



Working Carers Policy

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1 Purpose and Scope

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Set out the support Cafcass offers to our employees who have a caring responsibility, in order to help them balance their working and caring commitments and continue to be effective in their job to meet business needs.
- Help us recruit and retain employees with caring responsibilities.

2 Introduction

2.1 Cafcass values its working carers for the diverse range of skills and abilities they bring to our organisation.

2.2 We are committed to supporting working carers. The Equality Act 2010 protects a person who experiences discrimination because they are associated with someone who has a disability.

2.3 This policy applies to all permanent and fixed-term Cafcass employees. Non-employed staff who are engaged by Cafcass (including Cafcass Associates, Agency Workers, Students) are not covered by this policy. However, we recognise that individuals who are not covered by this policy can still be carers and are committed to providing appropriate support if it is needed.

2.4 This policy sets out some of the definitions of a carer and the help and support available. It should be used by managers and staff to ensure good practice around the needs of individual carers.

3 Definitions

3.1 A carer is anyone, including children and adults, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health condition or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.

3.2 The definitions listed below provide clarification on some of the different types of carers in order to help a member of staff identify if they are a carer:

- **Unpaid carers:** an individual who provides unpaid help on a regular basis. They may provide practical help, care and physical and/or emotional support to a person who is vulnerable through age, illness, frailty, disability, mental health condition or addiction. For some carers the role has been introduced suddenly through accident or sudden illness; for others the needs of the individual have increased over time and the caring role has been absorbed as part of an existing relationship. This means that many unpaid carers do not necessarily recognise themselves as such.
- **Young carers:** an individual under the age of 18 who is involved in the daily care of someone, usually a parent, older relative or sibling who has a disability, illness, mental health condition, drug/alcohol problem or is frail. The extent of their caring responsibilities would normally be expected only of an adult.
- **Older carers:** an individual aged 65 or older who is involved in the daily care of someone – usually a partner, parent or child – who has a disability, illness, mental

health condition or is frail. Some will be caring for those at the end of life. Older carers may face particular challenges with the physical nature of caring and need support to protect their own health whilst they care, as they may have their own health issues which can be exacerbated by their caring role.

- **Caring for children:** this includes anyone who has legal responsibility for a child or young person. The Carers Policy is separate to any statutory, policy or contractual rights related to maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave etc. The provision of carers leave relates specifically to caring for a child who is critically ill and/or disabled rather than general childcare responsibilities.

3.3 Cafcass is committed to providing suitable support for anyone that falls within the definition of a carer at Section 3.2.

4 Supporting Working Carers

4.1 We recognise that some of our employees will have caring responsibilities for seriously ill or disabled children or dependent relatives, partners or close friends. We appreciate the demands this may place on them, and that at times it may be difficult for them to combine their work and caring responsibilities.

4.2 As a responsible employer, it is our policy that:

- Managers will give sympathetic consideration to requests for support from those who have caring responsibilities, based on a shared understanding of the situation and its impact.
- It should be viewed by all as acceptable to request support and to be confident that no one will be unlawfully discriminated against because they have caring responsibilities.
- All such requests will be dealt with in a confidential manner.
- Employees who require support will be provided with guidance on the options available to them. We will endeavour to treat all employees fairly and consistently, while taking into account the individual needs of a particular case.

5 Available Support for Carers

5.1 In discussion with your manager there are a number of adjustments that can be made to support staff with caring responsibilities, if suitable, including:

- Flexible working [link to separate document when available]
- If you are the parent of a child (or have legal parental responsibility of a child), you will be entitled to take statutory unpaid parental leave.
- Cafcass Special leave options such as, carers leave – up to five days paid per year, paid and unpaid special leave.
- Support from the line manager in agreeing any information to be shared with team members about the situation and about staying in touch during absence and support to return to work
- Access to relevant information and advice (see separate Resource Guide)
- Confidential support from our Employee Assistance Programme (which may include counselling as well as practical information and advice)
- Carers Diversity Network
- Health and wellbeing resources
- [Charity for civil servants](#)

6 Responsibilities

Employees

- 6.1 If a member of staff identifies themselves as a carer, they are encouraged to raise and discuss this with their line manager in relation to the support they may need now or in the future and update them if their circumstances change. The aim is to help staff find ways to effectively balance their caring and work responsibilities. By providing their line managers with information about their situation, support options can be explored and agreed together.
- 6.2 Any requests for changing working hours or special leave will be considered on an individual basis and in line with the needs of the staff member, of the service and the relevant policies in place at the time. This Policy does not impact on an employees' statutory rights to time off for dependents or to make a statutory flexible working request.

Managers

- 6.3 Managers have the responsibility to familiarise themselves with this Policy and to work within its parameters. They also have a responsibility to ensure that all employees have access to the policy and understand their own and the organisation's responsibilities in respect of it.
- 6.4 Line managers will, in the first instance, discuss with the member of staff the support options available and agree any actions needed. This should include signposting staff towards other sources of help (see Section 4). Managers should be careful not to make any assumptions and should approach every conversation with an open mind and a willingness to listen.
- 6.5 Managers should consider involving their local HR representative in any discussion relating to the support required by a member of staff who identifies as a carer.
- 6.6 Managers and the staff member should agree what information will be recorded. The outcomes and any agreed actions of the meeting will be recorded in a general meeting record on the PLR system.
- 6.7 Regular catch up and review meetings should be used to discuss changing responsibilities and ensure the best support options and adjustments can be put in place. This will include the impact of changing responsibilities.
- 6.8 As every individual situation will be different, general examples are not included within this document. Managers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the resources and support that may be of assistance to a member of staff and if required to discuss with their local HR representative the options that can be considered.

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