



# Supporting Carers at Work Policy

We recognise that some members of staff have caring responsibilities and there may be times when they require time off work to deal with an issue involving a dependant in need. We aim to support members of staff with caring responsibilities balance their work obligations, while providing them with the flexibility to take time out to manage their responsibilities as a carer, in line with our [University Values](#).

## Introduction

The University recognises that some members of staff may have caring responsibilities for seriously ill, elderly, or disabled relatives or partners. We aim to understand the challenges and pressures that combining work and caring can bring, which place extra demands on an individual's time, energy and emotions.

If you are a carer, we want to support you in balancing your work and caring commitments. Our aim is to ensure that members of staff can meet their caring responsibilities and feel confident they are doing a good job for the University. This policy supports this aim.

Every carer's needs are different - and they may change over the period of care. Equally, the University needs to consider how to meet the business needs which may also change during this time. With this in mind, we believe every carer's situation is unique so this policy has been developed to bring together all relevant policies and information to help support the carer, and their manager in reaching an arrangement that is best for each situation.

## What do we mean by a carer?

A carer is responsible for caring for, or supporting, a disabled, elderly or sick partner, relative or near relative, or someone that lives with them who is unable to care for themselves because they are ill, frail or have a disability. These caring responsibilities could have an impact on the staff member's working life.

(By a 'near relative', we mean parents, a parent-in-law, a disabled child, an adult child, an adopted or fostered adult child, siblings (including in-laws), uncles, aunts, grandparents or step-relatives. If a member of staff cares for someone who is not a family member, some of our policies and benefits may still apply, so please read this policy in conjunction with the others referred to in this document to see what support is available.)

If members of staff have caring responsibilities and need help to manage the balance of their working and caring responsibilities, they should discuss this with their line manager and local HR Business Partner as a first step. Together, they will be able to offer support and guidance using the policies outlined here.

# Our commitment to Carers

We will make sure members of staff with caring responsibilities are:

- treated fairly and not disadvantaged because of their caring responsibilities
- supported in managing their responsibilities as a carer however long they may continue for,
- able to get the most out of their working life and have a fulfilling role.
- encouraged to seek additional support to help manage their own wellbeing e.g. through the employee assistance programme.

Members of staff will need to ensure that where arrangements are put in place, their manager is kept up to date with any changes.

All information received in relation to this policy will be stored and processed in line with applicable data protection legislation. To learn more about how we handle staff data please review our [Privacy Notice](#).

## Context

According to [Carers UK](#), it is estimated that across 6.5 million people across the UK are carers who are supporting someone who is older, disabled or seriously ill. That equates to 1 in 8 adults who care, unpaid, for family and friends (often juggling their own work and home commitments).

Within our lifetime, it is estimated this figure will increase to 9 million carers.

We believe that at Cranfield, if we adopt a flexible approach to the support of carers in the workplace we can help to:

- reduce absenteeism,
- lower staff turnover,
- reduce sick leave,
- improve recruitment and retention,
- improve morale,
- improve productivity and loyalty and, most importantly,
- reduce stress and improve wellbeing.

## Guidance for managers

This section provides guidance for managers when they become aware of team members with caring responsibilities.

If a member of your team informs you that they have caring responsibilities, do your best to respond positively to help them manage any issues that are arising at work. It is recommended that you initially set up a meeting with them, to discuss and understand the responsibilities they are dealing with and what a typical day is like for them. The more information you have, the more likely it is that you will be able to find a solution that suits all parties.

Managers may wish to consider:

- setting up regular one to one meetings so your team member can easily let you know if there's a change in their circumstances;

- whether the individual wants their caring responsibilities to be known to the wider team or kept confidential, and how you can manage your part in the communications;
- the type and level of support the team member needs - bear in mind the circumstances may change as their dependants' circumstances change;
- providing private access to a phone and or the internet. Your team member may need to take and make private calls or might need access to the Internet, for example, to check an online tracking device for the whereabouts of an elderly relative with dementia;
- time off to accompany the dependent to appointments - quite often carers must accompany their dependant to GP/hospital appointments (where possible, staff should make every effort to schedule these outside of normal working hours but when that is not possible, managers may suggest unpaid time off or that the time taken is made up at a later date);
- a temporary reduction in hours;
- the timing of meetings - some staff who have caring responsibilities may work flexibly, so efforts should be made for meetings to be arranged in advance and within the day/hours they work;
- varying start and/or finish times and lunch breaks;
- where business needs allow, the ability to “drop everything” and leave quickly, even if they make the hours up again later.

Managers should work with their team member to find the best solutions for the carer, the wider team and the University. It is not unusual for other team members to feel resentful if they think someone is getting “special treatment”, so always bear in mind that the solution needs to be fair and equitable for everyone. Keep reviewing the situation regularly and be honest with your team member: if the arrangements really aren't working for the rest of the team or the business unit, you both need to see if there are alternatives.

Sometimes a carer's domestic circumstances become very complex and need very careful management and support. Please think about all our policies and how to use them to best advantage. For example a period of unpaid leave may be granted, supplemented with annual leave. Managers will need to keep an accurate record of these instances. HR are always on hand if you need further advice. Any agreed leave should be recorded on the HR system under the appropriate category.

## Policies to support Carers

This section sets out the range of policies the University has in place to support staff with caring responsibilities. Managers and carers should read this section so they know what is available. If further information is required, local HR Teams can offer advice.

Whatever arrangements are agreed, both the team member and line manager should keep a written record and review the arrangements regularly to make sure they are still working for all parties.

**Flexible Working Policy** - Carers may find that the best or only way to manage their caring responsibilities and working life is to change their working arrangements. This policy is applicable to all staff regardless of their length of service.

Members of staff can request temporary or permanent changes to your working patterns to suit individual needs.

Flexible working is a term to describe a wide range of working styles that differ from the traditional full-time office-based role and include:

- part time,

- compressed hours
- term time working,
- annualised hours,
- job share,
- homeworking.
- ad-hoc arrangements (to cover emergencies)
- change in start or finish times

For further information see our [Flexible Working Policy and Procedure](#) and [Home Working Guidance](#).

**Parental leave – (Unpaid Leave)** Parental Leave is a statutory right designed to enable staff to look after a child or to make arrangements for the good of a child.

Under the Parental Leave Scheme, members of staff have the right to take up to 18 weeks (pro-rata if they are part-time) of unpaid leave up to the child's eighteenth birthday.

The reasons for the leave need not be connected with the child's health: it can for example include, settling a child into a new playgroup or nursery.

For further information see our [Parental Leave Scheme](#).

**Dependants' leave – (Unpaid leave)** members of staff have the right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid leave to deal with incidents involving a 'dependant'. A 'dependant' is defined as the member of staff's parent, spouse or partner, child, or someone who lives as part of the family. For example an elderly aunt or grandparent who lives in the household for whom the individual is the main carer. In cases of illness, injury or where care arrangements break down, a dependant may also be someone who reasonably relies on the member of staff for assistance. This may be where the individual is the primary carer or is the only person who can help in an emergency.

Staff have the right to time off to deal with an unexpected or sudden problem and make any necessary longer term arrangements:

- to help when a dependant falls ill or has been involved in an accident or assaulted, including where the victim is hurt or distressed rather than injured physically;
- to make longer term care arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured;
- to cope when the arrangements for caring for a dependant unexpectedly break down;

The University does not set a limit to the amount of time off which can be taken: it is typically a couple of days, but this will depend on individual circumstances.

For further details please refer to [Other Leave](#) and [Dependant Leave Policy](#).

### **Compassionate Leave – (normally paid)**

Members of staff may have compassionate leave if a member of their immediate family (i.e. parents, spouse/partner, children, siblings) suffers from a sudden severe illness or dies.

Sudden severe illness – this is paid time off, typically up to two days. This is to enable the member of staff to visit the sick relative, put in place care arrangements and manage immediate domestic affairs.

Bereavement – this is paid time off. As bereavement affects people in different ways, the University aims to ensure members of staff are provided with the appropriate level of support during this

difficult time. Line managers will take into account the particular set of staff circumstances and the relationship they had with the deceased, to ensure reasonable arrangements can be made in terms of time off. Reasonable paid time off is also typically granted to allow staff to attend a funeral of their extended family, close friend or colleague.

For further details please refer to [Other Leave Policy](#)

## End of Care

This section covers the support the University can offer when a staff members' caring responsibilities finish.

At some point, caring responsibilities are likely to finish. This may be because the person cared for has recovered from a serious illness or accident, or required a different type of care, or, sadly they may have died.

Whenever and however the need to care comes to an end, it is important for members of staff, line managers and colleagues to take time to adjust and find out what "normal" is moving forward.

Line managers should be prepared to listen and offer support to someone during this transition. Even if there is a "happy ending" (for example, a partner entering remission from cancer) the team member may still need support to deal with the changes in their own life - they may even miss the caring role and feel redundant. Therefore, it is important to keep the support going until it is clear the team member no longer needs it. If managers are at all concerned about the health and wellbeing of a team member, they should contact their local HR Business Partner who can offer support and make a referral to Occupational Health Services if appropriate.

## Additional Support

### Internal sources of support

In addition, carers have access to support, advice and assistance, which includes:

#### [Employee Assistance Scheme](#)

The scheme is designed to offer confidential support, information and advice, either online or by telephone, for individuals in dealing with life's challenges, which can be acute for carers. The service is fully funded by the University and there is no charge to staff or their families for using it.

**You can access this service either by telephone** 24-hours a day, to talk to a specialist who will help identify the nature of the issue and appropriate resources to address it - 0800 882 4102

Or via the:

**Online portal** – the online portal containing useful tools and information to assist you on a range of topics such as those listed above.

Online: [www.pamassist.co.uk](http://www.pamassist.co.uk)

Username: CranfieldEAP

Password: Cranfield EAP1

## **Occupational Health**

Our Occupational Health Service is independent, impartial and confidential. The Occupational Health Specialist Practitioners provide specialist medical advice to staff and the employer on the effects of work on health and the effects of health on work. If you need occupational health support, you can ask your line manager or HR to support your request. If you are the line manager, have a chat with your team member and then contact your HRBP to access the service.

## **Wellbeing**

Ensuring the wellbeing of our staff is extremely important and a key area of work being taken forward by the University. [Here](#) is a range of information and links to events that are available to improve our wellbeing.

## **External sources of support**

The following external support and advice may be of assistance.

[Carers UK](#) provide expert advice, information and support on all aspects of caring, with both a telephone advice and support service and an online portal.

[Carers in Bedfordshire](#) is a not for profit registered charity providing support for carers of family members and friends throughout Bedfordshire.

[NHS – Support and Benefits for Carers](#) provides a range of social care and charities that can offer advice and support.

[Carers Milton Keynes](#) is an independent charity established in 2006 to support unpaid, family Carers in the Milton Keynes area. They are part of the Carers Trust Network, which has 141 Carers Centres around the UK and are affiliated to Carers UK.

[TuVida](#) - works in, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, East Midlands, London and Essex, North Yorkshire and West Sussex and provides one-to-one care and group support for adults and children with a wide variety of needs and conditions, at home and in the community.

[Carers Support \(Bristol and South Gloucestershire\)](#) – are dedicated to improving the quality of life of local carers, by providing information and practical support to carers living in Bristol and South Gloucestershire. They work with various organisations across Bristol and South Gloucestershire including hospitals, doctors surgeries, local PCTs, councils and other charities.

[Carers Support Wiltshire](#) – help carers access support, services, education and training, and breaks from their caring role. Their services cover the whole of Wiltshire (excluding Swindon) and are available to anyone who is aged 16 or over.

[Swindon Carers Centre](#) – is a charitable organisation, which is part of the Carers Trust Network, established to provide help and support to carers in the Swindon area.

[Carers Oxford](#) - Carers Oxfordshire is a free service which offers information, advice and support to someone aged 18 and over, who is looking after someone aged 18 and over, living in Oxfordshire, who could not manage without this help.

## Document control

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V1	Introduction of Carers Policy	HR Compliance	1 December 2017
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