The Family Support Provisions cover the following:-

- Time off for emergencies
- Time off to Care for dependants
- Special Leave
- Parental Leave

6.2 In addition, a number of other options may be available to carers, and include:-

- Flexible working hours
- Job Sharing
- Part-time working
- Homeworking
- Temporary reduction of hours
- Term time working
- Career Break
- Unpaid Leave
- Management discretion to allow carers to carry forward annual leave, over and above the 5 days stipulated in the leave procedure, to a maximum of 10 days.

These are subject to agreement with the line manager, or more senior manager in line with the provisions set out within the Council’s Leave Policy.

Additionally,

- Allow carers to make reasonable telephone calls to “cared for” as required.
- Provide individual tailored solutions to meet special circumstances.

7. **Legal Framework**

7.1 The Employment Relations Act 1999 provides employees (including Carers) with a right to time-off without pay to deal with certain urgent domestic incidents/ family emergencies. The right was included in the UK law from the EC’s Parental leave Directive which provided time –off to deal with family emergencies.

7.2 The Council's Delegation of Executive Powers authorise Chief Officers to grant special paid leave at their discretion up to and including five days, and paid or unpaid leave in excess of five days in consultation with the Head of Human Resources.

7.3 In March 2000 the Prime Minister launched the Government's Work-life Balance Campaign. It aims to encourage employers to recognise the benefits to their organisation of flexible working arrangements, which enable employees to strike a better balance between work and their responsibilities outside of work.

7.4 In addition the Employment Act 2002 gives working parents of children up to 6 (or 18 if disabled) the right to request flexible working. Any request will be positively considered, taking into account the needs of the service.

8. **Equity/Equal Opportunities**

9.1 All Carers in the workforce should be treated fairly, and offered the level of support dependant on their caring situation and work commitments. They should be well informed of the policies in operation for supporting carers. These policies should be accessible to all carers regardless of post held, gender, race, age or disability.

9. **Information**

9.2 Line Managers and DHR teams must provide information on request regarding Carer support in a consistent manner throughout the organisation.

10. **Carers Forum**

10.1 Merton Council intends to establish a Carers Forum for employees who are carers.

11. **Monitoring**

11.1 It is proposed that this charter is reviewed annually to take into account any equal opportunities or diversity issues arising, trends and patterns analysis across the organisation.

For further information on this Charter please contact Yomie Darby (HR Advisor Employee Relations) Extn 4145, or via e-mail.

For information on the Carers Forum and support for carers who do not work in the Council, please contact Geoff Patmore extn 3625 or via e-mail.