



Human Resources

# CARERS' POLICY



**January 2024**

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## 1. Introduction

This policy sets out Surrey Heath Borough Council's commitment to supporting employees who are Carers and the support that we offer them to combine work with care. It should be read in conjunction with the [leave and special leave](#) and flexible working policies and the staff health and wellbeing information on Warbler.

## 2. Purpose and Scope

Many of our staff will be juggling care responsibilities with work and family life. We seek, wherever possible, to support and assist employees to balance their caring responsibilities with their work. This assistance can be beneficial to both the employee's wellbeing and service delivery, and can help employees with caring responsibilities to remain in work.

It is recognised that not all carers will require the same type of support and that their requirements may change as their dependant's circumstances change. The council has a duty and commitment to ensure that no discrimination (whether directly or indirectly) occurs relating to any personal protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 [Gov.UK Equality Act 2010: Guidance](#)

Human Resources can provide advice and guidance to employees and managers on the application of this policy. Employees with caring responsibilities are encouraged to identify themselves as a carer to their manager. Their status as a carer will remain confidential if they wish, but it is helpful for the manager to be aware in case support is needed by the employee.

## 3. Definition of a carer

A carer is an individual who provides a substantial amount of unpaid care on a regular basis for another person who is dependent upon their care or support; it can also be an individual who provides more occasional support to cope with changes in circumstances or the health of a dependant. This could include care



for a spouse, partner, parent, sibling, child or other dependant (including a friend or neighbour) because of their illness, frailty, disability, or a mental health problem.

A 'Kinship Carer' is the relative or friend of a child, who is not the child's parent who looks after the child in the carers' home on a full-time or 'most of the time' basis, typically because their parents aren't able to care for them. A 'kinship carer' could be a grandparent, older sibling, aunt, uncle, family friend or neighbour.

The activities that carers undertake are wide ranging, including but not limited to:

- Emotional support
- Help with personal care
- Help with mobility
- Accompanying to medical and other appointments
- Being a careline responder for emergencies
- Help with routine household tasks such as shopping, cooking, cleaning etc.

## 4. Carers' Circumstances

4.1 Carers' needs differ from the needs of employees with routine childcare responsibilities. Caring can be unpredictable and emotionally upsetting. An employee may acquire caring responsibilities overnight, for example when a relative or friend has a stroke, or caring responsibilities may develop over time, for example when a friends relative or friend has a debilitating long term health condition.

4.2 With routine childcare, the child's needs become more predictable as they grow older, go to school and become more independent. Caring



responsibilities may increase or change as medical conditions develop. For example an elderly parent might become more frail and dependent over time, and a disabled child may continue to have significant support when they become an adult, or their support needs may change as they become older.

## 5. Support available for unexpected caring emergencies

### 5.1 Emergency time off for dependants

Employees have a right to take a reasonable period of unpaid time off work to deal with a sudden problem or emergency involving a dependant. A dependant is the spouse, partner, child or parent of the employee or someone who depends on an employee for care. This type of leave may be used to deal with an immediate issue such as an unexpected breakdown in care arrangements, and to make longer term arrangements. There is no right in law to paid time off for family emergencies.

## 6. Support available for longer term caring responsibilities

### 6.1 Flexible Working

As a council, we offer various types of flexible working options including part-time, flexi-time, job share, working from home, requesting specific start and finish times and nine-day fortnight. These are designed to help employees ensure they have an appropriate work-life balance, whilst ensuring business needs are met.



Further information on the options available can be found in the Flexible Working Policy and Leave and Special Leave Policy.

## 6.2 Carers' Leave

Employees who are carers are able to take one week's unpaid leave each year for the purpose of caring for a dependant, or arranging care for a dependant, with long-term mental or physical health needs. The leave may be taken as a block of consecutive days or as non-consecutive, half-days or full days.

The right to apply for carers leave is a day one employment right and employees must notify the council, in writing of their intention to take carer's leave. This notice must include the dates the employee intends to take and confirmation of the employees entitlement to take the leave. An employee must give at least twice the amount of notice than the period of leave requested or three days' notice, whichever is longest.

## 6.3 Sabbaticals

Employees with continuous employment with the council of at least two years can apply for a period of unpaid leave for a sabbatical between one to six months in length. Employees do not have to resign from the council whilst on a sabbatical and continuous service will not be affected. Employees will return to their substantive post at the end of the sabbatical, if the post still exists.

*If a service restructure is undertaken during the sabbatical period then the employee will be consulted in accordance with the [Organisational Change Policy](#).*

## 6.4 Parental Leave

Employees with one year's continuous service who have parental responsibilities are entitled to take unpaid time off work to look after a child (aged under 18), or to make arrangements for the child's welfare. It is intended to cover matters which can be foreseen, as opposed to sudden emergencies. The employed parents of a child under the age of 18 each have the right to take up to 18 weeks





parental leave for each child until the child's 18th birthday, with a maximum of four weeks of parental leave in any one year.

## 6.5 Other Leave Options

Employees with caring commitments may need time off work to meet their caring responsibilities. For example, they may need to attend medical appointments with a dependant or deal with a dependant's discharge from hospital. In such circumstances, they should seek the prior consent of their line manager.

Employees should discuss with their line manager any known leave needs relating to their caring commitments. This will enable the manager to plan work and other leave arrangements. Line managers will, where possible, approve annual leave requests from employees who wish to take time off to meet their caring responsibilities.

Where possible, Carers should book appointments that they need to attend with a dependant at the start or end of the working day or outside core hours to minimise disruption to work. However, it is recognised that this is not always within the Carer's control, particularly with medical appointments and operations.

Carers may benefit from flexible leave arrangements (in addition to flexible working arrangements) to manage all aspects of their caring role. The Council offers carers the following additional leave options

- Flexitime
- Time off in lieu
- Annual leave
- Compassionate leave – If dependant become seriously ill



## 7. Responsibilities

### 7.1 Line Managers

Line managers have a critical role to play in ensuring that any employees are well supported and managed if they need to take time out in order to manage their caring responsibilities. Each Carer's situation requires a different response from the manager and managers should take into account the whole range of organisational support available when putting in place support for carers.

Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up the organisation's support for Carers and it is vital that managers approach these conversations with employees in a supportive and sensitive manner. Managers should create a workplace culture that is supportive of Carers, by encouraging employees to make use of the support offered to Carers and encouraging discussion around Carers' issues.

Managers will treat all discussions and requests relating to care responsibilities in a confidential manner and should always give sympathetic consideration to requests for support from those who have such responsibilities, based on a shared understanding of the situation and its potential impact on the employee and the service.

## 8. Information and Support

### 8.1 Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

The Employee Assistance Programme provides confidential, independent and unbiased information and guidance for home and work issues. More information on how to access the programme can be found [here](#).



## 8.2 Carer's Assessment

Carers have a legal right to have a carer's assessment. This assessment is usually carried out by the Local Authority in which the carer resides. [Carer's assessments - Social care and support guide - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

## 8.3 Website links to external carer organisations

These links will take you to organisations that offer support and guidance to carers:

[www.actionforcarers.org.uk](http://www.actionforcarers.org.uk)

<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/carers>

[www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

[www.independentage.org](http://www.independentage.org)

<http://www.carers.org/>

