

Carers Policy

Effective from June 2022

We know that many colleagues have unpaid caring responsibilities, and we want to do our best to support you as you balance these with work. This policy explains what provisions we have in place, and how you can go about applying for them. If you need time off for another reason that isn't detailed here, then we would really encourage you to speak to your line manager about what support you need and they will do their best, wherever operationally possible, to help you.

This policy applies to all colleagues of Newcastle University, regardless of your length of service.

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1. Introduction

We are committed to creating a workplace that is supportive and understanding of carers and we acknowledge that every carer's experience is unique to them. We want everyone, whether that be carers themselves, managers of carers or colleagues of carers, to have a common understanding of how the University can support.

This policy **does not** cover caring for a child who may become sick with a short-term childhood illness such as chicken pox or a cold. Please refer to our Family Time and Special Leave policies in these instances.

2. Definitions

Who is a carer?

In line with the NHS England definition, 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 problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.

You are eligible to apply for carers' leave regardless of your length of service, if you meet the required definition of a carer set out above. The leave can only be taken for dependants for whom you have a caring responsibility. You may meet the definition of a carer on a permanent or temporary basis.

Colleagues with day-to-day childcare responsibilities that fall outside of this definition should refer to the Family Time or Special Leave policies.

The activities that colleagues with caring responsibilities undertake can be wide ranging, including, but not limited to:

- help with personal care
- help with mobility
- managing medication
- practical household tasks
- emotional support
- attending medical appointments

- help with financial matters or paperwork

Often, such caring responsibilities would have some impact on the colleague's working life.

If you are unsure whether you or a member of your team is an unpaid carer, we have further examples listed in appendix 2 for you to refer to.

Who is a dependant?

For the purposes of this policy, a dependant will typically be a relative, spouse, partner or friend who may or may not live with the colleague at the same address. If the dependant is a child, for the purpose of this policy, they would either have a disability or long-term illness that impacts on their day-to-day life even after they reach their 18th birthday.

3. Time off

There are various situations that may lead to unpaid carers requiring time off. These include but are not limited to:

- A disruption or unforeseeable breakdown in normal care arrangements
- Accompaniment of the dependant for a medical appointment
- Attendance at appointments concerning the welfare and care of the dependant
- End of life and the death of a dependant
- If a dependant falls ill or is involved in an accident
- To make longer-term arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured (but not to provide long-term care yourself) e.g., setting up a care package with a local authority, transition into a care home
- Providing emotional and / or practical support to a dependent who is particularly vulnerable, physically or mentally.

Short term carer's leave

Colleagues can request up to 5 days' leave in a rolling 12-month period. The first 2 days will be paid and the remaining 3 days will be unpaid. The 5 days can be used as consecutive days, half days or may be broken down into hours over the 12-month period. It will not affect your annual or sick leave provisions and you are not required to exhaust your annual leave before carers' leave is granted.

This type of leave might be helpful if someone you care for has an unexpected medical appointment or someone else who was providing caring duties is unavailable at short notice and you need to leave work without being able to give much warning. Alternatively, you may request this leave for planned appointments that cannot be arranged outside of your working hours.

Carers' leave can be requested in addition to other leave available that may be applicable to time off for caring for dependants or emergencies.

Long term carers' leave

If you find yourself in a situation where you need to have a longer period of time away from work to care for your family member or dependant, you could consider taking long term carers' leave. This is for a period of up to 9 months, with the option of increasing this to up to 12 months.

This is unpaid time off and should be discussed and agreed with your line manager. Wherever you can, you should give as much notice of your plan to take this time as possible however, we understand that if an emergency situation has driven your need to take the time, you may need to request this at fairly short notice.

Pensions and service implications of long-term carers' leave: The period of unpaid leave will not be pensionable and the period will be counted as suspended membership. The period of unpaid leave will be treated as continuous service in the pension scheme, but pensionable service will not accrue. For colleagues in the USS an additional contribution can be made before the leave starts to maintain cover for death in service or ill-health retirement. For the RBP, there is no need to make additional contributions for death in service or ill-health retirement cover.

There may be the odd occasion where for operational reasons your line manager cannot agree to the exact leave you have requested, and we may have to discuss further with you. We will do our best to work with you.

When you return from long term carers' leave, and the University is not able, for good business reasons, to offer you the same job you had before carers' leave, we will offer you a similar job. A similar job means one at the same level with terms and conditions just as favourable as those for the job you had before carers' leave. Naturally, there will be discussion with you about this in good time before your return and we will do our best to confirm all this with you before you come back to work.

Upon return, you may also apply for the Returners' Support Programme. This Programme offers funded support (of up to £10k) to eligible colleagues who are returning to work following extended leave in order to maintain career development. Areas of support that can be accessed include the appointment of a fixed term technician, returners' coaching or enabling attendance at a training course/conference. However, this is a flexible policy which, within reason, can be tailored to individual circumstances. You can find out more through our Returners' Support Programme policy or by speaking to your RSP Co-ordinator or Faculty EDI Officer.

Working Flexibly

We understand that situations may arise that mean you need to make short term changes to your working pattern to allow you to fulfil your caring responsibilities. In this circumstance, you should talk to your line manager to make these arrangements. We will try to be as flexible as we can be depending on the nature of your role, your individual caring circumstances and the needs of the business.

Potential options could include:

- A temporary change to your working hours
- A temporary change in work location
- A temporary reduction in working hours each day
- A temporary reduction in the number of days worked each week

We encourage you to speak to your line manager as soon as possible to discuss what could potentially work for you.

If you need to make a long-term or permanent change to your normal contracted hours/days, then please talk to your line manager. An option for all colleagues is to submit a formal flexible working request, giving you the ability to request a contractual change to your hours to support your caring responsibilities. For more information on this, please see the Flexible Working Policy.

Eligibility

All colleagues regardless of contract or length of service are eligible for the provisions within this policy. To enable us to administer and record any leave or temporary flexible working arrangements correctly and to support you in the best possible way, we ask that you inform your Line Manager of your caring responsibilities and make use of the Carer's Passport (as detailed below).

Pensions and Service Implications

Any period of unpaid leave will not be pensionable and the period will be counted as suspended membership. The period of unpaid leave will be treated as continuous service in

the scheme but pensionable service will not accrue.

For colleagues in the USS an additional contribution can be made before the leave starts to maintain cover for death in service or ill-health retirement. For the RBP there is no need to make additional contributions for death in service or ill-health retirement cover.

4. Carers Support

Carer's Passport

If you are a carer, the passport is designed to keep a record of your caring responsibilities and the agreements you've made with your line manager about what this means for work. It's your document and it's yours to share with a new line manager if you move or if your line manager changes.

The passport should be kept as up to date as possible; recording the agreements made does not mean that they will never need to change depending on your own personal circumstances and the changing operational needs of your work area.

Any information you share with your line manager will be kept confidential unless you give your permission for this to be shared with others. The Carer's Passport is an optional tool and it's really up to you to use if you feel it would be beneficial. You can find a copy of a Carer's Passport in appendix 1.

Digital Resource for Carers (DRC)

This digital platform is designed to support carers with a range of information and resources, available at anytime and from anywhere, including:

- Carers' Rights and guidance on balancing work and caring.
- Access to 'Jointly', Carers UK's *Care co-ordination App*
- Information on specific health conditions and issues e.g. Dementia, Cancer, Autism, Stroke

Visit: www.carersdigital.org

Sign in using your User ID (normally your University email address)

Enter Newcastle University's Unique Access Code is: **DGTL1834**

5. Associated provisions

As well as this Carers' policy, we also have a range of other policies in place to provide practical support to colleagues to help maintain an effective work-life balance. This includes:

- Special leave policy
- Family time policy
- Career break scheme

Being a carer can be demanding especially as you balance caring with work commitments. To help you work through stressful issues or situations that you may come across whilst being a carer, you can call Health Assured, our employee assistance programme (EAP). This is a confidential, personal support service, delivered by experts at Health Assured, our partners in Health and Wellbeing, whose key objectives are to ensure that people receive support and guidance that will help them to develop positive ways forward, and reduce the likelihood of their own wellbeing deteriorating. The EAP is free and easy to access and is available online or on the telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

6. Associated documents

- [Parental leave policy](#)
- [Special leave policy](#)
- [Returners support programme](#)
- [Flexible working policy](#)
- [Career break scheme](#)

- [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#)

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Appendix 1: Carer's Passport

Your carer's passport is designed to support discussions between you and your line manager to enable an open chat about your caring responsibilities and what we can do at work to support you. Everyone involved in the conversation should be willing to consider all possible options that will deliver a happy compromise for you and the University.

This conversation and document will remain confidential between you and your line manager unless you want to share this more widely. This is your document and it's yours to share with a new line manager if you move or if your line manager changes. For our records and with your consent, we will also keep a copy on your SAP file for future reference.

You should work with your line manager to keep your passport as up to date as possible; remember, recording the agreements doesn't mean they will never need to change to either reflect your own circumstances and the changing operational needs at work.

Date of meeting:

Preparation Guide

In order to get the most out of your meeting it might be a good idea to think about the following areas and what you would like to discuss:

- Current caring responsibilities
- How do your caring responsibilities impact on work?
- How does work impact on your caring responsibilities?
- What support is already in place?
- What additional support would be helpful?
- Thoughts on contingency plans at work if you were to have an emergency

Discussion Notes

Caring responsibilities

How can we help?

Agreed actions and next review date

Carer's Leave Agreed:
(Please include the full date (including the year) and the number of hours taken for short term leave)

Colleague signature:

Line manager signature:

Appendix 2: Further examples of caring responsibilities

If you are unsure whether you or a member of your team is an unpaid carer, we have provided a list of tasks as examples of the type of support a carer may be involved with

- Driving them to the GP, hospital or other medical appointments
- Arrange for or prepare meals
- Grocery shopping
- Providing personal care (help with bathing, dressing, feeding etc.)
- Providing practical help (help with moving around, getting into bed, up and down the stairs, etc.)
- Dealing with their finance e.g. banking money, paying bills, collecting benefits, managing income and/or spending money
- Arranging various services for a long-distance friend or relative
- Housekeeping chores (e.g. cleaning, laundry, cooking etc.)
- Assisting with medications (set-up, dosing, reminders, injecting)
- Collecting prescription and receiving pharmaceutical advice on behalf of 'cared for'.
- Liaising with Health and Social Care professionals.
- Take a child/or children to school because a responsible adult is physically or mentally unable to
- Take responsibility of a child/children because a responsible adult is physically or mentally unable to do so
- Keep an eye on the person you care for to make sure they are alright.
- Interpret, sign or use another communication system for the person you care for
- Providing emotional support