



SCHOOL CARERS POLICY

CARERS Wales
the voice of carers

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is available in Welsh.

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 The Council/Governing Body is aware that many employees have caring responsibilities, and that carers constitute part of its workforce. The Governing Body is committed to trying to find ways to assist employees to manage their work alongside their caring responsibilities.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Aims of this policy are to:

- 1.2 Work in partnership with employees in exploring all viable options to enable them to remain effective workers.
- 1.3 Support employees to remain in work, fulfil their career potential and meet their caring responsibilities.
- 1.4 Support employees balancing work with their caring responsibilities by outlining a range of existing policies and employee support, and developing further the scope of this document.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

1.5 This policy applies to all employees of the school, irrespective of status and/or grade. It does not apply to centrally employed staff who are covered by the corporate policy.

KEY PRINCIPLES

- 1.6 The Governing Body believes it has a responsibility to support employees who have caring responsibilities and will be as flexible as possible in its approach, balancing each individual's circumstances and the needs of the school.
- 1.7 Carers can be men or women and this policy is designed to apply equally to male and female employees.
- 1.8 Employees will in no way be discriminated against on the grounds of their caring responsibilities and the principles of the School's Equal Opportunity policy will be fundamental to the implementation of caring provisions. Specifically, the Governing Body will not discriminate against carers in terms of:
 - access to learning and development opportunities
 - promotion within the school
 - secondment opportunities
 - and any other opportunities for personal and professional development

- 1.9 This Policy will be reviewed in the light of ongoing operational experience, or any subsequent legislative changes.

DEFINITION - WHO IS A CARER?

- 1.10 The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 defines a carer as a person who provides or intends to provide care for an adult or disabled child. This can be an employee who looks after a relative, partner, friend or neighbour who is unable to manage without help because of age, impairment or health condition, drug or alcohol problem or long-term illness. The care they give is unpaid. It also includes Parent Carers (or a person who has assumed parental responsibility) of a child or young person under 18 years old who needs support due to having a physical or mental impairment or long-term health condition.

SECTION 2 - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role and Responsibilities

- 2.1 It is important that everyone clearly understands their roles and responsibilities within this process.

Employee Responsibilities

- 2.2 The responsibilities of all school employees are to:
- Approach the Headteacher to discuss their employment in relation to their caring role and support required.
 - Recognise that the Headteacher will need to be aware of issues with which an employee is coping.
 - Work together with the Headteacher in exploring all viable options to remain effective workers to balance work and caring commitments.
 - Co-operate with the Headteacher in the effective implementation and monitoring of the policy.

Headteacher Responsibilities

- 2.3 In addition to their responsibilities as employees, the responsibilities of Headteachers are to:
- Operate the policy fairly and reasonably with no detrimental effect on overall efficiency or service.
 - Ensure that Headteachers and employees are familiar with the support that is available for carers.

- Support employees with guidance on the options available to fulfil their potential in work and to meet their caring responsibilities.
- Give sympathetic consideration to requests for support from employees with caring responsibilities, based on a shared understanding of the situation and the impact it is having.
- Ensure reasonable adjustments are considered for disabled employees.
- Deal with requests in a confidential manner.

SECTION 3 – SUPPORT OPTIONS

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR CARERS?

3.1. The School has a range of options available to support carers to continue working while effectively balancing their work and care commitments.

These options include:

- Flexible working options
- Leave options (subject to terms and conditions of employment)
- Supporting Carers returning to work
- The Employee Counselling Service and the Employee Assistance Package (Care First).
- Education Support Partnership (formerly Teacher Support Line Cymru and now available to all school staff)
- Stress Management courses
- Support provided for carers through Adult Services and Children Services including a Carer's Assessment
- Employee Assistance Programme with 24/7 access
- Carers Network
- Signposting for further information including Carer's Rights Day

FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS

Flexible Working Patterns Policy and Procedure ([1.CM.088-Sch](#))

3.2 The purpose of the policy is to comply with the statutory 'right to ask' for a change to working patterns for all employees with at least 26 weeks' continuous service. The decision to allow flexible working patterns must take into account the school's needs.

3.3. The Policy:

- outlines the defined procedure for consideration of requests including timescales and an appeals procedure

- a successful request will result in a permanent change to the employment contract, but the arrangements can be trialled first
- normally only allows one request in any 12 month period
- sets out certain factors to be taken into consideration for each request

Requesting a short term period of flexible working (temporary variance of contract)

3.4 A request for flexible working can be used for permanent and temporary changes to working patterns. Before making a formal application to work flexibly, employees can try to work out and agree a temporary arrangement with their Headteacher.

LEAVE OPTIONS

3.5 In addition to annual leave (where appropriate), employees can also request special leave within the Attendance and Wellbeing Policy and the Time off for Dependants, Parental Leave, and Sabbatical Leave policies.

Special leave ([1.CM.081-Sch](#))

3.6 The purpose is to allow employees short periods of time off work to deal with various issues.

3.7 The provision of special leave is held within the Attendance and Wellbeing Policy which:

- defines the small number of days where Special Leave may be granted (over and above the annual leave entitlement) and the number of days allowable, this list is not exhaustive.
- recognises that exceptional circumstances may arise where it would be appropriate to grant Special leave
- provides varying amounts of time off for occasions such as bereavement, domestic/personal emergencies, medical appointments, public duties, training etc. etc.
- will normally over ride policies such as Parental Leave and Time off for Dependants where the leave could also be approved under those policies

Time Off for Dependants

3.8 The purpose is to allow an employee to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off and to make any necessary longer-term arrangements.

3.9 The Policy:

- defines "a dependant" for the purpose of this policy as spouse, partner, child or parent of the employee, a person who lives in the same household as the employee (excluding tenants, lodgers or live in employees), or a person that reasonably relies on the employee for assistance
- details reasons why such leave could be taken

- will be overridden by the Special Leave Scheme if reasons for leave could be approved under the Special Leave Scheme

Parental Leave

3.10 The purpose is to allow a parent (natural, step or adoptive) to take unpaid time off work to look after a child or make arrangements for a child's welfare.

3.11 The Policy:

- offers up to 4-weeks unpaid leave in a 12- month period up to a maximum of 18 weeks for each child
- the leave must be taken in blocks of 1 week (individual days may be taken for a disabled child)
- the leave is separate to maternity leave, maternity support leave, adoption leave, Special Leave or career breaks
- the leave is an individual right and cannot be transferred to someone else

Sabbatical Leave

3.12 The purpose of the policy is to allow an employee the opportunity to take a break from their employment with the School under certain conditions and to seek to return to employment once circumstances permit a return to work.

3.13 The Policy:

- normally a break shall be for a minimum of 1 year and not greater than 3 years
- more than one break may be taken provided that the total absence does not exceed 5 years and there shall not normally be less than 5 years between breaks
- requires the employee to have contact with the School for a minimum of 10 working days during each calendar year
- gives no guarantee of a return to work either to the original job or another job

SUPPORTING CARERS ON RETURN TO WORK

3.14 Carers need to be supported to return to the workplace if/when their caring role comes to an end.

3.15 During the employee's period of absence from the workplace the Headteacher has a responsibility to ensure that they, or an alternative manager, maintains contact with the employee to keep them informed of any workplace developments and any other information the employee may need to ensure that they still feel part of the team.

- 3.16 Returning employees must be provided with the training and development they need to re enter the workplace. Many carers may feel that they have lost their skills and their self-confidence and need work related training or retraining. This should be addressed by the carer and the Headteacher on or prior to their return to work.
- 3.17 Training and development needs can be identified by the Headteacher through the School's Performance Review Process and / or through discussions.
- 3.18 Employees can also be supported in their return by carrying out a training needs assessment that can be conducted before they return to work.

EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

- 3.19 Caring for someone else can put a great deal of strain on carers. The Governing Body is very aware of the need to provide an Employee Assistance Programme and stress management measures to ensure that employees who have caring responsibilities are aware of support for carers.

The Employee Counselling Service and the Employee Assistance Package (Care First)

- 3.20 [The Employee Counselling Service](#) (ECS) offers free and confidential counselling to anyone who is employed by Cardiff Council.
- 3.21 Counselling gives an employee a chance to talk about whatever is troubling them, whether personal or work related, without being interrupted or judged. Their counsellor will listen carefully and will try to help the employee sort things out in their own mind.
- 3.22 The Employee Counselling Service is confidential. No one will be told that an employee has been in contact: neither the Headteacher, nor colleagues in HR People Services have to know.
- 3.23 Employees can access the Employee Counselling Service between 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday (answer phone at all other times). The telephone number is 029 2078 8301.
- 3.24 School employees can also access the Education Support Partnership on Tel No. 0800 085 5088.
- 3.25 The Care First service is in addition to the important face-to-face counselling service provided by in-house the Employee Counselling Service. It is open to all employees and offers confidential telephone access for any personal or work related issue.
- 3.26 The Freephone telephone service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. The telephone number for the Care First team is 0800 174319 or find out more on line at www.carefirst.lifestyle.co.uk. The Username is ccw001 and the Password is diff1234.

Managing Stress

3.27 The Council currently has in place is the provision of stress awareness courses and managing stress courses.

3.28 For more information about courses:

Contact the Cardiff Council Academy team on Telephone number: 029 2034 6050 (ext 46050) or email: cardiffacademy@cardiff.gov.uk. You will need to establish if the school has purchased this service.

SUPPORT FOR CARERS

3.29 Many carers may not be aware of the statutory and voluntary services, financial benefits and other benefits available to them. It is important that employees who have caring responsibilities are made aware of these support services. Further details can be found by contacting Adult Services First Point of Contact on 029 2023 4234 or Children Services on 029 2053 6490.

3.30 If carers are finding it increasingly difficult to cope, there are different ways that Social Services can help; this can include a free assessment of the carer's situation.

For more information, also see:

[*Assessments - A guide to getting an assessment in Wales*](#)
[*Carers Information Handbook*](#)
[*Benefit and Advice Factsheet - A Guide for Carers*](#)

CARERS NETWORK

3.31 People who have caring responsibilities experience many different situations that have a direct effect on their health and well-being, their family relationships, and their working lives. Carers can experience a great deal of stress and feel very isolated because of their caring responsibilities. Getting together with others in similar situations can have a very positive effect on how carers cope. The Council and the Governing Body recognise the importance to its employees who are carers, to have the opportunity to share information, knowledge and experience with other carers and has launched the Carers Network, which is one of five Employee Equality Networks for this purpose.

3.32 Employees who are carers can join the Carers Network, which aims to give carers a forum in which they can express their views, have contact with other carers and support each other. It will be for the members of this network to decide its purpose and format. The Governing Body may consider allowing members to attend / participate during working hours.

3.33 The Carers Network can take the form of informal meetings or 'get togethers' or by setting up a carers 'chat room' on the Council's intranet.

- 3.34 The Carers Network may choose to invite a nominated member of HR People Services to attend the forum on a regular basis or on an ad hoc basis to provide information on any changes, which may be relevant, or to generally advise on particular issues. In addition, if an employee wishes to raise an issue on a private basis, they can post views or concerns anonymously.
- 3.35 The views and opinions of the members of the Carers Network will be sought by HR People Services to influence ongoing development of the Carers Policy.

APPENDIX 1 – USEFUL CONTACTS

Carers Wales (part of Carers UK)

Unit 5
Ynys Bridge Court
Cardiff

Tel: 029 2081 1370
Email: info@carerswales.org
www.carerswales.org/wales

The All Wales Forum

21 Cardiff Road
Taffs Well
Cardiff
CF15 7RB

Tel: 029 2081 1120
www.allwalesforum.org.uk

Carers Network

Cardiff Council's Employee Network
Email: carersnetwork@cardiff.gov.uk