



Supporting Carers at Work Policy

People and Culture

We recognise that some members of staff have caring responsibilities and there may be times when they require time off work to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need. We aim to support members of staff with caring responsibilities to 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 and the Carer's Leave Act (2023).

Every carer's needs are different - and they may change over the period of care. 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. Equally, the University needs to consider how to meet the business needs which may also change during this time.

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 more than 1 in 7 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:

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

What do we mean by a carer?

A carer is responsible for providing or arranging care for a relative or dependant with a long-term care need and who may not be living with the staff member. This could be a near relative* (or a close friend), who can't manage without their support. This unpaid Carer's Leave is for planned and foreseen caring commitments to care for relatives or friends who are older, disabled or seriously ill who are unable to care for themselves.

This unpaid leave is in addition to leave for unforeseen (i.e. emergency) caring situations which is covered by the statutory right to unpaid time off in emergencies and as detailed in our Dependant Leave policy.

*By a 'near relative', we include 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.

A carer is anyone with caring responsibilities who provides care, assistance and support to any other individual who may be seriously ill or unable to care for themselves. Carers might find it difficult to distinguish their caring role from the personal relationship they have with the individual they are caring for. Therefore, some people may not immediately identify themselves as a carer. The activities that carers undertake are wide ranging, including but not limited to:

- help with personal care.
- help with mobility.
- managing medication.
- practical household tasks.
- emotional support; and
- help with financial matters or administration.

This statutory right to unpaid carer's leave applies to a wide range of caring situations, but excludes general childcare, except where your child meets the definition of a dependant with a long-term care need. Our family friendly policies can be found on the University's intranet: [Family Friendly policies](#).

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.

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 manager and local Business Partner – People and Culture as a first step. Together, they will be able to offer support and guidance using the policies and guidance outlined here.

How much time off is allowed?

Under the new Carer's Leave Act (2023), there is a flexible entitlement to one week's unpaid leave (pro-rated for part-time members of staff) during any period of 12 months for members of staff who are providing or arranging care for a relative or dependant with a long-term care need. This is available from the first day of their employment and allows members of staff to take the leave flexibly, as half or full days, for planned and foreseen caring commitments. If you are caring for more than one dependant, you don't have a separate entitlement to carer's leave for each dependant.

Requesting Carer's Leave

We ask that you give as much notice as possible when requesting carer's leave so that we can plan for your absence. In any event, you must give notice in advance that is either twice the number of working days that you wish to take as carer's leave, or three days, whichever is earlier. Whilst managers may not refuse a request for carer's leave, they will need to balance requests with business requirements and can postpone the requested period of leave for up to one month if they reasonably consider that business operations would otherwise be unduly disrupted. When postponing a requested period of carer's leave, a manager should first discuss the situation with the staff member and within seven days of receiving the request, will confirm in writing to the staff member the reasons for the postponement and the dates on which the leave can be taken instead. Therefore, individuals and their manager may need to agree when the best time is for the individual to take carer's leave within this timeframe. Carer's Leave must be requested and recorded on Agresso via the absence request section.

The above unpaid leave is in addition to unpaid leave for unforeseen (i.e. emergency) caring situations, which is covered by the statutory right to unpaid time off in emergencies for dependants.

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.

Members of staff taking this unpaid leave have the same protections that are associated with other forms of family-related leave, meaning they will be protected from dismissal or any detriment because of having taken time off.

Although employers may not refuse a request, they are able to postpone an individual taking Carer's Leave for up to one month so long as doing so is 'reasonable'. See the Requesting Carer's Leave section above for further details,

In addition to or as part of discussing and granting the unpaid leave, managers may wish to consider:

- setting up a regular one to one meeting, 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 dependant's 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 dependant 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 the member of staff 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. All team members should be aware that anyone could take on caring responsibilities at any time. 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 area, 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. Consult with your Business Partner – People and Culture if you need further advice. Any agreed leave should be recorded on the Agresso system under the appropriate category.

Other policies to support carers

This section sets out the range of policies the University has in place to support staff with caring responsibilities. If you are required to look after a child or make arrangements for the good of a child, please refer to our separate [Parental Leave scheme](#).

In circumstances where there is an emergency or urgent requirement to take unpaid leave, please refer to [Dependant Leave](#).

These policies can be found on the University's intranet: [Family Friendly policies](#).

Members of staff may be granted some paid compassionate leave if a member of their immediate family (i.e. parents, spouse/partner, children, siblings) suffers from a sudden severe illness or dies. For further details on Compassionate leave, please refer to the ['Leave in Special Circumstances' policy](#).

If further information is required, your Business Partner - People and Culture 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 - 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. For further information see our [Flexible Working Policy and Procedure](#).

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. Members of staff may be granted some paid compassionate leave if a member of their immediate family (i.e. parents, spouse/partner, children, siblings) suffers from a sudden severe illness or dies. For further details on Compassionate leave, please refer to the ['Leave in Special Circumstances' policy](#).

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

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 Business Partner – People and Culture who can offer support and make a referral to Occupational Health Services if appropriate.

Additional Support

Carers have access to support, advice and assistance, which includes our:

- [Cranfield Parents and Carers' Network](#)
- [Employee Assistance Programme](#). 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.

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

Cranfield University is a member of [Carers UK](#). This organisation provides expert advice, information and support on all aspects of caring, with both a telephone advice and support service and an online portal.

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](#).

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