

Support for Staff with Caring Responsibilities

Guidance for Managers

Guidance Snapshot

- Small adjustments can make a big impact for staff with caring responsibilities
- Ongoing dialogue is encouraged to discuss and review options, particularly as the dynamic of caring responsibilities can change over time
- Paid leave elements are outlined in the 'Support for Staff with Caring Responsibilities' Policy
- Flexible Working can be of particular benefit to staff juggling caring responsibilities

Introduction

With an increasing number of employees taking on caring responsibilities outside work it is important that managers are aware of the resulting demands placed on individuals. Staff with caring responsibilities may provide support to dependants in a number of ways including, but not limited to:

- Helping with personal care
- Helping with mobility
- Managing medication
- Carrying out practical household tasks
- Providing emotional support; and
- Helping with financial matters or paperwork

Understanding potential challenges faced by staff with caring responsibilities is important to ensure managers are best placed to support their employees at work. There are many ways in which support can be provided and it is often small adjustments which can make a big impact. As the nature of caring responsibilities can change, ongoing dialogue is encouraged to discuss and review reasonable options.

This guidance note provides further information to support managers of staff with caring responsibilities and should be read in conjunction with the University's [Support with Staff for Caring Responsibilities](#).

Understanding Carers

The University's Support for Staff with Caring Responsibilities policy defines carers as an individual who provides support to a dependant who is affected by long-term physical or mental illness or disability, addiction or problems relating to old age.

Managers should recognise that every caring situation is different and each case should be dealt with individually and with full respect to the sensitivity and confidentiality of any caring circumstances.

Staff with caring responsibilities are encouraged to register on the University's Carers Register (and must do so to access Carers Leave) however it cannot be assumed that all carers will do so. Managers are encouraged therefore to maintain open dialogue with staff to ensure there are opportunities for staff to raise any concerns or pressures they may be facing or to identify that they have caring responsibilities, should they wish to do so. It is important to note that it remains an individual's choice whether or not (or the extent to which) they disclose their caring responsibilities, however the greater the understanding of pressures faced the more likely it is that supportive arrangements will be successful.

Once it is established that an individual has caring responsibilities outside work, appropriate dialogue can take place to build common understanding of the pressures faced and possible adjustments or supports which may support an individual in work.

Supporting Carers

The University's Support for Staff with Caring Responsibilities outlines various support options which may be helpful to carers. Managers should familiarise themselves with the various options outlined within the policy and consider these during any conversations with staff with caring responsibilities, including signposting to external support resources and facilities such as the University's Employee Assistance Programme.

The University's [Support for Staff with Caring Responsibilities](#) policy also makes provisions for additional leave. This takes the form of:

- Up to 3 days paid Emergency Time off to Care for Dependants
- Up to 5 days paid Carers Leave (then up to 4 weeks unpaid Carers Leave thereafter)

Managers should familiarise themselves with this entitlement and how it may be used, as outlined in the policy. These new leave types are requested/approved in the normal way, via the Core HR self-service portal and should not be unreasonably refused as per normal leave arrangements. Whilst the system cannot automatically check if the individual requesting leave has identified as a carer, periodic monitoring will be carried out by the HR Systems Team to ensure the leave is being used appropriately. The process should otherwise be based on trust with any particular concerns over potential misuse being raised to the relevant local HR Team in the first instance.

Managers should also familiarise themselves with the University's [Flexible Working Policy](#) as being able to work hours in a flexible way can prove very effective in supporting carers to achieve a greater work-life balance. In particular, informal flexibility (i.e. that which does not necessitate a contractual change) such as working more flexible hours can prove particularly effective in supporting carers. Such arrangements may also be agreed over a short-term period (i.e. with no need to make them permanent) in order to meet short-term needs.

Support for carers does not need to be restricted to flexible working however and as noted above, small adjustments can often have a significant positive impact. Staff with caring responsibilities may not always be able to plan for when they need time off, so proactive conversations and contingency planning may be able to mitigate the impact of any time off at short notice. Similarly, giving as much notice as possible of any needs for staff to attend conferences or similar events will also support the management of responsibilities outside work.

Another potential simple supports to implement include allowing time to make or take personal calls relating to caring responsibilities.

When a Caring Role Changes or Ends

Caring roles can by their very nature change over time for a number of reasons, including recovery, remission or deterioration. As noted above, regular dialogue will help ensure a common understanding of any pressures faced.

Where an employee no longer has caring responsibilities, similar dialogue should take place to ensure appropriate support is provided and to reflect on whether or not any agreed supports (e.g. flexible working) need to continue in their current form. It may also be appropriate for the employee to update their personal record via CoreHR self-service to reflect the change in their caring circumstances.

Managers may also wish to signpost staff towards the University's [Employee Assistance Programme](#) and/or the [Big White Wall](#) which offer confidential support on a range of matters.

Further Information

The University's [Support for Staff with Caring Responsibilities Policy](#) outlines full details of the support available.

Further support for managers around the policy is available via the relevant [local HR Team](#).