SCHOOL CARERS POLICY

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

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If you have any feedback on how we might improve our HR policies and guidance please email ERTeam@cardiff.gov.uk with your suggestion

Os oes gennych chi unrhyw adborth ar sut y gallem wella ein polisïau a'n canllawiau Adnoddau Dynol anfonwch e-bost at TimER@caerdydd.gov.uk gyda'ch awgrym

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

POLICY STATEMENT

1.1 Some people don't think of themselves as carers, but caring will most likely affect us all at some point in our lives. As a result, more people will be combining work and caring. The Council/Governing Body is aware that many employees have caring responsibilities, and that carers constitute a significant part of its workforce. The Governing Body is committed to finding ways to assist employees to manage their work alongside their caring responsibilities.

1.2 The Council has umbrella membership with Employers for Carers (EfC) which gives Headteachers and staff with employee wellbeing responsibilities, and small and medium-sized businesses with fewer than 250 employees, the opportunity to engage and gain free access to EfC resources through the Council. **To create your own account visit efcdigital.org and use our membership code #EFC2026.**

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of this policy are to:

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, employee support and developing further the scope of this document.

1.5 Increase awareness of managers and all employees to the needs of carers to ensure a sympathetic response to caring responsibilities/needs.

1.6 Work in partnership with employees in exploring all viable options to enable them to remain effective workers.

1.7 Help to remove the feeling of isolation and lack of support often experienced by carers.

SCOPE OF THE POLICY

1.8 This policy applies to all employees of the school, irrespective of status and/or grade, age, disability, gender reassignment / affirmation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity (including same sex), race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and Welsh language. It does not apply to centrally employed staff who are covered by the corporate policy.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1.9 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.

1.10 Carers can be any gender identity and this policy is designed to apply equally to both binary and non-binary employees.

1.11 Employees will in no way be discriminated against on the grounds of their caring responsibilities and the principles of the Council's/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.

1.12 Employees are not obliged to disclose to their Headteachers that they are caring for someone but are encouraged to do so in order to benefit from the support available from the Council.

1.13 This policy will be reviewed in the light of ongoing operational experience or any subsequent legislative changes.

DEFINITION - WHO IS A CARER?

1.14 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 problems 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. In terms of supporting employees in the workplace, Employers for Carers recommend a broader definition, for example: 'carers support family members, partners or friends in need of help because they are disabled, older or seriously ill'.

1.15 Carers in the school may be supporting a seriously ill or disabled child, young adult or older family member, partner or friend.

SECTION 2 - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and Responsibilities

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

Employee Responsibilities

22 All Council employees are responsible to:

- Recognise that the Headteacher will need to be aware of issues with which an employee is coping.
- Recognise that colleagues can be very supportive, and it may help to discuss caring commitments with colleagues at work.
- 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.
- Keep their carers passport (see Section 5) up to date should they choose to have one.

Manager Responsibilities

23 In addition to their responsibilities as employees, managers are also responsible 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 to fulfil their potential in work and to meet their caring responsibilities.
- Give sympathetic consideration to requests for support from employees with caring responsibilities, with due regard to issues of confidentiality and based on a shared understanding of the situation and the impact it is having.
- Arrange a confidential one-to-one meeting with the employee to discuss the carers passport if an employee chooses to have one.

- Ensure reasonable adjustments are considered for disabled employees and, where possible, for employees who are carers.

- Deal with requests in a confidential manner.

SECTION 3 – CARERS RIGHTS

- **The right to request flexible working** (a day one employment right)
- **The right to up to 18 weeks unpaid leave for dependents** (Employment Rights Act 1996)
- **The right to time off in emergencies** (reasonable time off)
- **Parental leave** (one year's continuous service for a child under 18)
- **Protection from Discrimination** (Equality Act 2010)
- **The right to a week of unpaid leave (Carer's Leave Act 2023)**

SECTION 4 – SUPPORT OPTIONS

WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR CARERS?

4.1. 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 including special leave provisions (subject to terms and conditions of employment)
- Health and wellbeing directory
- Supporting carers returning to work
- Employee assistance programme with 24/7 access
- Vivup telephone and online services
- The employee counselling service and Education Support Partnership
- Stress management courses
- Support provided for carers through adult services and children's services including a carer's assessment
- Carers Network
- Carers Network SharePoint page
- Carers passport
- Signposting for further information including Carers Rights Day
- Jointly App

42 Often, caring can be a highly stressful and emotionally draining experience. Employees may be faced with traumatic, life-changing crises, sometimes overnight - if a loved one is suddenly taken ill or has a serious accident, for example. Or they may be looking after someone with a terminal illness for many months or caring for an elderly parent. In these

circumstances managers will need to act with sensitivity as well as flexibility. For example, recognise that employees may sometimes need to make or receive private phone calls relating to their dependents.

FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS

Flexible Working Policy

4.3 The purpose of the **school flexible working** policy is to formalise the statutory 'right to request' a change to working hours or place of work in order to work flexibly for all employees. Under provisions set out in the Employment Rights (Flexible Working) Act 2023, all employees will have the right to request flexible working from day one of a new job. The decision to allow flexible working must take into account the school's needs. (Examples of flexible working can include flexibility with start, finish and break times, part time working, compressed working week, term time working, post share or change to normal days worked).

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
- employees will be able to make two flexible working requests 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)

4.4 A request for flexible working may also be used for temporary changes to working patterns. If the employee is only looking for an informal flexible working change for a short period, for instance following a bereavement, then the Headteacher/Governing Body may consider allowing a temporary change e.g. flexibility with start, finish and break times, reduced working hours (salary adjusted to reflect new arrangement), compressed working patterns. The employee could then revert to their original employment contract after the agreed period.

LEAVE OPTIONS

4.5 In addition to annual leave (where appropriate), employees can also request special leave within the School's Attendance and Wellbeing Policy, time off for dependents, parental leave and sabbatical leave policies.

Special Leave

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

4.7 The provision of special leave is held within the **Leave Policy**:

- 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 reasonable time off for occasions such as bereavement, domestic/personal emergencies, medical appointments, public duties, training etc.
- will normally override policies such as parental leave and time off for dependents where the leave could also be approved under those policies.

Time Off for Dependents

4.8 The purpose of this right is to allow all employees to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to deal with unexpected situations involving a dependent and to make any necessary longer-term arrangements.

The policy:

- defines "a dependent" 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

4.9 The purpose is to allow someone with parental responsibility (as defined on https://www.gov.uk/) to take unpaid time off work to look after a child or make arrangements for a child's welfare.

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, shared parental leave, maternity support leave, adoption leave, special leave or career breaks.
- the leave is an individual right and cannot be transferred to someone else.

Carer's Leave

4.10 This leave is available to employees who have a dependent with a long-term care need.

- Up to one week of unpaid leave can be taken in any 12-month period.
- Requests can be in consecutive, or non-consecutive, half days or full days.

4.11 Further information can be found in the Leave Policy.

Sabbatical Leave

4.12 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.

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
- the employee's contract of employment is maintained throughout the period of leave. Employees should however be aware that due to the pace of change and the current economic challenges faced by the Council/School a return to the same post may not always be feasible. If it is not possible for the school to return the employee to the same post at the end of the sabbatical leave period, the school will use its best endeavours to redeploy the employee to a similar post in the school in line with the School Redeployment and Redundancy Policy and Procedure.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

4.13 As part of the Council's/school's ongoing commitment to develop a health and well-being strategy, employee benefits are continuously added as part of the Corporate Health Standard. This is an important award that recognises quality health and well-being in the workplace. More information about the employee benefits can be found on the Council's intranet information page - **Health & Wellbeing**.

4.14 The Council has developed a Health and Wellbeing Directory which provides one stop shop of support services and information on a wide range of health and wellbeing topics. The Health and Wellbeing Directory can be found on HR People Services, A-Z intranet page.

SUPPORTING CARERS ON RETURN TO WORK

4.15 Employees could be going through a particularly distressing time, may need a block of time off and will need to be supported to return to the workplace if/when their caring role comes to an end.

4.16 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. This is to keep them informed of any workplace developments or any other information the employee may need to ensure they still feel part of the team. This will ensure that employees do not begin to feel isolated and makes the return to work easier.

4.17 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 skills or self-confidence and need work related training or retraining. This should be addressed by the carer and Headteacher on or prior to their return to work.

4.18 Training and development needs can be identified by the Headteacher through the School's Performance Review Process and/or through discussions.

4.19 Employees can also be supported on their return by carrying out a training needs assessment that can be conducted before they return to work.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

4.20 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 the support available.

Vivup Telephone and Information

4.21 Vivup is open to all employees, including school-based staff and provides impartial confidential, telephone advice and support 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for any personal or work related issues. The telephone number for the Vivup team is 0800 023 9387. Further details - Vivup Employee Assistance Programme (sharepoint.com).

4.22 The service is free for employees to access whenever they need it. Employees do not need to ask permission from their manager before

contacting Vivup.

4.23 Through Vivup employees can access a number of services from Vivup advisors to help employees find practical ways forward when they feel overwhelmed by problems. Sometimes having the information to make a sensible plan, and some support in doing so, is all it takes to feel better.

4.24 Vivup advisors are highly trained to quickly find what employees need and help them get back in control of their life. Common subjects include;

- **Family and Personal:** relationships, divorce, child support, domestic violence, childcare, eldercare, community care, changing a name,
- **Debt:** credit, debt, banks, loans, consolidation,
- **Workplace:** bullying and harassment, maternity rights/pay, sick pay, health and safety at work.

Vivup On Line
Whatever mental health, physical, financial or personal issue you are facing, access expert help and support for life's ups and downs, 24/7, 365 days a year. You can use this service as many or as few times as you like, there's no limit on the support you can receive. Employee Assistance Programme

The Employee Counselling Service

4.25 **The Employee Counselling Service** (ECS) offers free and confidential counselling to anyone who is employed by the Council.

4.26 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.

4.27 The Employee Counselling Service is confidential. No one will be told that an employee has been in contact: Headteacher, colleagues nor HR People Services have to know.

4.28 Employees can access the Employee Counselling Service between 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday (answer phone at all other times). The telephone number is 02920 788500.

Education Support Partnership

4.29 Education Support Partnership is the UK's only charity providing free confidential mental health and wellbeing support services to all education staff. Further information is available on Education Support, supporting teachers and education staff or 08000 562 561.

Community Hubs

4.30 Sometimes getting the right advice at the right time is all that employees

need. The Council's Community Hubs bring together the work of the Council and other agencies under one roof, allowing customers to use our services more quickly and conveniently than ever before. Further information is available from **https://www.cardiff.gov.uk/ENG/resident/hubs-and-libraries/Pages/default.aspx** or call C2C on **029 20872087**.

Managing Stress

4.31 The Council currently provides stress awareness courses and managing stress courses.

For more information about courses:

Contact Cardiff Council Academy team on email: **cardiffacademy@cardiff.gov.uk**.

SUPPORT FOR CARERS

4.32 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. For more information on what may be available to you contact the social services department of your local authority where the person you care for lives. If the person you care for lives in Cardiff, for adults you can contact Independent Living Services on **Independent Living Services** or if you care for a person someone under 18 years old contact Children Services on **Children's Services**.

4.33 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:

Carers Assessment - **Carers assessment (cardiff.gov.uk)**

CARERS NETWORK

4.34 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.

4.35 The Council and the Governing Body recognise the importance of this to its employees who are carers, to have the opportunity to share information, knowledge and experience with other carers. To this end the Council has launched the Carers Network, which is one of five Employee

Equality Networks for this purpose. To join the Carers Network please email: **carersnetwork@cardiff.gov.uk.**

4.36 It is proposed that employees who are carers identify themselves in order to 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 to share personal experiences in a safe and confidential setting. The Governing Body may consider allowing members to attend / participate during working hours.

4.37 The Carers Network can take the form of informal meetings.

4.38 The Carers Network may choose to invite a nominated member of HR People Services to attend the meetings on a regular basis or on an ad hoc basis to provide information on any changes, which may be relevant, or to give advice on particular issues. In addition, if an employee wishes to raise an issue on a private basis, they can post views or concerns anonymously.

4.39 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.

SECTION 5 – CARERS' PASSPORT

5.1 The Carers' Passport has been developed to help and support employees who have specific caring responsibilities. Where adjustments to working arrangements have been agreed the passport will provide a record which can be reviewed if the employee changes roles or their caring circumstances change.

5.2 The purpose of the passport is to enable a carer and their Headteacher to hold a supportive conversation and document the flexibilities needed to support the carer in combining caring and work. The aim is to minimise the need to re-negotiate these flexibilities every time an employee moves post, moves between departments or is assigned a new manager. This document belongs to the employee and their Headteacher should have a copy. This is designed to be a living document to be reviewed every year in response to any changes in the nature or impact of the caring responsibilities.

5.3 When a passport is reviewed (either an action or the passport overall), a manager changes, or an employee moves to a new role, the passport does not guarantee that the previously agreed arrangements will remain in place.

5.4 Completion of the Carers Passport is voluntary and the employee retains ownership of the form. The school recognises that employees may find it difficult to explain their personal circumstances, issues and challenges. therefore, it is not a requirement to do so.

Confidential Meeting

5.5 Once the form is completed by the employee they should give a copy to their Headteacher who will arrange a confidential one-to-one meeting to discuss the details. The meeting will give both parties the opportunity to discuss the issues identified and talk through the following questions (not an extensive list).

- What are your caring responsibilities?
- How do they affect your work?
- What impact does work have on your caring responsibilities?
- Do you already receive any support in work to help combine caring with work?
- Do you need to apply for flexible working to continue your caring responsibilities?
- How would you prefer to communicate with your manager if you are unable to come to work?
- What would help ensure that the needs of the team/school continue to be met?
- Do you need any support from the Employee Assistance Programme, Occupational Health or external organisations?
- Do you need any equipment from the school to support your combined role e.g. a mobile phone or laptop?
- How do you expect your caring responsibilities to change in the future?

5.6 It is up to employees to decide how much detail to share, it is important that employees give their Headteacher enough information for them to understand the issues and challenges faced by the employee.

5.7 Any actions agreed and a review date should be entered on the passport and a copy given to the Headteacher. Employees will need to follow relevant school procedures i.e. school flexible working policy for formal requests.

Carers Passport

(to be completed by the employee)

Employee Name:	**Name of Manager:**

Overview of your caring responsibilities

This section should include:

- A summary of your caring responsibilities
- The impact this has on your working life
- Any further information that may help your Headteacher/manager understand the impact your caring responsibilities have on you and your work.

Overview of your role and team:

Flexibilities which would be helpful:

This section deals with flexibilities specific to your current job which would help you combine caring and work. These are intended to inform your discussion with your Headteacher/manager.

Flexibilities agreed between you and your manager:

This section deals with flexibilities specific to your current job which would help you combine your caring responsibilities and work commitments. Set out agreed actions with dates for implementation. Reviews should take place every 12 months.

Action Agreed	Date of Implementation	Date to Review Action

Any other actions agreed at the meeting

This section might include for example contacting Vivup or Employee Counselling Service, Carers Assessment or signposting services.

I consent to my manager keeping a copy of the passport It is important to remember that the passport belongs to the employee involved and is confidential. Should the Headteacher/manager or employee move to another post, the Headteacher/manager should not pass the form to the next manager without permission of the employee concerned. Only with the employee's consent should a copy be saved in the employee's DigiGov file.	
Employee Signature:	**Date:**
Headteacher/Manager Signature:	**Date:**
Date of Next Review Meeting:	

SECTION 6 - USEFUL CONTACTS

Carers Wales (part of Carers UK)
Unit 5, Ynys Bridge Court
Cardiff
Tel: 029 2081 1370
Email: info@carerswales.org
Wales | Carers Wales

The All Wales Forum
21 Cardiff Road
Taffs Well
Cardiff, CF15 7RB
Tel: 029 2081 1120
Home - All Wales Forum

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