

Employees who are Carers

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is:

- To recognise the Council's positive approach to carers in employment.
- To summarise the practical ways in which the Council can help employees to combine work with us with caring for others.
- To offer guidance to both managers and carers.

A carer is someone who looks after or provides support to a relative, friend or partner who, because of disability, illness or old age cannot manage without help (this may also include disabled children). The carer may or may not live with the person they care for.

Caring responsibilities may involve fairly limited help like visiting and shopping, or it may involve carrying out personal tasks such as washing and feeding. Some carers spend only a few hours a week with the person they care for, others spend far more. The caring may be temporary or permanent thus most people may be working carers at some point in their lives and for many it may be a long-term matter. A carer may not be the main or only person helping to look after someone.

Our view of carers in employment

We recognise that many of our employees may have caring responsibilities outside work. We also know that many employees work part-time or work particular working patterns because of commitments outside work, and it seems reasonable to believe that the issue is one that may affect employees at all levels across the organisation. Retaining such people is important and replacing them would be difficult and costly.

Supporting our staff as carers improves their work performance, by reducing stress and the risk that they will become unwell. A clear policy of support for carers helps staff to overcome potential problems caused by juggling work and care arrangements.

As a responsible employer, the Council is ready to support employees who are carers, and it is recognised that they may need assistance from time to time, to enable them to meet their commitments at work and outside work. So far as we reasonably can, we are ready to help, and we have in place a range of measures which may benefit and assist carers.

The benefits and support that are outlined below are available to employees who are carers. Staff who are carers should have regular conversations with their line manager, aimed at agreeing the carer's needs in work and how these may be met. An agreed plan, known as a Carer Support Plan, will then entitle the carer to a range of benefits and support.

Once the initial support plan interview has taken place it is important that a review date is agreed. The timing of this may depend on the circumstances surrounding the caring responsibility. This could be on a weekly, monthly or annual basis or when circumstances change.

Should a carer's manager change the support plan arrangements should remain in place but be reviewed. A discussion with the new manager about these arrangements and the caring situation is recommended.

Supporting the carer

Subject to the needs of the service and agreement by the line manager, flexitime may enable employees that have regular caring commitments at the beginning or end of the day to work

hours which most suit them. In addition, flexi leave may allow time off work to cope with unforeseen commitments.

Part-time work may be more suitable to someone with significant caring commitments. The Council has a job-share policy and is also willing to consider requests by carers to work reduced hours on either a permanent or temporary basis.

Subject to the needs of the service and agreement by the line manager, working from home may help support carers. Times spent caring and working at home must be kept separate. In these circumstances, the line manager and the carer will agree in advance what work will be undertaken on working from home days.

Carers leave

Carers sometimes need to take some time off, often just an hour or so, at short notice, usually to attend a medical or care appointment. Carers will have an allowance of 36 hours per year, paid caring leave. This time is to be used if needed for caring and can be used at short notice in any reasonable amount, for example taking a couple of hours to cover a medical appointment or can be taken in whole days. Any carers leave taken should be booked and recorded via the IBC portal. Carers leave cannot be carried over if not used.

Support and information

Details of training courses which focus on managing stress, wellbeing and health and safety are available on KCNet.

Counselling and practical advice is available from Workplace Options, the Council's employee assistance programme provider. Further details can be found on the [Wellbeing Hub](#)

When Caring ends

Looking after someone can be a huge part of an individual's life. It is likely that the caring role will change over time and at some point may come to an end. Whatever the situation it is important for the carer to find help and support and for their support plan to be regularly reviewed with the line manager.

Change in Manager

When a carer has a change in manager or moves to a new job it is recommended that the new manager reviews the support plan with the carer. Wherever possible the current support plan should remain in place, but it is recognised that on occasions there may be a business need to discuss and agree new arrangements.

Summary

Combining a paid job with caring for someone places demands on the employee concerned and in some cases may lead to problems at work. As a responsible employer, the Council recognises this and within reason will do what we can to support our employees.

It is in all our interests that staff are enabled to be as effective as possible at work. We have a number of ways in which we can offer support and our approach is positive. No employee should feel hesitant about seeking help or advice if they are already in the position of working and caring, or if they foresee such circumstances in the future.

[Carers Registration Form](#)