



Supporting Carers at Work

Guidance for Staff and Managers

There are six million people in the UK caring unpaid for a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill; three million of these carers juggle work and care - that is 1 in 7 in every workplace.

We recognise the pressures that combining work and caring can bring and the importance for managers to be supportive and sensitive to the issues faced by staff who are balancing work and caring commitments.

Context

It's estimated that currently 1 in 7 of the workforce are caring for somebody who is older, disabled or seriously ill. Most people will assume the role of a carer at some point during their lives and it is estimated that 6,000 people per day find themselves adopting a role as carer. Growing numbers of families are managing multiple caring responsibilities for children or grandchildren and for older parents. By 2050 globally three times more people of working age will be looking after two billion ageing family members – and the majority will have to combine that care with paid work. Currently 3 million people in the UK combine paid work with care, many of them at the peak of their careers, and that number will rise in the next 50 years as the dependency ratio falls from 4 to 1 to 2 to 11.

We aim to create and sustain an environment that 'normalises' caring within the workplace and facilitate its acceptance as part of an employee's life course which will probably include family responsibilities from childcare through to care for older parents.

¹ Source: *Final Report of the Carers in Employment Task and Finish Group*
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/232303/Supporting_Working_Carers_Final_Report_accessible_.pdf

Things to Consider

If a member of staff has caring responsibilities outside of the workplace, this is likely to lead to some further discussion on any difficulties they may experience in balancing these responsibilities with employment. Managers should respond flexibly to any issues that may arise and work with staff to identify areas where support may be necessary. Managers should not assume that all carers will need or want the same support and bear in mind that any support requirements may change as their dependant's circumstances change. Staff and Managers may wish to consider the following areas when discussing support needs:

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/library/locations-opening/>).

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 if this can be accommodated.

Timing of meetings

Some staff with caring responsibilities may have flexible work arrangements in place, so efforts should be made for meetings to be arranged within the days/hours they work so they can attend where possible.

Support Provided by the University

The following sources of support are also available to staff with caring responsibilities.

Carers' Network

Being a carer can be very stressful and demanding and it can sometimes help to talk to others who are in a similar situation. The [Carers' Network](#) brings together staff who are balancing work with caring for older, seriously ill or disabled family member, friend or partner.

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.

Relevant Policy

The University has a range of policies in place to support employees with caring responsibilities. A full list can be seen on the [A-Z policies, procedures and guidance](#) section of our website. Some of the policies you may wish to familiarise yourself with are Compassionate and Dependants Leave, Flexible Working Policy, Parental Leave Scheme and the Career Break Scheme.

External Weblinks

These are local and national organisation that provide support to Carers.

[Carers Support Centre](#)

[Bristol City Council](#)

[Carers Direct](#)

[Carers UK](#)

[Carers Trust](#)

[The Guardian's Carers' Page](#)