

## Guidelines for Carers

### Introduction

There are approximately 6.5 million carers in the UK, with this figure expected to reach 9 million by 2037 (carersuk.org). The University recognises that many of its employees will take on some form of caring responsibilities at some point in their lives. The following guidelines outline the support available to employees with carer responsibilities to assist them in achieving a sufficient balance between their work and caring commitments.

### Definition

A carer is an individual who provides a substantial amount of unpaid care on a regular basis for another person who is dependent upon their support; it can also be an individual who provides more occasional support to cope with changes in circumstances or the health of a dependant. This could include care for a spouse, partner, parent, sibling, child or other dependant.

### Key Principles

Employees with carer responsibilities are encouraged to identify themselves as a carer to their manager or HR Adviser. Their status as a carer will remain confidential if they wish, but it is helpful for the manager or HR Adviser to be aware in case support is needed by the employee.

It is recognised that not all carers will require the same type of support and that their requirements may change as their dependant's circumstances change. The University has a duty and commitment to ensure that no discrimination (whether directly or indirectly) occurs relating to any personal protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 (please see the [Dignity at Warwick](#) policy for further information).

### University Policies to support Carers

*(Please click on the relevant links for more detailed information)*

[Flexible Working](#) The University offers a range of flexible working arrangements that can assist individuals in balancing their work and home life. All employees (with 26 weeks of service) have a statutory right to request flexible working. Flexible working requests may be considered for a trial period or granted for a temporary basis during a particularly difficult period, or if the circumstances surrounding the request are likely to change after a period of time. Flexible working arrangements may also be agreed on a permanent basis. Managers should work with employees to achieve the best outcome from any request for flexibility, taking into account any potential impact on business needs and operational requirements.

[Time off for Dependants](#) Employees have a right to take a reasonable period ( normally one or two days) of unpaid time off work to deal with a sudden problem or emergency involving a dependant. A dependant is the spouse, partner, child or parent of the employee or someone who depends on an employee for care. This type of leave may be used to deal with an immediate issue such as an unexpected breakdown in care arrangements, but for longer term needs other types of leave will need to be requested.

[Annual Leave](#) The University offers a generous annual leave entitlement and also provides for employees to purchase additional annual leave.

[Unpaid leave](#) All employees have the option to request a period of unpaid leave normally up to a maximum of three months. Shorter periods for example one or two weeks can be requested. Anything beyond three months would ordinarily be covered by the University's Career Break policy (please see below).

[Career Breaks](#) To be considered for the scheme employees must have at least five years' continuous service at the University and in the case of employees on fixed term contracts, have at least eighteen months until their contract end date at the start of the career break. A career break provides for unpaid time off work for a specified period, normally between three months and two years.

[Parental Leave](#) is a right for those with parental responsibilities (and with one year's continuous service) to take unpaid time off work to look after a child (aged under 18), or to make arrangements for the child's welfare. It is intended to cover matters which can be foreseen, as opposed to sudden emergencies. The employed parents of a child under the age of 18 each have the right to take up to 18 weeks' parental leave for each child until the child's 18th birthday.

The University offers [Maternity](#), [Paternity](#) and [Adoption](#) Leave. Employees also have a right to reasonable paid time off to attend antenatal or adoption-related appointments. Eligible parents have the option to end their maternity or adoption leave early and to convert the balance of this leave into [Shared Parental Leave](#) with the other parent or their partner. The aims of shared parental leave include enabling parents to have increased flexibility in how they share childcare during the first year of their child's life. Parents will be able to take it in turns to take periods of leave to care for their child and/or to take leave at the same time as each other. Statutory and/or University payments during maternity, adoption, paternity or shared parental leave are available, subject to a range of eligibility requirements relating to length of service and level of earnings.

### **Additional support available for Carers**

#### [University Staff Carers' Network](#)

This group is open to any employee with caring responsibilities including caring for a disabled child, a partner or relative with ill health, or elderly parents for example. The network sends out regular emails to members about topics for discussion and support available and also hosts a website and a Facebook page. There is no requirement to attend meetings in person although this is often where members are able to gain the most support from other carers.

#### [Carers' Network Buddy Scheme](#)

This scheme underpins the University's Staff Carers' Network and aims to enable carers to have an opportunity to meet other members of the network outside of meetings.

### [Care companion online resource](#)

The University has developed an online resource available for anyone who is caring for a loved one. The links to the webpage and information from the University website are below.

<https://www.carecompanion.org.uk/>

[https://warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/unique\\_personalised\\_online/](https://warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/unique_personalised_online/)

### [Counselling Service](#)

The University Counselling Service offers an opportunity to access free professional therapeutic counselling to assist with the fulfilment of personal and professional potential. University Counsellors can work with employees to help them think through their psychological/emotional difficulties and effect change. The Counselling Service offers one to one sessions, therapy groups and workshops.

### [Chaplaincy](#)

The Chaplaincy is available for all employees (of all faiths and none) and offers a place of hospitality, safety, care and reflection.

### [Newsletter](#)

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (E, D and I) monthly newsletter provides colleagues with a range of E, D and I updates including relevant information relating to carers. Current and future events will be highlighted, as well as information provided by a number of University Support Services and external support providers.

### [Warwick Sport](#)

Employees eligible for Warwick Learning Vouchers are able to redeem these against a variety of activities or courses available from Warwick Sport that may assist with improvement in physical or mental health.

### **External Support**

The following links provide details of local and national support for carers:

- [How to cope as a Carer](#)
- [Mind website](#)
- [Carers Assessments](#)
- [Young Carers Coventry](#)
- [Samaritans](#)
- [Carers UK](#)
- [Carers Trust - Heart of England](#)
- [Healthwatch Warwickshire](#)
- [Guideposts Warwickshire](#)
- <https://www.carersuk.org/>

## **Responsibilities**

A summary of the responsibilities associated with the above guidelines are provided below.

### **Employees with caring responsibilities**

- Where possible, members of staff should try to identify themselves as carers in order to ensure that appropriate consideration of their circumstances is given.
- Individuals should familiarise themselves with the different types of support the University offers that may be applicable to their circumstances and ensure that any requests submitted are in line with the requirements detailed in the relevant policy, procedure or guidance.
- It is recommended that individuals plan (in conjunction with their line managers) to set out preparations for urgent or unforeseen circumstances in the event they are unable to attend work
- It is the responsibility of all employees to look after their own general health and, as far as possible, to minimise absence from work.

### **Managers**

- Managers should respect the staff member's wishes in relation to the confidentiality of their caring responsibilities.
- Upon disclosure, the employee and their manager should consider what adjustments (if any) may help to balance work and caring duties.
- Managers should ensure they are considerate of the additional responsibilities carers have, ensuring that decisions for working requests take into account both the needs of the business and the individual's circumstances.
- Managers should ensure that the employee is not discriminated against in any way as a result of their caring responsibilities.
- Managers should meet regularly with the member of staff and ensure that individuals are made aware of the support available.

### **Human Resources (HR)**

- All departments have a relevant HR Adviser who individuals or managers can contact for advice.
- HR Advisers are available to support individuals with the interpretation and application of relevant policies and procedures and with arranging referrals to Occupational Health, where appropriate.
- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team have established the Carers' Support Network. The team are available to provide support to all staff and to signpost individuals to the options available.