

Issue Number: 2

Issue Date: 2/24

Review Date: 2/26

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formats on request.

Carers Leave Policy

Supporting our people with caring responsibilities
For all council employees



Renfrewshire
Council

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 We recognise that our some of our people have caring responsibilities which can be challenging at times and may impact their ability to balance their work and home life. The health and wellbeing of our people has, and will remain, our number one priority, and therefore we will continue taking steps to create a healthy and inclusive workplace environment which supports our people to better balance their work and family commitments.
- 1.2 For carers, work can often represent a lifeline, not only financially, but in providing a life outside of caring. However, juggling work and caring responsibilities can be extremely stressful. Research shows that women represent two thirds of unpaid carers in the UK (Census 2021). Nearly three quarters of our workforce are female with an average age of 45, and so we remain fully committed to removing any barriers to work supporting our unpaid working carers population in Renfrewshire.

2 Purpose and Aims

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to support the Council in managing carers leave requests with a clear, fair, inclusive, and transparent process. We will continue taking steps to help identify our people who are primary carers so they can be provided with practical support and advice to help them better balance their caring responsibilities with work.
- 2.2 We aim to engage with our people who are primary carers to better understand their daily challenges and seek to remove any barriers at work, whilst raising awareness of all the necessary support provisions available.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Council employees. Advice and guidance on this and other support and leave provisions are available from the People and OD Service.

4 Definition of a carer

- 4.1 A carer is someone who helps another person, usually a relative or friend, in their day-to-day life. This is not the same as someone who provides care professionally, or through a voluntary organisation (Carers Rights Bill 2023).
- 4.2 The people that they care for may be impacted by:
- disability
 - physical or mental ill health,
 - frailty or
 - substance misuse.
- 4.3 For the purposes of this policy, a carer is defined as the person who is provides primary care and provides unpaid support to the person that they are caring for. They do not need to be living with that person.

5) Supporting our carers

5.1 We remain fully committed to providing support to our unpaid working carers in Renfrewshire. We understand everyone's situation and needs are different. If you require support or would like to know more about the support available, you should speak to your manager in the first instance if you are comfortable doing so. Your manager can then discuss a range of workplace supports including:

- Carers Connected Support Network
- Carers Leave
- Carers Passport
- Online resources for people with caring responsibilities
- Local and national carer support organisations
- Changes to your working pattern
- Access to other HR supports, for example Occupational Health and Employee Counselling.

5.2 Paid Carers Leave

5.3 To supplement the support provisions detailed in section 5.1, people with primary caring responsibilities can request up to a maximum of 5 days paid carers leave per year (pro rata in line with their work pattern) to help them support the individual(s) that they are caring for. This leave can be requested in hours, half, and full days.

5.4 Although not an exhaustive list, some examples of when paid carers leave may be approved include:

- Providing support at appointments for the person that you are caring for.
- Temporarily assisting with the care of a relative/partner/friend.
- Managing an unexpected breakdown of care arrangements.
- Managing the transition to or from a care home.
- Providing support when caring for a terminally ill relative or partner.
- Managing the hospitalisation of a relative or partner.
- Providing 'Me Time' (respite) to support an employee's emotional or physical health.
- To attend training to help you support the person(s) that you are caring for.

5.5 Carers leave can only be used by those who are registered on our Carers Register and cannot be used for childcare purposes.

6 Carers Register and Paid Carers Leave.

6.1 In order to qualify for paid carers leave, you must be registered on the Council's Carers Register. This can be done by completing the Carers Registration form on Business World ERP and requires to be annually. Any change in circumstances should be highlighted to the manager and the People and OD Service.

6.2 When registering, you should complete the declaration at the bottom of the form confirming that you are the primary carer and you can provide evidence of your caring responsibilities and relationship from: either a GP signature/stamp from either

the unpaid working carer or the person(s) they care for, other health professional signature/stamp, Local Carers Centre, or Social Work Department confirmation.

- 6.3 If this type of evidence cannot be provided, other forms of evidence which demonstrates a primary caring responsibility exists will be considered.
- 6.4 Once approved on the Carers Register, a carer requesting carers leave should complete the Carers Leave Request form as soon as is practically possible. Reasonable notice must be provided to allow the manager sufficient time to consider the request. Where there is a question around inclusion on the Carers Register or around leave requested, the manager should take advice from the People & OD Team.

7 Considering a request and reaching a decision

- 7.1 The manager should discuss the request with the carer, considering any relevant personal circumstances. The manager must clarify the reasons for the application and ensure that carers leave is the most appropriate option as on some occasions other alternatives may be more suitable. Before reaching a decision on the request, the manager should consider the following:
- Is the carer approved on the Carers Register.
 - The nature of the leave request.
 - The amount of carers leave requested (hours/half/days).
 - The date the carers leave will start and finish.
 - The operational impact on service delivery and any costs associated with backfilling if required and/or whether work needs to be redistributed.
 - Details of any shared carers leave with a spouse, partner, family member or friend who also works with the Council.
- 7.2 Managers must ensure that decisions are made no later than 14 days after a request has been received. If a manager is unable to approve a request, they must confirm to the carer clear business reasons for refusal. The manager's decision is final and there is no right of appeal.
- 7.3 Any costs associated with a request should be considered based on what is fair and reasonable, taking into account the circumstances of the request.
- 7.4 The manager will record approved Carers Leave on Business World ERP in the same way as unplanned leave.
- 7.5 If an carer is providing care to more than one person, they can only request up to 5 days paid carers leave in total (pro rata).

8 Confidentiality

- 8.1 Information relating to Carers leave, Carers Register and confidential discussions linked to caring responsibilities will be recorded, maintained, and processed securely by the service, People & OD, and Customer and Business Services. Information will not be divulged to any third parties without your written consent.

8.2 Information processed may include paper or electronic records and will be done so in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (Regulation EU 2016/679) (“GDPR”), the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003 (as may be amended by the proposed Regulation on Privacy and Electronic Communications) and any legislation that, in respect of the United Kingdom, replaces, or enacts into domestic law, or any law relating to data protection, the processing of personal data and privacy as a consequence of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union.

9 Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment

9.1 This policy has been impact assessed in line with the Council’s obligation to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

10 Monitoring and Review

10.1 This policy will be reviewed regularly and in line with any legislative and organisational changes. The recognised Trade Unions will be consulted on any future changes to this policy.

Version	Date	Details of Review/Revisions made	Next Review date
2	February 2024	Review of V1 policy to bring into line with current needs of our working carers.	January 2026