

Carers Policy

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1. Introduction

Purpose

We are committed to supporting our employees with caring responsibilities through our workplace policies and working practices to allow them to stay in work. Caring can be unpredictable and emotionally upsetting. An employee may acquire caring responsibilities overnight or caring responsibilities might develop over time. It can be hard to plan and cope and can involve a series of milestones which result in the need for varying intensities and levels of caring.

The SSSC is a Carer Positive employer. This means the Scottish Government has recognised our commitment to supporting employees with caring responsibilities through our workplace policies and working practices. We ensure carers within our workforce can access appropriate support to help them manage their work and caring responsibilities.

We understand that having the opportunity to work is an important part of life and one that most of us take for granted. In addition to providing financial stability, it is widely recognised that employment brings wider benefits in terms of a fulfilling career, positive mental health and social interaction.

Being a carer can have a substantial impact on working life and can be difficult to manage. To help with this we offer carers leave of up to one week (35 hours) paid time off or pro rata for part-time employees. We also offer practical support and emotional support to carers as detailed within this policy. We hope that this support will help those with caring responsibilities outside of work continue to meet the demands of their job.

Scope

This applies to all Scottish Social Services Council employees who have significant caring responsibilities and are the primary carer for an individual.

Monitoring and review

Human Resources and the Partnership Forum are responsible for monitoring and implementing this policy. We will review this policy every three years and make amendments as appropriate in consultation with the Partnership Forum.

Legislation relating to policy

This policy has taken in to account the following legislation:

Equality Act 2010

Employment Rights Act 1996

Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Act 2020

The Work and Families Act (2006)

Carers (Scotland) Act 2016

Carers Leave Act (expected to take effect in 2024)

2. Principles

- We recognise that some employees have caring responsibilities and that they may need support to combine work with care.
- We offer support measures to allow carers to balance work and caring (including carers leave, compassionate leave, family emergency leave).
- We have many 'carer friendly' policies and working practices (including career breaks, flexible working, flexible retirement and flexi time).
- We will treat all employees fairly and consistently while considering individual needs.
- We will act in line with the Equality Act and not treat carers less favourably than others who don't have caring responsibilities.
- We will consider making reasonable adjustments for employees with caring responsibilities.
- We hope that offering flexibility will help us to recruit and retain employees with caring responsibilities and reduce sickness absence.
- We are guided by our organisational values whilst ensuring the confidentiality of our employees.

3. Values

In everything we do, we believe the people of Scotland have the right to be safe when accessing social care services. We do this by listening, learning and doing the right thing.

Work together

We treat each other with kindness and respect and value the contribution every member of staff makes.

- We make sure you have access to advice, support and guidance to help you understand this policy.
- We discuss and explore options with you to find mutually acceptable solutions and support.
- We recognise the value of positive and constructive involvement and participation from our recognised trade union. Our commitment to partnership working is integral to the development and maintenance of harmonious employee relations.

Accept responsibility and accountability

We recognise the trust placed in us to ensure the safety and wellbeing of people who use social services and that is our guiding mission.

- We maintain accurate records of any carers leave taken.
- We monitor and review your working hours and discuss issues that arise.
- We consider the operational impact when deciding how to use the leave and support available under this policy.

Recognition and respect for others

We value the social service workforce and the life changing work they do. Our work increases recognition of and further develops their role. All our stakeholders contribute to our success and we recognise and respect their views.

- We consider the impact of your leave on other colleagues and our ability to meet customer demand.

- We make sure that you understand your entitlements under this policy and can exercise your rights and supports.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Executive Management Team

The EMT is responsible for:

- approving this policy
- overall responsibility for the implementation of the policy and creating a culture in which employees can flourish through interesting and rewarding work
- delegating responsibility related to the policy to Operational Management Team (OMT) and line managers
- making sure that managers and employees receive appropriate development, support and training to implement the policy appropriately
- making sure that the application of this policy and procedure does not breach any statutory requirement placed upon the SSSC
- setting a positive example to employees by following this policy
- treating complaints seriously and dealing with them promptly.

4.2 Operational Management Team

The heads of department are responsible for:

- making sure their managers and employees are aware of the required behaviours and the details of this policy
- signposting employees to relevant information
- dealing with issues kindly, sensitively and showing compassion
- respecting confidentiality and only sharing information, as appropriate, with relevant postholders
- setting a positive example to employees by following this policy
- monitoring and reviewing the hours employees work.

4.3 Employees

Employees are responsible for:

- informing your manager if you have caring responsibilities and to discuss any assistance you think would help so you can be supported.
- if willing entering that you are a carer on MyView, which will support us to comply with equality monitoring
- following the procedures for requesting support / leave.

4.4 Human resources (HR)

Human resources are responsible for:

- updating this policy and procedure in line with the agreed schedule or as changes occur to comply with employment and other relevant legislation, best practice and the SSSC People Strategy
- developing this policy and procedure collaboratively to meet legal and business requirements
- developing template letters, forms and guidance if required
- offering advice on how to apply the policy and procedure
- making sure employees follow the process in line with the policy
- reminding employees and managers of their responsibilities under the policy, if required
- monitoring use of the policy and processes and reporting any non-compliance to heads of department / directors.

5. Policy

5.1 Employees who are carers

We define 'carers' as individuals who are the primary carer and provide unpaid care and support to a family member, friend or neighbour who is disabled, has an illness, mental health condition, or who needs extra help as they grow older. The person can be a child, however, caring for a sick or disabled child is different from mainstream childcare responsibilities. An adult is not a carer if the adult provides or intends to provide care under a contract or through voluntary work.

The activities that carers undertake are wide ranging including:

- helping with personal care
- helping with mobility
- managing medication
- assisting with practical household tasks
- providing emotional support
- helping with financial matters or paperwork
- attending appointments.

Support for carers can often be very simple such as knowing that they will be able to leave work on time each day or being able to make a telephone call home during the day to check that all is well.

Needs such as these may be relatively easy to satisfy and it is expected that the employee's manager will provide sympathetic support and strive to reach a mutually acceptable solution that balances these with the needs of the organisation.

This policy provides details about what we can offer to support carers. It also provides details of external supports and how to access them.

5.2 Support Available

There are a range of potential support options for carers contained within our policies.

Carers leave. Full time employees with caring responsibilities can request up to 35 hours paid leave per leave year, pro-rata for part time employees, to help with activities such as:

- attending a carers assessment to identify if they need any support to carry on their in their caring role
- attending medical appointments with someone they care for
- dealing with the unexpected disruption or breakdown in care arrangements
- dealing with unforeseen care needs such as unplanned/emergency hospital admission
- caring for an individual if they have an illness of a serious nature and they need to care for them
- making longer term care arrangements for an individual they care for
- managing the transition from home to care home or hospital to home / care

home

- managing the hospitalisation of someone they care for
- providing support when caring for someone who is terminally ill.

If you are a carer and wish to request carers leave, you can discuss your request with your line manager and then follow this up in writing by email if you have not already done so. Where possible, you should provide 21 days notice in writing to your line manager for all requests for carers leave. However, we recognise that this will not always be possible and you may need to respond to a situation due to urgent unforeseen care needs. You or your manager can seek advice from the HR team at any point. Further details are in our [Special Leave Policy](#).

You submit your leave request on MyView for your line manager to approve. If your request is not approved your line manager will discuss the reasons with you. If your manager is not available to speak to you, you can contact your OMT member.

Carers leave does not need to be taken as a continuous period of leave and can be taken in hours. All carers leave must also be recorded on your flexi sheet.

You can also request a reasonable amount of unpaid carers leave. This may impact on your pension so it is advisable to speak to the Tayside Pension Fund or to take independent financial advice.

We provide support for time off in different ways and these are detailed in these policies:

- [Agile Working Policy](#)
- [Annual Leave Policy](#)
- [Career Break Policy](#)
- [Flexible Working Policy](#)
- [Special Leave Policy](#)

You can also speak to a member of the HR team who will guide you through the leave options available to you.

5.3 Emotional Support

Employee Assistance Programme

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provides professional support and guidance for employees and immediate family experiencing such issues in a range of ways – by telephone, online and through face-to-face appointments.

You can trust that the EAP treats all information confidentially whether obtained directly or indirectly. It is provided by an external company and is bound by the professional code of ethics of the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy and the Employee Assistance Professionals Association.

The EAP is an integrated online and offline personal support programme that gives you unlimited access to a range of specialist support and information, including:

- financial information such as dealing with debt, budgeting, investments
- relationships
- health, including fitness, weight, illness and wellbeing
- legal, such as consumer issues, housing, insurance claims or road traffic accidents

- family care, including childcare, schooling, parenting issues and care for the elderly.

The EAP is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to all employees by visiting <https://sgcp.optimise.health> or call Freephone on 0800 032 9849.

A reduced service is available to family members of the employees. Specific exclusions to family members are:

- face to face counselling (this does not stop the immediate family from participating in couples or family counselling at the employee's request),
- no legal and financial information and advice services will be made available to immediate families.

Mentally Healthy First Aiders

Some of our employees are certified mentally healthy first aiders who can play a key role in supporting colleagues across the organisation confidentially with any concerns you may have. For information about our mentally healthy first aiders and the support they can provide to you please contact the HR team.

The role of Occupational Health

If you are experiencing any health difficulties that are impacted upon by your caring responsibilities then we would urge you to speak to your GP in the first instance. If you feel that your health is impacting on your role you may wish to talk to the HR team about a potential occupational health assessment. Occupational Health may be able to provide recommendations to you or to us as your employer in how we can best support you in the workplace and this may involve carrying out a risk assessment with you and putting in place reasonable adjustments.

6. External Support

External support is also available for Carers. Some of the support options are detailed below.

Your Local Authority - The Carers (Scotland) Act is designed to support carers health and wellbeing and help make caring more sustainable and to make it simpler for carers to be identified as needing support with their caring role and make getting this support easier too. Measures include:

- a duty for local authorities to provide support to carers based on the carer's identified needs which meet the local eligibility criteria
- a specific adult carer support plan (ACSP) and young carer statement (YCS) to identify carers' needs and personal outcomes
- a requirement for local authorities to have an information and advice service for carers which provides information and advice on, amongst other things, emergency and future care planning, advocacy, income maximisation and carers' rights
- a requirement for the responsible local authority to consider whether that support should be provided in the form of a break from caring and the desirability of breaks

from caring provided on a planned basis.

Your local authority will be able to offer guidance and support.

There are national external supports available. Some useful contacts include:

Carers UK www.carersuk.org

Offers information and support to carers. Can put people in contact with support groups for carers in their area. Carers UK have national offices for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. They can help with benefit checks and advise on financial and practical matters.

Carers Trust www.carers.org

They support carers in their homes through the provision of replacement care, and in the community with information, advice, emotional support and hands on practical help.

Macmillan Cancer Support www.macmillan.org.uk

They offer emotional, physical and financial support for those affected by cancer. For help, call the Macmillan Support Line free (Monday to Friday, 9am-8pm) on 0808 808 00 00.

Alzheimer Scotland: www.alzscot.org

Alzheimer Scotland is Scotland's national dementia charity. Their aim is to make sure nobody faces dementia alone. They provide support and information to people with dementia, their carers and families, campaign for the rights of people with dementia and fund vital dementia research.

For support contact the 24 hour Freephone Dementia Helpline: 0808 808 3000.

There are also local external supports specifically for carers, such as:

Dundee Carers Centre www.dundecarerscentre.org.uk

Fife Carers Centre www.fifecarerscentre.org

Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Carers
www.pkavscarershub.org.uk

These centres provide support and information to carers.

7. Further information

7.1 Learning and development

To support the fair and consistent application of this policy, we will identify the opportunities and implications for managers. We will do this by incorporating training on this policy within line management development programmes. We will consider the implications for employees and make sure that they receive suitable training. We also provide refresher training.

7.2 Sources of support

Further sources of support include:

- day to day support from line managers
- the employee assistance programme
- help advice and support from recognised trade union representatives
- ACAS
- Health and safety
- Human resources.

7.3 Related documents

This policy has strong links to other people management policies and guidance. We have listed these below.

- [Agile Working Policy](#)
- [Annual Leave Policy](#)
- [Career Break Policy](#)
- [Code of Conduct \(Employees\)](#)
- [Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#)
- [Flexible Working Policy](#)
- [Retirement and Severance Policy](#)
- [Special Leave Policy](#)



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We promote equality by removing unlawful and unfair treatment on the grounds of any protected characteristic wherever possible.