

## Worcester City Council

# WORKING CARERS POLICY

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## **1. Introduction - what is a Working Carer?**

- 1.1. A working carer has caring responsibilities that have an impact on their working lives. These workers are responsible for the care and support of relatives or friends who are older, disabled, seriously ill (physically or mentally) and need help to care for themselves (working definition developed by Employers for Carers).
- 1.2. This does not include individuals who are employed as a professional carer or whose caring role relates solely to a child or children who do not have a long-term illness or disability.
- 1.3. Caring experiences vary – a working carer might be providing constant support or a few hours a week; the care might be at home or they might have to travel to support someone. Caring might entail periods of high and low demand, depending on the needs of the person being cared for. Caring may involve personal care, handling finances, co-ordinating with medical/care services, or providing things (such as doing the shopping).
- 1.4. Caring might be a sudden experience (following an illness or accident) or it might be more of a gradual process, where the carer realises, for instance, that their parents can no longer manage on their own.

## **2. Purpose**

The Council recognises that some of its employees will have caring responsibilities. Dealing with the demands of these caring responsibilities and work will often be challenging. The purpose of this policy is to outline the support which the Council offers to our employees who have a caring responsibility, in order to:

- a. Help them balance their working and caring commitments, and continue to be resilient and effective in their work role; and
- b. Help the Council to recruit and retain employees with caring responsibilities.

## **3. Definition of Carer**

The Government has said that a definition of caring relationships for the purposes of Carer's Leave needs to reflect modern family circumstances and build in flexibility for the future. The majority of unpaid care takes place within families, who may or may not live within the same household or even the same city. Caring can also be done by neighbours, friends or other people who are not related to each other.

The Government considers that the definition for Carer's Leave should broadly mirror dependant relationships under the right to time off for dependants. This would mean that a person could take Carer's Leave to care for:

- A spouse or civil partner
- A child
- A parent
- A person who lives in the same household as the employee (other than as an employee, tenant, lodger or boarder)
- Someone else who reasonably relies on the employee for care.

#### **4. Scope**

- 4.1. This policy applies to all employees – please refer to individual policies under support options for detailed eligibility.

#### **5. Principles**

- 5.1. Eligible employees (working carers) are entitled to up to 1 week's unpaid leave per year. This is in addition to the right to request paid special leave, with the agreement of the Head of Service, as set out below in the Council's existing Local Conditions. Leave can be taken in consecutive blocks or on an ad hoc basis. All requests for leave are subject to the usual requirements that they must be made with reasonable notice wherever possible.
- 5.2. Everyone's experience as a carer will be different; in order to get the best understanding of how carers can be supported while working for the Council, employees are encouraged to identify themselves as a Carer, where appropriate, to their line manager
- 5.3 Where an employee has identified themselves as a Carer, guidance shall be provided on the support available to them. Carers are also encouraged to request specific support where required, in accordance with this policy;
- 5.4 Sympathetic consideration will be given where support is requested by Carers in accordance with this policy, based on a shared understanding of the situation, its impact on the Carer's work and the consistency of treatment with other employees in a similar position.
- 5.5 Employees who have identified themselves as a Carer and/or requested support in accordance with this policy will not be treated unfairly or subjected to discrimination as a result.
- 5.6 An employee's identification as a Carer and support requested will be disclosed no wider than is necessary to ensure the effective day-to-day running of Council business.

#### **6. Support Options for Working Carers**

There are a range of potential support options for Carers contained within the Council's policies, in particular:

## **6.1 Local Conditions of Employment - Special Leave**

### a) With Pay

Heads of Service are authorised to grant, for any reason, a maximum of seven days special leave with pay in any year ending 31st March. Suggestions of what is included are listed including family bereavement.

### b) Without Pay

Head of Services are authorised to grant any period appropriate to the circumstances of the case.

Emergency Leave - The appropriate line manager can approve either annual leave, flexitime leave or unpaid leave for instances such as childcare or eldercare needs, at short notice.

This will only be an ad hoc or emergency arrangement. Any longer term or regular requirements could be agreed under the flexible working policy or parental leave.

## **6.2 Flexible Working**

This allows employees to ask to change some aspect of their working pattern, for example reducing total working hours or changing the days worked. Such requests are often linked to family caring responsibilities but that does not have to be the case.

## **6.3 Hybrid Working Policy**

Those employees whose role allows them to work at different physical locations and using technology to support working in different ways and at different locations which may include homeworking.

## **6.4 Flex time working procedure**

Where an employee works flexi time as part of their contract, flexibility can be given to start and finish times, taking longer rest breaks and making the time up at another time as agreed with their manager.

## **6.5 Buy More Leave Policy**

Up to 5 additional annual leave days per year (pro rata for part time employees) may be purchased spread over a 12 month period via a salary sacrifice which allows savings on Tax and NI.

## **6.6 Unpaid Parental Leave Procedure**

Parents can take up to 4 weeks unpaid leave in blocks of 1 week every year (from when a baby is born or on adoption, until they are 18 years old) up to a maximum of 18 weeks (for the welfare needs of the child).

## **6.7 Additional Support**

Carers have access to other support, advice and assistance which includes:

- Counselling and Employee Assistance Programme - to help employees acquire the skills to deal with challenges to a balanced and productive life at work and home, which can be acute for our Carers. Benefits include: A telephone helpline, which is available 24/7; Up to 6 counselling sessions; Access to an online resource, providing information and advice on a range of topics.

## **7. External Links**

- [We're here to make life better for carers - Carers UK](#)
- [Homepage - Carers Trust](#)
- <https://www.carersworcs.org.uk/>