

# SAMPLE CARERS POLICY

NOTE TO READER: This policy has been written as a guide and may need adapting to suit your organisation. You may, for example, choose to add a period of paid carers leave or you may only be able to offer some of the options under “Policy Commitments”. It is also recommended to link to related policies in your Carer Policy (as suggested under “Policy Framework”). Please contact Working for Carers if you require support with tailoring a policy to your circumstances.

---

## Introduction and Scope

[Name of organisation] is committed to recognising the needs of working carers and ensuring that our policies and practices enable individuals with caring responsibilities to enter into and retain employment. Being able to manage work and caring responsibilities is part of maintaining a healthy life work balance and is important for your wellbeing.

As a Working for Carers accredited employer and Working for Carers Charter Signatory, we aim to improve awareness of carers’ needs within our organisation and support staff members who have caring responsibilities outside of work.

This Carer Policy is applicable to all employees across the organisation.

## Policy commitments

[Name of organisation] aims to support working carers by:

- Appointing a **Carer Champion** to ensure that carers’ issues are considered when implementing new policies and workplace practices, and up to date information is available to staff about the free support provided by local carer support services. Our Carer Champion hosts a carer forum where individuals can gain information and peer support. Information on how to contact the Carer Champion is on the dedicated carer intranet page (link).
- Requiring all line managers to complete the **Working for Carers training module**, thereby improving their knowledge of the issues carers face and what support they, as managers, can provide.
- **Reviewing the effectiveness** of our carer support through additional one-to-one meetings with carers, annual staff surveys and exit interviews and taking action where more can be done to help carers to stay in work
- Including information on carer support as part of the **induction process** for all employees, as someone can become a carer unexpectedly at any time
- Encouraging a **workplace culture** in which employees feel safe and supported to talk about the challenges they face as carers and ask for help
- Providing a **dedicated contact** for every employee to talk in confidence about their caring needs. This is your line manager and your HR team contact.

- Signposting to **additional support** through our Employee Assistance Programme (link) and dedicated carer intranet page
- Options to take **unpaid carers leave** in addition to the wider policies which support carers.

## Policy Framework

Our Carer Policy sits within a wider policy framework and the following policies provide additional useful information. Click through to the relevant policy for full details:

- **Time off for dependents:** this allows you to take (unpaid) leave in an emergency, for example when caring responsibilities fall through or a dependent falls ill.
- **Bereavement leave:** we recognise that an employee may be caring for a family member, friend or neighbour so have deliberately taken a broad view of who bereavement leave could relate to.
- **Flexible working:** whilst employees only have a statutory right to make a flexible working request after 26 weeks service and only once per year, we recognise that carers' needs can change at short notice and that job applicants may be unable to take a job that does not offer them the flexibility they need. We are therefore open to considering flexible working requests from employees who have caring responsibilities from the start of their employment and whenever caring needs change. Whilst we cannot guarantee that we will be able to accommodate every request, we will give each one careful consideration and will meet with you to discuss potential options before making a final decision.
- **Parental leave:** options which can support carers include sharing parental leave after the birth or adoption of a child, or unpaid parental leave which enables you to take blocks of unpaid time off up until your child is 18.

## Carers Leave

Sometimes, your caring responsibilities may be such that you need to take a complete break from work for a temporary period. In this situation, we will endeavour to agree with you to take a period of "carers leave" until you are ready to resume your work duties.

Carers leave provides the right to take up to [enter length of maximum time – typically 13 weeks to 1 year] to undertake caring responsibilities for a dependent.

There is no length of service requirement to qualify for this leave. **OR** This leave can be requested by any employee once they have passed their probationary period.

### Entitlement to Carers Leave

- To be entitled to carers leave you will have to give support, to a family member, partner, friend or neighbour who is physically and/or mentally ill, old and frail or disabled in some way, or has substance misuse problems. The help the carer gives is unpaid and involves support which is beyond that usually expected or over and above just helping out.
- Unpaid carers give practical and emotional support and may look after someone to keep them safe. The caring role can continue whilst the person being cared for is in hospital or another setting.

Carers leave may be taken:

- as a single block
- as a number of shorter periods with a minimum of one day (so effectively you are working shorter weeks for an agreed period to help you to better manage work and caring responsibilities)
- If you are a part time employee, the amount of leave taken should be calculated in relation to your normal working week at the time leave is taken.

### Requesting Carers Leave

You should request leave, in writing, to your manager, giving as much notice as possible. The minimum notice is 7 days before the day on which you propose to start leave. However, your manager will have the discretion to grant leave where the required notice has not been given and this discretion will not be unreasonably withheld.

### Postponing Carers Leave

Your manager may postpone the leave in circumstances where the department would be unduly disrupted if you took leave during the period identified in your notice. However, every attempt should be made to avoid postponement. In any event leave cannot be postponed for more than 3 months except in exceptional circumstances.

Where your manager feels that postponement is necessary, they should consult with you a view to coming to an agreement over alternatives, which might include:

- a different pattern of leave - e.g. part-time rather than full-time
- a shorter or longer period of leave
- alternative dates within 3 month period

Where agreement cannot be reached, you should, as a minimum, be allowed to take a period of leave of the same length and beginning on a date determined in consultation with your manager no later than 3 months after the start date originally requested.

Following consultation, and not more than 7 days after you have given notice, your manager must give you notice in writing of the postponement, stating the reasons for postponement and confirming the new dates of leave.

### Returning from Carers Leave

On returning from carers' leave, subject to certain exceptions (e.g. redundancy), you have the right to return to the job in which you were employed, under the original contract of employment and on terms and conditions not less favourable than those which would have applied if you had not been absent.

During your carers leave, your line manager has the right to keep in contact with you to keep you up to date with any organisational issues and to discuss your return to work and any support you may need upon your return. It is a good idea to discuss contact arrangements before you start your leave.

Your return to work date will be as agreed before you started carers leave. If you want to change the date, please contact your manager in writing giving at least 6 weeks' notice. If you decide not to return to work, you are obliged to give notice as per the terms of your contract of employment.

## Terms and Conditions during Carers Leave

- Your contract of employment continues during carers' leave including all your terms and conditions e.g. notice periods, redundancy rights and disciplinary and grievance procedures and confidentiality etc. Contractual benefits, with the exception of terms relating to remuneration (wages and salary), are preserved.
- Where you fall sick during a period of carers' leave, and you comply with the sickness reporting procedures, you will be entitled to sick pay in line with the terms of your contract and this period shall not count towards your carers' leave entitlement.
- Pension contributions during a period of unpaid leave will not be paid unless you elect to pay these in the form of an Additional Pension Contribution (APC). You must confirm your decision whether to pay contributions via an APC for this period.
- If you do not elect to pay an APC, you will not pay pension contributions on the period of unpaid leave and this period will not count towards your pensionable service.
- If you are part of a salary sacrifice scheme (such as childcare vouchers), you will need to consider the impact of carers' leave on this deduction depending on the amount of carers' leave you are taking.
- You are not allowed to take any other employment whilst on Carers Leave, unless you have prior written permission of your line manager.
- You will continue to accrue annual leave entitlements during a period of Carers Leave.

## Record Keeping

A record of carers' leave taken will be kept on your personnel file.

## Employee Responsibilities

- To inform your manager as soon as possible of your wish to take carers' leave
- To provide any information required to support your application
- To remain in contact with your line manager particularly around your intention to return to work

## Line Manager Responsibilities

- To apply this policy fairly and consistently to all employees
- To ensure that the required information is provided and forwarded to payroll administration so that pay records can be amended

## HR Responsibilities

- To process requests for carers' leave ensuring that pay records are amended accordingly
- To review that this policy is being applied fairly and consistently across the organisation

## Frequently Asked Questions

***My partner has had a significant operation and will require care during the recovery period. I would like to reduce my hours to provide this care, can I use carers' leave?***

Yes, you can use carers leave to provide care to a partner who is seriously ill or recovering from a significant operation.

***I care for an elderly neighbour. They are not a relative. Am I still entitled to apply for carers leave?***

Yes, we recognise that people care for a variety of individuals, including friends, neighbours and relatives, not just immediate family members.

***What if I requested carers' leave but did not use it to care for a dependent?***

Using carers' leave for a purpose not associated with caring for a dependent would be dealt with under the organisation's disciplinary procedure.

***Can my manager postpone the period of leave?***

Yes, if the department would be disrupted, but they will need to discuss this with you and try to agree to an alternative date.

***What happens if I do not want to return to work after carers' leave?***

You are required to give the notice stated in your contract to terminate your employment.

***Does the period of carers' leave count as continuous service for the purposes of calculating redundancy payments?***

Yes. Statutory employment protection rights, including calculating a redundancy payment, apply during a period of carers' leave.

***I am the parent of a disabled child under 18 years old and need to take a period of unpaid leave to care for my child. Should I use this policy to apply for unpaid leave or the parental leave policy?***

You should apply for unpaid parental leave in these circumstances.

***Would it affect my benefits if I take unpaid carers leave?***

As carers' leave is unpaid, it may be possible for you to claim benefits or tax credits during leave. Additionally, taking unpaid leave may affect entitlement to any statutory benefits which are based on your earnings or national insurance payments. You should contact the Department for Work and Pensions for further information.

If you need assistance with understanding this policy or require it in another format, please contact your line manager.



Working for Carers – Employers supporting working carers

Author: produced by Kathryn Roynon HR & Training Consultancy for Working for Carers

July 2017

[www.workingforcarers.co.uk](http://www.workingforcarers.co.uk)