

Supporting staff who are unpaid Carers Policy

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Summary of document:

This policy sets out a vision for providing a supportive working environment for Hywel Dda University Health Board staff who are looking after a family member or friend in their personal lives as unpaid carers.

Scope:

This Carers policy is for all employees under a contract of employment with the Health Board who have caring responsibilities fitting the definition of an unpaid carer in the section [‘identification of a carer’](#)

To be read in conjunction with:

[126 Work/Life Balance - Flexible Working Policy](#) – opens in a new tab

[131 Flexi Time Policy and Procedure](#) – opens in a new tab

[582 Term Time Working Policy](#) – opens in a new tab
[122 All Wales Special Leave Policy](#) – opens in a new tab
[245 Employment Break Scheme](#) – opens in a new tab
[1085 Parental Leave](#) – opens in a new tab
[129 Time Off For Medical/Dental Appointments During Normal Working Hours Policy](#)– opens in a new tab
[768 All Wales Managing Attendance at Work Policy](#) – opens in a new tab
[133 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) – opens in a new tab
[340 Staff Psychological Wellbeing Policy](#) – opens in a new tab
[109 Time off in Lieu Procedure](#) – opens in a new tab
[172 Confidentiality Policy](#) – opens in a new tab
[Annual Leave Purchase Scheme](#) – opens in a new tab

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[Patient Information Library](#)

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Glossary of terms

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Introduction

The Health Board is committed to creating an environment that supports employees with caring responsibilities, assisting them to manage their work/life balance whilst meeting the needs of our organisation. Our Carers Policy aligns with the Health Board's values which seek to create an organisational culture which allows staff to be open about their unpaid caring responsibilities and feel respected and supported.

The three statements below provide a definition of an unpaid carer to make clear the different circumstances of caring roles:

A Carer is someone who looks after a relative, friend or neighbour who is ill, frail, disabled, has a mental health concern or problematic substance use and who could not manage without that help.

A Young Carer is someone under 18 whose life is restricted because of the need to take responsibility for a family member due to issues as above.

A parent carer is someone who looks after their child, who would struggle to manage without their help, due to illness, physical disability, learning disability or who has a mental health concern or substance misuse problem.

The care they provide is **unpaid**.

This policy also contributes to our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 as well as the Social Services and Well-being (Wales Act) 2014 and supports our commitment to the national Employers for Carers Scheme. It also adheres to the Carer's Leave Act 2023.

Policy Statement

This policy sets out a vision for providing a supportive working environment for Hywel Dda University Health Board staff who are looking after a family member or friend in their personal lives as unpaid carers. Aligns with statutory right to time off for dependants with long term care needs and is a Day One employment right for all employees.

Scope

This Carers policy is for all employees under a contract of employment with the Health Board who have caring responsibilities fitting the definition of an unpaid carer in the section ['identification of a carer'](#) Carer's Leave is designed to support employees who need to 'provide or arrange non-emergency care' for a dependant.

The policy provides:

- Guidance for managers on how to support staff with caring responsibilities;
- Information for staff on how to seek support from the Health Board and external services to help them with their caring responsibilities.

Aim

The aim of this policy is to:

- Support employees to remain in work and fulfil their career potential whilst continuing with unpaid caring responsibilities.
- Outline the range of existing policies and employee support which can be accessed by employees with caring responsibilities.
- Provide guidance to managers about the needs of carers to promote a supportive response to unpaid caring responsibilities/needs identified by employees.
- Improve the employee experience of balancing employment and caring responsibilities.
- Contribute to increased staff retention.

Objectives

The Health Board is committed to supporting unpaid carers in accordance with the following aims:

- **Identification as an unpaid Carer:** Proactively encourage individuals with caring responsibilities to identify themselves as an unpaid carer to their line manager.
- **Recognition of unpaid Carers:** The valuable role that unpaid carers play in our families and communities are recognised and valued by all staff working in the Health Board.
- **Support for unpaid Carers:** Where a member of staff has identified themselves as an unpaid carer, the line manager will raise awareness of the employment support available to them. Line managers will also be proactive in advising staff about how they can access information, advice and assistance from external support agencies relevant to the employees caring needs.
- **No unfair treatment:** Staff who have identified themselves as an unpaid carer and/or requested support in accordance with this policy will not be treated unfairly or be disadvantaged as a result. Staff will be protected from detriment and dismissal as a result of seeking or taking carer's leave.
- **Confidentiality:** A staff member's identification as a carer and any support requested will be disclosed no wider than is necessary, to ensure the effective day-to-day running of Health Board business.

Identification as a Carer

It is estimated that 1 in 7 unpaid carers are in employment and the number of unpaid carers is growing each year.

Not everyone recognises themselves as an unpaid carer. When people care for an ill, older or disabled family member or friend it is often just considered a part of everyday life.

Staff with caring responsibilities are encouraged to self-identify themselves as Carers by highlighting their caring role to their line manager. In addition, staff have the opportunity to register their unpaid

caring role through the supplementary role function in ESR. For more information about how to do this click here: [Adding Supplementary Roles Guide](#) (opens in a new tab)

Recognition of Carers

In recognition of the important role of unpaid carers, the Health Board has made the Carer Aware e-learning mandatory. This is accessed via ESR. A guide on how to access the e-learning can be found using the link below:

[People Development - Carer Awareness e-Learning Guide.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)
(opens in a new tab)

Carer awareness training is also available:

- As part of the Health Board's corporate induction programme
- Through the delivery of bespoke training for teams and departments

For information about how to access training, email CarersTeam.hdd@wales.nhs.uk (opens in a new tab)

Support for employees with Caring responsibilities

Staff who identify themselves as an unpaid carer to their Manager can request the establishment of a 'Carers Passport'. The Carers Passport provides a template to record the caring needs of the employee and informs a supportive conversation about any adjustments which would support the employee to remain effective within their role alongside their unpaid caring responsibilities.

Unpaid Carers are entitled to take up to a week's unpaid leave (equates to weekly contracted hours) in any 12 month period. Requests can be in consecutive or non-consecutive half-days or full days

Staff must give written notice to their Manager of their intention to take carer's leave. The notice given must either be three days or twice the amount of time of the period of leave requested – whichever is longer. Requests for carer's leave must not be refused, however, Managers may postpone a request if the department would be unduly disrupted. In these circumstances, the Manager must give notice of the postponement prior to the requested leave and explain the reasons why. The Manager must then allow the leave to be taken within one month of the start date of the leave originally requested and should consult with the staff member about rescheduling the leave.

There are a range of employment policies which can support employees with caring responsibilities. These include:

Flexibility of working hours/pattern

Policy Title	How it can help
Work Life Balance Flexible working Policy (opens in a new tab)	Sets out the steps needed to discuss and request a variation in working hours and/or working pattern and/or location.
Agile Working (opens in a new tab)	A guide for employees and managers when considering agile/hybrid working.

Flexi Time Policy (opens in a new tab)	Sets out the steps needed to discuss working a flexible working pattern whilst remaining on the same contractual hours.
Term Time Working (opens in a new tab)	Sets out the steps needed to request a term time working pattern.

Time off work to deal with unforeseen emergencies (Including bereavements)

Policy Title	How it can help
All Wales Special Leave Policy (opens in a new tab)	The policy includes provision for time off work for emergency carers and dependent leave-

Time off work to deal with planned requirements.

Policy Title	How it can help
Annual Leave Purchase Scheme (opens in a new tab)	Sets out the steps to follow to request the purchase/buy back up to 4 weeks / 20 additional annual leave days.
Employment Break Scheme (opens in a new tab)	Sets out the steps to follow to request an extended period of unpaid leave between 3 months to 5 years, of absence from the workplace.

Time off work to attend Medical/Dental/Hospital Appointments

Policy Title	How it can help
Time Off For Medical/Dental Appointments During Normal Working Hours Policy (opens in a new tab)	Clarifies the process in respect of staff taking time off to attend Medical/ Dental/ Hospital appointments in planned and emergency circumstances for dependents.

Managing Attendance

Policy Title	How it can help
NHS Wales Managing Attendance at Work Policy (opens in a new tab)	Sets out the provision to support the health and wellbeing of employees in the workplace.

Employee well-being services and support

There are a number of services that are available to all employed staff including unpaid carers. These include Occupational Health, employee assistance programme, and Staff Psychological and Wellbeing services. See the SharePoint page for more details:

[Staff Health & Wellbeing Gateway \(sharepoint.com\)](#) (opens in a new tab)

Staff Networks

The Health Board recognises the important role that staff networks can play as they provide an opportunity for staff to connect, socialise, support one another, and discuss issues of relevance to them in accordance with their shared characteristics and common experiences.

It is recognised that some staff with unpaid caring roles may wish to seek support through a wide variety of networks to reflect their own personal need or area of interest. The Health Board has a growing number of staff networks, including a Carers Peer Support network. More information about the staff networks can be found here: [Staff Networks](#) (opens in a new tab)

Support with career development and progression opportunities

Employees with caring responsibilities are encouraged to discuss their circumstances during one-to-one supervision and/or annual appraisal sessions in order to identify any barriers they feel they may be facing in accessing training and development to support career development opportunities.

Carer's Passport

The purpose of the Carers Passport is to enable a carer and their manager to hold a supportive conversation and document the agreed flexibilities that will be available to support the employee in their unpaid caring role and work. Sympathetic consideration will be given where support is requested by staff in accordance with this policy, based on a shared understanding of the unpaid caring situation, its impact on the employee's work and the consistency of treatment with other staff in a similar position.

The Passport is designed to be a living document to be reviewed every year and in response to any changes in the nature or impact of the caring responsibilities, although the passport does not guarantee that the previously agreed arrangements will remain in place as line managers must balance the needs of the employee with the requirement to ensure service delivery and business continuity.

The Health Board recognises that employees may find it difficult to explain their personal circumstances, issues and challenges. Completion of the Carers Passport is therefore voluntary, and the employee retains ownership of the form. See [Appendix 1 – Carer's Passport Guidance](#) and [Appendix 2 – Carers Passport Template](#).

Wider Support outside of work

In addition to employment support, some unpaid carers may need additional support from third sector or other support organisations to enable them to maintain their caring role. Staff and managers can find useful information about support services for Carers on the Carers Support West Wales Website:

[Carers Support West Wales | Cymorth Gofalwyr Gorllewin Cymru](#) (opens in a new tab)

The Health Board jointly commissions specialist Carers information and advice services in each of our three counties. These services can be contacted on the details below.

Carmarthenshire Carers Information Service, 01267 230791

Email: carersincarms@adferiad.org Website: www.adferiad.org.uk (opens in a new tab)

Ceredigion Carers and Community Support, 01545 574200. Email: cllc@ceredigion.gov.uk

Website: www.ceredigion.gov.uk/carers (opens in a new tab)

Pembrokeshire Carers Information and Support Service, 01437 611002. Email:

pciss@adferiad.org Website: www.adferiad.org.uk (opens in a new tab)

Further information for staff and managers is available on the Health Board Carers Sharepoint page:

[Unpaid Carers \(sharepoint.com\)](#) (opens in a new tab)

Responsibilities

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive holds overall responsibility for the effective management of organisational policies.

Director of Workforce & Organisational Development

The Director of Workforce & OD has responsibility for ensuring that all employment policies are developed in line with employment legislation and practice and are reviewed and updated as appropriate.

Line Manager

Managers have the responsibility to familiarise themselves with this Policy and to work within its parameters.

Employee's responsibilities

Employees are not obliged to disclose to their managers that they are caring for someone but are encouraged to do so in order to benefit from the support available from the Health Board. In this way the manager can work with the employee to ensure that, wherever possible, they can effectively balance their work and care commitments.

Workforce and Organisational Development

Provide support and guidance to managers on the application of this policy.

Evidence base and References

The policy has drawn on evidence and good practice from a range of sources including:

Employers for Carers www.employersforcarers.org __ (opens in a new tab)

Carers Trust www.carers.org (opens in a new tab)

Carers UK www.carersuk.org (opens in a new tab)

Useful links

Intranet:

[Strategic Partnerships Diversity and Inclusion - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#) (opens in a new tab)

[Staff Health & Wellbeing Gateway \(sharepoint.com\)](#) (opens in a new tab)

Appendix 1 – Carers Passport Guidance for Managers

If a member of staff identifies themselves as an unpaid carer, their manager should arrange a confidential one to one meeting to discuss the details. The following questions, are provided as guidance rather than an exhaustive list, and can be used to help facilitate the discussion:

- What are your caring responsibilities? Who are you caring for, what do you do and how frequently?
- What impact or potential impact, do the caring responsibilities have on your work role (if any)?
- Do you already receive any support in work which helps you to combine your work and unpaid caring role?
- 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 because of your caring responsibilities?
- What would help ensure that the service and business needs of the team / Health Board continues to be met?
- What is most important to you in order to effectively combine your work and caring responsibilities?
- Have you identified any specific support that you need from the Health Board? e.g. access to the use of a private room to make phone calls.
- Have you identified any specific support that you need which you might need to seek from external organisations?
- Do you expect your caring responsibilities to change in the future, and if so, how?

It is up to the employee to decide how much information to share, but it is important that employees give their manager enough information for them to understand the issues and challenges faced by the employee. Any actions agreed should be recorded on the Carers Passport, see [Appendix 2](#), together with an agreed review date.

Employees will need to follow relevant Health Board procedures e.g. [flexible working policy](#) (opens in new tab) for formal requests. Employees who require support will be provided with guidance on the options available to them in line with Health Board policies. The manager will need to look at all options and seek, wherever possible and reasonable, to accommodate a long or short-term caring need. Each case/episode will need to be reviewed on an individual basis.

If an employee moves department the Passport provides a framework for discussion with the new manager but **does not guarantee that the previously agreed arrangements will remain in place**. Any flexibilities agreed must be mutually agreed to ensure that the needs of the individual are balanced with the needs of the Health Board service/team.

Appendix 2 – Carers Passport Template

Carers Passport (to be completed by the employee)	
Employee Name:	Name of Manager:
Overview of your caring responsibilities This section should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A summary of your caring responsibilities• The impact this has on your working life• Any further information that may help your 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 manager.

Flexibilities agreed:

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 and reviews should take place annually, or more frequently as required.

Action Agreed	Date of Implementation	Date to Review Action

Additional support or actions identified:

This section might include for example contacting the Occupational Health Team, Staff Psychological Services or Employee Counselling Service, Carers Assessment or Signposting Services.

I consent to my manager keeping a copy of my Carers Passport.

Employee Signature:

Date:

Manager Signature:

Date:

Date of Next Review Meeting: