



Supporting Staff who have caring responsibilities – Policy and Procedure

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1. Introduction

Employees may have caring responsibilities and require the university's support and flexibility to combine work with care. The university recognises that there may be a substantial impact on working life for employees with significant caring responsibilities, and aims to support carers as much as is possible to enable them to continue with work whilst managing these responsibilities.

This policy sets out the university's commitment to supporting employees with caring responsibilities and details the support available to staff who identify as carers.

This policy does not cover employees with mainstream childcare responsibilities. These employees should refer to the Family Friendly policies located [here](#)

2. Equality and Diversity Statement

The University is committed to equality and embraces diversity in our working, learning, research and teaching environment. Our policies, procedures and guidance are inclusive of all staff, including fixed-term, permanent, part-time, full-time and hourly paid lecturers and apply irrespective of age, disability, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

3. How the university will implement the policy

The University requires all employees and managers to support the principles of this policy and to deal with requests under this policy objectively and fairly.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

a) UEB

- To demonstrate their commitment and support to this policy and to reflect the policy's strategies within their own management practices.

b) All Managers, including Heads of Schools and Department Managers are responsible for ensuring that they:

- Support the implementation of the policy and apply it in a fair and transparent way with regard to the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

c) Human Resources

- To consult with the relevant Trade Unions in implementing and updating the policy to reflect the university and employee's needs.
- Provide support and advise on the policy and procedure

d) Equality and Diversity Team

- Ensure the policy reflects the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

e) Employees

- To consider carefully the impacts of taking time off under this policy and to engage fully in discussions with managers to ensure the best outcome.



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f) Trades Unions

- Right to review and give feedback to any modifications to the policy with management and to support members

5. The legal position

The laws underpinning this policy are:

Equality Act 2010

Employment Act 2002

Employment Relations Act 1999

Employment Rights Act 1996

Flexible Working Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/1398)

6. Definition of carers

Carers are protected under the Equality Act 2010 from discrimination and harassment by association with a person/s with a protected characteristic such as age or disability through their caring responsibilities.

The Care Act 2014 defines a carer as “an adult who provides or intends to provide care for another adult (“adult needing care). The Carers Trust describes a carer as “anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support”. Carers may also be parents who look after disabled children.

The university aims to strike a balance between recognising the individual circumstances of caring, and not classifying carers as a rigid or separate group. The activities that carers undertake are wide ranging, including:

- help with personal care;
- help with mobility;
- managing medication;
- practical household tasks;
- emotional support;
- dealing with health professionals and appointments
- help with financial matters or administration.

7. Employees who have caring responsibilities

Employers can play a key role in mitigating the detrimental effects on employees of combining work and care, thereby increasing employee resilience, productivity and performance and reducing unnecessary turnover.

Caring can be unpredictable and emotionally upsetting. An employee may acquire caring responsibilities overnight, for example where the employee’s parent has a stroke, or caring responsibilities may develop over time, for example where the employee’s partner has a debilitating long-term health condition. Caring responsibilities may also change depending on the nature of the disability or condition of the individual the employee cares for, and consequently there may be times where their caring responsibilities are more substantial than others.

Therefore carers’ needs, circumstances and milestones differ greatly to mainstream childcare responsibilities.



8. Identification and disclosure

Employees are not required to disclose to their line manager that they are caring for someone, but are encouraged to do so. This will help the university provide appropriate and relevant support to the employee. Line managers will respect the confidentiality of any information provided to them in this regard.

Employees who do not wish to disclose their caring responsibilities to their line manager, but would benefit from discussing the support options available to them, are encouraged to approach the university's [Disability & Carers Staff Equality Network Group](mailto:disabilityequality@brighton.ac.uk) at disabilityequality@brighton.ac.uk or the Human Resources department.

Where a manager knows that an employee in his/her team has caring responsibilities, the manager should inform the employee about the support that the university offers carers and encourage him/her to access this as applicable.

The university has a **Carers' Support Plan scheme** to assist carers. The support plan is to be completed with the carer and their line manager, to identify ways in which the carer's individual needs can be best supported. The support plan highlights options available to carers, which may be appropriate to assist the carer at work. Once the support plan is in place, it will stay with the carer throughout their time at the university regardless of job changes or changes to line management.

The manager should meet with the carer to complete a carer's support plan together to ensure that the carer is being properly supported to remain in work. The carer should also be encouraged to contact the [Disability & Carers Staff Equality Network Group](mailto:disabilityequality@brighton.ac.uk). Participation in network groups is recognised as core university business and therefore staff are entitled and encouraged to attend network group meetings within work time.

9. Flexible working

The law grants the right to request flexible working to employees who have a minimum of 26 weeks' continuous service. Please refer to the Flexible Working Policy and Procedure for further information.

10. Crisis situations

Employees with caring responsibilities cannot always plan ahead for time off. The ability to take leave in an emergency is important for carers, who may be called on at short notice.

Emergency Care of Dependants Leave is a statutory entitlement giving employees the right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work to assist or make arrangements for the care of their dependants.

The university also offers employees the opportunity to request **Special Leave** which is one week's (pro rata) paid leave in total in any 12 month period for important family or domestic issues (e.g. unplanned caring responsibilities, a close relative is suffering from serious illness, etc.). The leave can be taken in a block or as one or more days at a time. This is granted at the discretion of the head of school/department. Further information can be found in the Special Leave Policy.



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11. Leave arrangements

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.

Employees should discuss with their line manager any known annual leave needs relating to their caring commitments. This will help the manager and the other members of the team to plan work and other leave arrangements.

Where possible, carers should book appointments that they need to attend with a dependant at the start or end of the working day to minimise disruption to work.

Carers may benefit from flexibility over annual leave arrangements to manage all aspects of their caring role. For example, instead of having to use up all of their personal annual leave entitlement the manager could consider offering the ability to make up time that they have taken to meet their caring responsibilities at another time. This needs to be approved by the line manager, and employees should discuss any such requirements with their manager. It is not an entitlement and the manager would have to consider the impact on the work of the employee and the effect on colleagues, however if there is no adverse impact then it is another way that managers can support carers at work.

Line managers will, where possible, approve annual leave requests from employees who wish to take time off to meet their caring responsibilities.

12. Other support for Carers

The following support initiatives are also available to help to assist carers. A reminder or details of these could be listed on the carer support plan.

- The university has a Disability & Carers Staff Equality Network Group which provides peer-to-peer support and practical information for carers, as well as helping to inform university policy. Contact disabilityequality@brighton.ac.uk to join the email list and find out about meetings. Involvement in Network Group activities is recognised as core university business and staff are encouraged to attend.
- The university provides a personal counselling helpline for all employees (and any member of their immediate family who permanently lives with them) over the telephone, including, where appropriate, onward referral to relevant voluntary and/or professional services.
- The university has an Occupational Health service which employees can contact directly for non-work matters or the line manager can refer via HR if they have concerns about health issues relating to or impacting on work.
- Further information about available support is [here](#)

13. Individual Carer Support Plan

Once a line manager is aware that their employee has caring responsibilities they should meet with the employee to discuss any ways in which they can offer support, including completing a Carer Support plan in agreement with the employee. This will stay with the employee if they change roles or there is a change of manager.



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Completing a carer support plan is not compulsory but recommended. This initiative opens a regular channel of communication for the employee to discuss their caring responsibilities, in confidence, and ensures that the line manager is aware of how these responsibilities may be impacting the employee or their work. It also ensures that employees get the opportunity to say what they need rather than assumptions being made.

There are no set rules on what has to be included on the plan as each carers support needs will be different depending on their caring responsibilities. All of these suggestions will depend on what is needed by the employee and subject to agreement depending on the job role. Some options may not be possible to offer/agree for practical reasons.

Items which may be included are:

- The option and support to working from home on either a long term or short term arrangement;
- Access to a private space, or permission to move away from work station to make and take calls to/from the individual/s being cared for;
- Informing about the Disability and Carers Staff Equality Network Group and enabling to attend and benefit from their activities;
- Enabling to attend university initiatives that promote relaxation and well-being;

The manager should have a conversation with the employee using the information in this policy as a guide. They then agree any items for that employees support plan and list them accordingly. Finally a review date should be set to meet and review the plan.

How often the plan is reviewed will again depend on the carer's needs as well as the job role of the individual, as some line managers may not see their staff as regularly as others. There may not be a need to frequently review the support plan as the employee's caring responsibilities may be constant. However, it is recommended that managers meet with their employees to discuss their needs at regular intervals and the employee should be advised that they can contact the manager to let them know if needs have changed and they wish to review the support plan.

The completed plan should be signed by both parties and a copy kept by the carer as well as the manager. The signed plan should then be sent to the HR Assistant to be kept on record should job roles or line management change.

The **Individual Carers Support Plan** template can be found at Appendix 1.

14. Line managers

Line managers are key to implementing this policy. Each carer's situation requires a different response from the manager, so managers should take into account the whole range of organisational support available when putting in place support for carers.

Managers are integral to creating a workplace culture that is supportive of carers and should appreciate the challenges that their employees with caring responsibilities may face. Therefore, managers should encourage all employees who are carers to engage with the variety of support available to them.

Managers with a carer in their team can approach HR to receive advice about supporting their employee.



15. Monitoring Compliance

The HR Department will record and store all carers plans received on the staff file.

HR will run annual reports including analysis of the data which will be provided to JNC and the Leadership Forums.

Training for line managers on supporting carers is available through the Equality and Diversity Team and the dates of the training will be listed on the [Learning and Development](#) StaffCentral pages.

Please contact equality@brighton.ac.uk if you have any further questions regarding this training.

16. Further information

Relevant Legislation

The Care Act 2014

Equality Act 2010

Employment Act 2002

Employment Relations Act 1999

Employment Rights Act 1996

Flexible Working Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/1398)

Reference Documents

Internal

[Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)

[Flexible Working Information for Staff](#)

[Special Leave provisions](#)

External

Further information on external guidance can be found here

ACAS Advisory booklet Flexible working and work-life balance

<http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/j/m/Flexible-working-and-work-life-balance.pdf>

ACAS advisory booklet Health Work and Wellbeing

<http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/3/t/Health-work-and-wellbeing-accessible-version.pdf>

ACAS Code of Practice on handling in a reasonable manner requests to work flexibly

<http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/f/e/Code-of-Practice-on-handling-in-a-reasonable-manner-requests-to-work-flexibly.pdf>

ACAS guide to Homeworking

<http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/o/3/Homeworking-a-guide-for-employers-and-employees.pdf>



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17. Consultation, Approval, Ratification & Review

The policy has been shared with Unison and UCU and the Equality and Diversity Team for comment and input.

The policy and procedure will be reviewed after 12 months by the Human Resources Department. Any changes will be shared with the relevant trade unions.



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Individual Carers Support Plan Template

Carers are protected under the Equality Act 2010 against direct discrimination or harassment due to being associated with a person with a protected characteristic such as age or disability through their caring responsibilities.

The purpose of the Individual Carers Support Plan is to support employees to stay in work while also fulfilling their role as a carer. This template is to ensure managers and carers know what support is available. **The Support Plan will remain with the staff member regardless of changes to their line management.**

All information within this support plan is to be dealt with as confidential and should only be shared with your line manager and HR assistant unless you feel it needs to be shared more widely. Once complete you should send a signed copy of your support plan to your HR assistant in order for it to be kept on your file.

Section 1 – Please note that it is not compulsory to fill in this section but may assist you should your line management change in the future.

Name of person/s you care for:	
Relationship to you:	
The person/s illness/disability/addiction/diagnosis:	
Do they live with you?	
Are you their sole carer?	

Section 2 – This section details the type of support agreed for the employee. **Please note that not all of the support initiatives will be applicable to your individual situation and are example suggestions.**

Support initiative	Details of agreement made with line manager	Is this required for your immediate/medium or long term needs?	Review date if appropriate
The option and support to work from home (if appropriate to your job role) on either a long-term or short-term basis			
Access to a private space to make and take calls to/from the individual/s you care for			
Enabled to attend university initiatives that promote relaxation and well-being			
Informed about the Disability and Carers Staff Equality Network Group and enabled to attend			



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and benefit from their activities			
Ability to reserve a car parking space through standard online procedures when coming into work after a caring appointment in order to be able to get back to work quickly			
Individual Carer Support Plan to be discussed in regular meetings with line manager			
Referral to Occupational Health if required			

Section 3 – This section is to detail any other support you feel would help within your individual caring role or to list any support you are currently receiving that you would like to be formally agreed.

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Section 4 – This section requires both your signature and your line manager's signature to mutually agree that everything discussed within this support plan will be put in place. The support plan will then need to be send to your HR Officer in order to ensure it is kept on your file should any change in line management occur.

Date support plan was agreed:	
Carer's signature:	
Line manager's signature:	
Date of review:	