

University of Aberdeen

Guidance for Carers Leave February 2024

1. Introduction

This guidance sets out the statutory right of staff to carer's leave to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need, and other support that we offer to combine work with care.

We recognise the challenges that carers face while trying to balance the demands of caring, work, and looking after their own health. The University is committed to helping to ensure that the health and wellbeing of staff with caring responsibilities is looked after.

2. Being a carer

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, be it a relationship with a spouse, civil partner, child, parent, or friend. Therefore, some staff 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.

3. Requesting support

We recognise that caring can be unpredictable and emotionally upsetting. A staff member may acquire caring responsibilities overnight or caring responsibilities may develop over time.

We realise that caring is a subject that not everyone finds it easy to talk about. However, we urge you to be as open as possible about any particular issues that you are experiencing to ensure that you are provided with the right level of support.

You are encouraged to speak to your line manager about your caring responsibilities to explore how we can help you with any challenges that you are facing. You can also speak to your HR Adviser or union representative.

Any information disclosed by you during discussions with your line manager or HR will be treated sensitively and in strict confidence.

4. Entitlement to carer's leave

Whatever your length of service, you have a statutory right to take carer's leave to provide or arrange care for a dependant if they have a long-term care need.

In the context of statutory carer's leave, a dependant means:

- your spouse, civil partner, child or parent.
- any person who lives in the same household as you (other than as a lodger, tenant, boarder or employee); or
- any other person who would reasonably rely on you to provide or arrange care.

A dependant has a long-term care need if they:

- have an illness or injury (whether physical or mental) that requires, or is likely to require, care for more than three months.
- have a condition that amounts to a disability under the Equality Act 2010; or
- require care for a reason connected to their old age.

This statutory right to carer's leave applies to a wide range of caring situations, but excludes general childcare, except where the child meets the definition of a dependant with a long-term care need.

5. Amount of carer's leave you can take

The amount of carer's leave that you can take is up to one week in any 12-month rolling period.

A week of carer's leave is the same duration as your normal working week, meaning that a full-time employee is entitled to five days' carer's leave in any 12-month rolling period. If you work four days per week, you will be entitled to four days of carer's leave in any 12-month rolling period, and so on.

You can take the leave in one continuous block, as individual days, or as half days.

If you are caring for more than one dependant, you do not have a separate entitlement to carer's leave for each dependant.

6. Notice to take carer's leave

If you need to take carer's leave, you should submit your notice using the Form available here: <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/media/site/staffnet/documents/carers-leave-application-form.pdf>. This form contains a declaration that will need to be signed by you.

Staff do not need to give evidence of their dependant's care needs.

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 advance notice that is either twice the number of working days that you wish to take as carer's leave, or three days, whichever is earlier.

All carer's leave must be approved in advance by your line manager.

7. Pay during carer's leave

You do not have a statutory right to be paid during carer's leave. Therefore, any leave taken as carer's leave is unpaid.

8. Postponing your carer's leave

While every effort will be made to meet your request, we may postpone a period of carer's leave if we consider that your absence will disrupt the operation of the organisation.

If a decision is taken to postpone your leave, your line manager will consult with you to find an alternative leave period within one month of the carer's leave period originally requested.

We will write to you within seven days of receiving your notice, clarifying the reason for the postponement and the revised dates on which the carer's leave can be taken.

9. Cancelling your carer's leave

You can cancel your carer's leave and take it at a different time as long as you let your line manager know before your leave has started.

You cannot cancel any carer's leave that has already begun.

10. Returning to work after carer's leave

Following your carer's leave, you have the right to resume working in the same job as before on terms and conditions that are no less favourable than the terms that would have applied had you not been absent. Your continuity of employment is not affected.

11. Other types of leave

The statutory right to carer's leave is intended to be for planned and foreseen caring commitments. If you need to take time off to manage an unexpected or sudden problems relating to a dependant and make any necessary longer-term caring arrangements, please see the Arrangements for Special Leave Policy (insert link).

12. Requesting flexible working

We realise that flexible working can help navigate the challenges of caring while also working. For further information please refer to the Flexible Working Procedure.

13. Other support

How we support a staff member with caring responsibilities will vary depending on their specific needs and individual circumstances. Support that we may be able to offer include:

- access to a parents and carers network
- (add in anything else) EAP

14. External sources of help

There are various organisations that provide help and support to carers, including:

- [Carers UK](#), which provides help and advice for carers on employment rights, benefits and tax credits, assessments, and other practical matters for carers
- The [NHS website](#), which provides a wealth of information and advice for carers
- [Age UK](#) and [Independent Age](#), which offer information and support to anyone providing informal unpaid care to an older person through a range of local services;
- [Contact a Family](#), which provides support, advice and information to families with disabled children; and
- [Carers Trust](#), which works with other organisations to provide access for carers to breaks, information, advice, education, training and employment opportunities.