

Policy on the Support for Carers

(Those who provide unpaid support to family or friends who are older, disabled or seriously ill)

Introduction

The School is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity for all employees. It works towards positively supporting employees who are working carers and has attained a reputation as a top employer for working families.

The School recognises that carers' needs can be different from those with childcare responsibilities and that the circumstances and stages of caring are diverse in nature. This policy demonstrates a commitment on the part of the School to help carers combine work with the care of others.

This policy uses the following definition of a carer: a person of any age who provides unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this help. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is older, ill, frail, disabled and/or has mental health or substance misuse issues.

The type of support offered by carers is wide ranging and may include:

- emotional support via regular telephone calls, emails and/or visits
- help with financial matters or paperwork
- help with personal care
- help with household tasks
- help with mobility
- managing medication

The stages of caring can be very different depending on the circumstances. A person may acquire caring responsibilities suddenly, they may need to provide intermittent care or they may need to increase their care on an incremental basis. An organisational approach to supporting carers in the workplace must necessarily be flexible as a result.

Policy aims

The School seeks to sustain a strong track record as a diverse, fair and flexible employer that attracts and retains high calibre talent, and supports the career progression of all staff during their employment by the School. Whilst it is recognised that employees may choose not to disclose their caring responsibilities to others at work, the School aims to provide an environment where employees who do wish to disclose their caring responsibilities feel comfortable doing so.

It is also recognised that carers might not identify themselves under the term 'carer' because they may take it for granted that they should offer physical or emotional support to people they care about. Carers of dependents who live elsewhere may also not recognise that their support means that they are carers. This policy seeks to outline the support available to all staff with such personal responsibilities outside of work, irrespective of whether they wish to identify themselves as a 'carer'.

The purpose of the policy is to help employees with caring responsibilities and to provide support that strengthens both personal and work relationships.

Policy principles

Legislative Framework

It is useful to note a number of statutory provisions that that an organisation is required to consider in supporting carers, whilst recognising that fostering an empathetic organisational culture is about more than meeting statutory requirements:

1. Changes brought in by the Children and Families Act 2014 mean that **all** employees who have at least 26 weeks' continuous service can make a request to work flexibly. The legislation states that applications should be dealt within a reasonable manner. Guidance on this is contained in the statutory "[Acas Code of Practice on handling in a reasonable manner requests to work flexibly](#)"¹. Once an employee has submitted a valid statutory request for flexible working, employers must deal with the request within a three-month time limit. The School's "Flexible Working"² webpages provide further information.
2. Under s.57A of the Employment Rights Act 1996, employees are entitled to a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to deal with emergency situations involving their dependents. The School's guidance on "time off for emergencies involving a dependant"³ provides further information.
3. The Equality Act 2010 prohibits direct discrimination, which is less favourable treatment because of a protected characteristic. This also extends to "discrimination by association", which means that employees who care for a disabled or elderly person are protected against less favourable treatment because of their association with that person. For example, if an employee is not selected for a job because of their caring responsibilities for a disabled partner, this would amount to discrimination because of the protected characteristic of disability. The Act also protects employees from harassment, which is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for him or her. This means that employees who care for a disabled or elderly person are protected against harassment because of their association with that person.

Support through policies and provisions

4. Much of the support for carers is detailed in the School's other policies, procedures and guidance as follows:
 - Flexible Working, which includes flexitime, reduced hours, part-time working, compressed hours and unpaid leave to allow for care for others;
 - the School's guidance on "staff support leave", including "time off for emergencies involving a dependant";
 - the School's guidance on Compassionate Leave, which includes paid time for when a close relative is terminally ill or when, in the absence of other nursing arrangements, an employee is responsible for care.
5. Both managers and staff should approach both temporary and permanent solutions with an open and creative mind, being willing to consider new and alternative options that balance both the individual's needs and those operational requirements that must also be considered.

Networks, information and advice

¹ Available from www.acas.org.uk

² See HR A-Z on intranet

³ See HR A-Z on intranet

6. It is often easier for employees to talk about childcare responsibilities than to discuss caring responsibilities. 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 line manager to provide appropriate support to the employee. Line managers should encourage employees to talk about their caring responsibilities with them whilst respecting the employee's confidentiality concerning this information. However, whilst some staff may want to talk about their caring responsibilities beyond the essential details, others will wish to keep the division between work and home more distinct. Line managers are encouraged to recognise that different individuals will be comfortable with differing levels of disclosure and will have varying needs in relation to both practical and emotional support.
7. Employees who do not wish to disclose their caring responsibilities to their line manager are encouraged to approach their HR Partner and/or the School's developing Carers' Network, which is an informal private group of employees who have identified themselves as a carer. Its purpose is to provide practical peer-to-peer support and information and support, from internal and external sources.
8. The School also subscribes to the national Employers for Carers network, established by Carers UK, which provides information directly to staff about balancing work and caring for dependents. The Employers for Carers site can be accessed by registering here www.employersforcarers.org and quote the Schools membership number #EFC1190 when registering.
9. Many charities, local authorities and community groups will have online and face-to-face support for carers, enabling individuals to seek advice and make connections with others in similar circumstances. Some of the main charities that provide national support to carers, or who work with carers relating to specific issues, are:
 - Carers UK: <http://www.carersuk.org/>
 - Carers Trust: <https://www.carers.org/>
 - Age UK: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/>
 - Mind: <http://www.mind.org.uk/>
 - Alzheimer's Society: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/>
 - Macmillan Cancer Support: <http://www.macmillan.org.uk/>

This is by no means exhaustive. Facebook groups, online message boards and other social media networks are increasingly ways in which support and advice can be found.

10. Employees may also find it helpful to access the confidential [Staff Counselling Service](#) for support.