



Procedures

Applying for Carers' Leave

Part of Supporting Family Life Overarching Policy

April 2024

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1.	INTRODUCTION	
	The University recognises that employees with caring responsibilities may find it difficult at times to balance the demands of work and home life. Providing care can place significant demands on the time, energy and emotional resources of carers, and can cause disruption to both family and work life. We wish to encourage and support colleagues who are carers to balance their home and work commitments without detriment and to support career development for everyone who seeks to progress. As part of the Supporting Family Life Overarching Policy and suite of linked procedures, this procedure provides additional leave for those who are defined as carers, which may be used either a stand-alone entitlement or in conjunction with other paid or unpaid leave where appropriate. It sets out guidance on how to notify the University of your caring responsibilities and how to request Carers’ Leave.	
2.	DEFINITIONS	
	Carer	A carer is anyone, including children and adults who regularly looks after a dependant with a long-term care need; for example a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their long-term illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.
	Carers’ Register	The register is a formal list of employees who have identified themselves as carers and satisfied the definition of a carer as set out in this Procedure.
	Dependant	A dependant will typically be a spouse, partner, parent / parent-in-law, grandparent, civil partner, disabled child of the employee, any adult who lives with the employee as part of their family and who is dependent on the employee or anyone for whom the employee holds power of attorney.
3.	SCOPE	
	This procedure applies to all employees of Heriot-Watt University, who meet the definition of a carer as outlined in Section 4 of the Supporting Family Life Overarching Policy and in Section 2 of this procedure. Employees are eligible to apply for Carers’ Leave from their first day of employment. Employees with day-to-day childcare responsibilities should refer to our family friendly policies and procedures for further details on how to support family life.	
4.	CARING CONSIDERATIONS	
	Each carer’s situation will differ and may require varying responses; therefore line managers should consider the whole range of organisational policies and procedures available when putting support in place for carers and give sympathetic consideration to requests for support from those who have caring responsibilities, based on a shared understanding of the situation and its impact on work.	

	The activities that staff 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 Carers may also need occasional time off work to fulfil other caring requirements such as (but not limited to): • Attending medical appointments with a dependant • Dealing with a dependant's discharge from hospital • To provide support during post-operative recovery • Setting up a care package with a local authority • Providing emotional and/or practical support to a dependant who is particularly vulnerable, physically or mentally.
5.	NOTIFYING THE UNIVERSITY
	Employees are encouraged to inform their manager and register as a Carer with the University, if they are caring for someone and need any support, so that they can achieve a balance between work and their care commitments. It remains an individual's choice whether or not (or the extent to which) they disclose their caring responsibilities, however the greater the understanding the University has of the pressures on the individual, the more likely it is that supportive arrangements will be successful. The form can be found on the on the HR Policy Web Page under Family Friendly Policies. In order to discuss carer needs, the line manager will need to be informed of the employees' inclusion on the Carers Register. This information will be disclosed sensitively and confidentially. If an individual does not wish for their line manager to be notified, they should discuss this with HR. Placement on the register will be reviewed following a change of circumstances and it is the responsibility of the carer to inform HR of a change in circumstances.
6.	PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING
	Employees can request up to 5 days paid leave and a further 5 days unpaid leave in a rolling 12-month period. The entitlement remains the same, regardless of the number of dependants you have caring responsibilities for. Carers' leave may be taken as 1 continuous period or as individual days or half days throughout the 12-month period. Carers' leave can be requested in addition to the other leave available in this Policy. Carers' leave should be requested by completing the Carers Leave Request Form and submitting it to your line manager. Your line manager should then raise a ticket, attaching the Carers Leave Request Form, via the HRHelpdesk to request this leave. HR will then update ERP using the Paid or Unpaid Leave option in the type and then Paid or Unpaid Leave for Carers in the reason dropdown.

7.	AVAILABLE SUPPORT FOR CARERS
	<u>Internal Support</u> The ability to work flexibly is likely to be important for Carers. There are a wide range of support options available for Carers, details of which are outlined in our family friendly policies and procedures. Employee Assistance Programme <u>External Support</u> Further external help and advice for Carers can be found on the HR Hub Wellbeing A list of UK organisations is summarised below: Carers UK- Provides an expert telephone advice and support service for carers, as well as providing an abundance of online information. Mind- How to Cope as a Carer – A booklet for Carers on how to look after their own mental health, as well as some valuable self-help resources. Carers Scotland- Provides expert advice, information, and support, as well as connecting carers, so no-one has to care alone. They also campaign for lasting change and continually look to find new innovative ways to reach and support carers. Vocal- Provide support for Carers in Edinburgh and Midlothian with a range of practical information, and emotional support. They also offer support to understand and navigate through various health, social care and education systems. Carers Trust- Give carers a voice and highlights their work to the public. They also campaign and work with politicians and policy holders to create real change for unpaid carers throughout the UK. Dementia UK- Provides specialist dementia support for families by offering compassionate one-to-one support, guidance and practical solutions people need, that can be hard to find elsewhere. Age UK- Provide life-enhancing services and vital support to people in later life. Including information and advice, a befriending service and dedicated telephone advice line. Gov.UK- Is a UK government website that provides information on government services including benefits, housing, caring, money & tax etc. Citizens Advice - Free, confidential information and advice to assist people with money, legal, consumer and other problems. In addition, you may also wish to consider arranging Power of Attorney- this is a legal document that lets an individual appoint one or more people (known as 'attorneys') to help make decisions or to make decisions on their behalf relating to health and welfare or property and financial affairs. This gives an individual more control over what happens to them if they have an accident or an illness and cannot make their own decisions. Most solicitors will be able to help you with this.

8.	POLICY VERSION AND HISTORY			
	Version No	Date of Approval	Approving Authority	Brief Description of Amendment
	V. 1.0	October 2021	UE	New procedure for carers incorporating Supporting Family Life Policy
	V1.2	April 2024	N/A	Refreshed in line with government legislation