Supporting Carers
At Work
Guidance for Managers
This Guidance should be read in conjunction with University policy on:

- Career Break Scheme
- Compassionate and Dependants Leave Guidelines and Procedures
- Equality and Diversity
- Flexible Working
- Parental Leave

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/hr/policies

Further advice and information can be obtained from your HR Manager

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/hr/contact/#ops

or the Equality and Diversity Team

equality-diversity@bristol.ac.uk

If you require this guidance in an alternative format
(for example in Braille) please contact
the Equality and Diversity Team
by email at equality-diversity@bristol.ac.uk
or by telephone (0117) 33 18087
As Director of Human Resources I am delighted to welcome you to this guidance, which aims to provide a comprehensive source of information for managers supporting carers in work.

There are currently over three million carers working in the UK. As the population ages, increasing numbers of employees will balance work with caring for ill, elderly or disabled family members, friends or partners.

The University recognises the pressures that combining work and caring can bring and the importance for managers to be supportive and sensitive to the issues faced when balancing work and caring commitments. With this in mind, this guidance has been developed to bring together all relevant policy and information that managers supporting staff in such circumstances should have to hand.

I hope that you find this a valuable source of information and would welcome your feedback.

Guy Gregory
Human Resources Director
It’s estimated that currently 1 in 7 of the workforce are caring for somebody who is ill, frail or has a disability. Most people will assume the role of a carer at some point during their lives. Numbers of carers in the UK is set to rise from 6 million to 9 million over the next 30 years, which will mean a significant increase in people trying to balance work and caring responsibilities. One of the reasons for this is the ageing population in this country, which means that middle-aged employees increasingly find themselves having to look after, or arrange the care of, their elderly relatives.

Research shows that adopting a flexible approach to supporting carers in the workplace achieves:

- Reduced absenteeism
- Lower staff turnover
- Reduced sick leave
- Improved recruitment and retention
- Increased morale, productivity and loyalty
- Reduced stress

The University recognises the benefits of supporting working carers and of retaining skilled workers, rather than incurring the costs of recruiting and retraining new staff. This guidance sets out some of the issues that you might consider as a manager.

Access to a telephone and/or internet
Members of staff who do not have access to a private telephone may find it reassuring to have such arrangements put in place or have an agreement that they can make private calls as necessary outside of the office on their mobile phones. Sometimes carers may require access to the internet – for example, to check via an on-line tracking device the whereabouts of a parent with dementia. Computers and internet access are available in all University libraries (see http://www.bristol.ac.uk/is/locations/branches/).
**Paid time off to accompany dependants to appointments**
Quite often carers must accompany their dependants to GP/hospital or other appointments. Where the dependant would be unable to attend such an appointment without their carer, consideration should be given to treating the appointment as if it was for the carer and giving reasonable paid time off for them to attend. However, the general expectation would be that wherever possible staff would make every effort to schedule such appointments outside of their normal working hours.

**Temporary reduced hours**
Rather than permanently change their contract of employment, some carers may benefit from a temporary reduction in hours.

**Timing of meetings**
Some staff with caring responsibilities may work flexibly, so efforts should be made for meetings to be arranged within the days/hours they work so they can attend.

**Transferring annual leave into hours**
Serious consideration should be given to allowing staff to transfer annual leave into hours. This would be appropriate where a member of staff needs flexibility but due to the constraints of their caring responsibilities it is impossible for them to make up any lost time. It is advisable that you keep a record of any leave taken.

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**CARERS – RELEVANT POLICY**

This section sets out the range of policies that the University has in place to support employees with caring responsibilities. As a manager, you may wish to familiarise yourself with these policies and entitlements.

**Compassionate leave (normally paid)**
This provision enables staff to take paid time off work to deal with emergency situations with their immediate family, partner or someone for whom they are the main carer. It includes:

- **Bereavement**
Managers are required to use their discretion to determine what is a reasonable amount of paid time off, taking into account the particular circumstances and the relationship the individual had with the deceased. Time off with pay should also normally be granted to allow staff to attend a funeral of their extended family, close friend or colleague.

- **Sudden severe illness**
Staff should be granted a reasonable amount of time off with pay where a dependant has to attend hospital unexpectedly or requires total care at home. The normal maximum time permitted is two days. This is to enable employees to put alternative arrangements in place and manage immediate domestic affairs.

- **Consideration for carers**
Members of staff who are caring for elderly, ill or disabled dependants may feel they are entitled to paid leave for example, to take a dependant to a doctors/hospital appointment or to be present during any home visits; this is something they are encouraged to discuss with their line manager and HR Manager.
Dependants leave (normally unpaid)
Staff are entitled to a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work where there is an unexpected interruption in normal care arrangements for a dependant. For example, an elderly parent is too ill to attend day care. The purpose of allowing staff time off work is to enable them to put alternative arrangements in place, with the expectation that they will return to work on the next working day. As a manager, you can exercise your discretion as to whether limited time off with pay would be appropriate.

You should give consideration to provide as much flexibility as is reasonable where individuals are dealing with particularly difficult domestic circumstances. For example, compassionate leave may be supplemented by unpaid leave, annual leave or a career break. Work patterns may also be amended temporarily to assist the individual to meet such responsibilities. Where a member of your team is likely to require a long period or repeated short periods of compassionate or dependants leave, you should consult your HR Manager in the first instance.

All requests for leave should be considered on an individual basis and should not be unreasonably refused. Although the final decision lies with you as the employee’s manager, HR Managers can advise you on particular circumstances to assist with consistency across the University (e.g. paid time off for carers).

For further details see the Compassionate and Dependants Leave Guidelines and Procedures.

Flexible Working
Carers may find that the best or only way to manage their work and caring responsibilities is to change their working arrangements. Allowing carers to work flexibly on an ongoing or temporary basis can enable carers to balance their paid work with their caring responsibilities.

Under the Employment Act 2002 and Work and Families Act 2006 parents of disabled children under the age of 18 and carers of adults have a statutory right to request a flexible working arrangement. Flexibility and flexible working are terms used to describe a wide range of working styles that differ from the traditional nine-to-five full time job – examples include job sharing, home working, shift swapping or part-time working. It can sometimes be difficult to manage increasing requests for flexible working. Any difficulties in this area should be discussed with your HR Manager. The University has a statutory duty to consider requests for flexible working seriously and requests can only be refused if there is a clear business reason for doing so.

For further details see the Flexible Working policy.

Parental Leave (unpaid)
Parental leave is a statutory right designed to enable staff who have at least one year of continuous employment service to spend more time with their disabled child aged under 18 years, whilst still keeping their employment open.

Under the Parental Leave Scheme employees with disabled children have the right to take up to 18 weeks’ unpaid leave up to the child’s 18th birthday. For part-time workers this will be in proportion to the time worked. Applications for parental leave should not be unreasonably refused. However, leave may be postponed, where necessary, to meet operational requirements.

For further details see the Parental Leave policy.
**Career Break Scheme**
The Career Break Scheme provides a period of unpaid leave of between six months and three years for all staff who have three years or more continuous service. The scheme provides staff with the opportunity, in defined circumstances, to leave their employment without a break in service to fulfil personal commitments, such as caring for dependants.

If you receive any applications under the scheme, these should be considered jointly with your HR Manager. Acceptance of a career break application is solely at the discretion of the University.

For further details see the [Career Break Scheme](#).

**Equality and Diversity**
Under the Equality Act 2010 individuals who care for someone who is elderly or disabled are protected against direct discrimination. This is because they are ‘associated’ with someone who has a protected characteristic i.e. either age or disability.

Direct discrimination can occur if, for example, you refuse to offer a member of staff a job because of their caring responsibilities or if you treat a member of staff less favourably because of their caring responsibilities.

Carers are also protected from harassment in the workplace due to their caring responsibilities for an elderly or disabled person.

For further details see the [Equality and Diversity](#) website.

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**SUPPORT PROVIDED BY THE UNIVERSITY**

As a manager you may wish to refer members of staff with caring responsibilities to the following sources of support:

**Carers’ Support Group**
The University recognises that being a carer can be very stressful and demanding and that it can sometimes help to talk to others who are in a similar situation. For this reason, the Equality and Diversity Team has established a [Carers’ Support Group](#) bringing together staff who are balancing work with caring for an ill, elderly, or disabled family member, friend or partner.

**Car Parking: provision for carers**
The University operates a [car parking policy](#). Staff can apply for four types of parking permits – categories A1 (car share), A2 (disability), B (preferential), and C (standard). Employees with caring responsibilities for children under the age of 11 or caring responsibilities for a relative can apply for a Category B parking permit. Appropriate medical evidence e.g. a copy of blue badge or GP’s letter is required for staff with caring responsibilities for a child over the age of 11 or for an adult.
**Work and Family initiative**
The *Work and Family* initiative brings together information and support for the diverse mix of people who work at the University - mums, dads and those with caring responsibilities - helping staff to strike the balance between work and other responsibilities. It provides specific information for working carers.

**Staff Counselling**
The *Staff Counselling Service* offer an impartial ear for carers to reflect on their situation, express their feelings and think through the best way of dealing with problems that arise.

**Bereavement Counselling**
Employees who have suffered a bereavement may find it helpful to talk to someone outside their immediate circle of family and friends about how they are feeling. Every death is different and how individuals react will vary greatly. The *Staff Counselling Service* can offer employees support in understanding the process of grieving, the powerful emotions it can evoke, and can help individuals adjust to their new situation.

**Multifaith Chaplaincy**
The *Multifaith Chaplaincy Centre* is available to all members of the University as a place where they will find a warm welcome, a listening ear and a bit of peace and quiet. The Multifaith Chaplaincy has a team of Chaplains from a variety of faiths and denominations, who would be happy to offer support.

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