



# **East Herts Council**

## **Carers Policy**

### **Policy Statement**

#### **Policy Statement No 44 (Issue No. 1) January 2015**

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## 1. **Introduction**

- 1.1. This policy sets out East Herts Council's commitment to supporting carers and outlines the support that is available.
- 1.2. East Herts Council recognises that many employees have caring responsibilities and many of these individuals may need support to combine work with care.
- 1.3. East Herts Council respect and value the diversity of individuals and embrace Equality and Diversity in everything we do in line with East Herts Council's organisational values. East Herts Council's policies apply to all staff regardless of age, sex, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief.
- 1.4. This policy applies to all employees including Chief Officer level that are employed by East Herts Council.

## 2. **Policy Definitions**

- 2.1. East Herts Council define a carer as:

*Someone who is the parent of a disabled child or provides help and support to a partner, relative or friend, who may not be able to manage without this help because of frailty, illness or disability.*

- 2.2. This description means employees with significant caring responsibilities that have a substantial impact on their working life. An employee is a carer if they are responsible for the care and support of a disabled, elderly or sick partner, relative or friend who is unable to care for him or herself. More than one person may be a carer for the same person (for example, both partners caring for a disabled child and two siblings caring for a frail parent).
- 2.3. The activities that carers undertake are wide ranging, including:
  - help with personal care;
  - help with mobility;
  - managing medication;

- practical household tasks;
- emotional support; and
- help with financial matters or paperwork.

#### 2.4 East Herts Council define a **parent** as:

*Someone who is the parent or guardian of a child or children*

Child or children are those aged 18 or under and a parent must have responsibility for the upbringing of the child or children.

Any references in this policy to partner applies to both heterosexual and same-sex relationships.

### 3. **Identification and Disclosure**

- 3.1 Employees are not required to disclose to their manager they have caring responsibilities, unless they wish to apply for flexible working options or request additional leave for caring responsibilities. This will enable the manager to discuss with the employee the options and support available to them (see Resources and Support section). The employee's confidentiality concerning this information will be respected.

Where responsibilities change during an employee's career, they can update their records by contacting the Human Resources Service.

### 4. **Resources and Support**

- 4.1 There are a number of sources of support for Carers in Hertfordshire:

- **HCC's Health and Community Services (HCS)**
  - Committed to supporting carers through the Multi Agency Carers Strategy
  - Carry out carer assessments
- **Carers in Hertfordshire**
  - Carers in Hertfordshire give support and information to unpaid family and friends who look after someone

- Carers in Hertfordshire offer a range of free workshops and training related to caring as well as courses and learning events to help with your life outside caring through their Carers and Learning project.
- **Crossroads**
  - Provide support to carers via 'care at home' to give carers a break
  - Contact details are available on their website.
- **Health and Wellbeing Benefits**
  - East Herts Council provides advice, guidance and benefits to help employees maintain a healthy work-life.
  - Guidance available to employees can be found on our intranet under Health and Wellbeing Benefits.
- **Employee Assistance Programme (PPC)**
  - East Herts Council's employee assistance programme (EAP) through PPC is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It offers general information, advice and counselling (over the phone or face-to-face).
- **Childcare Voucher Salary Sacrifice Scheme**
  - East Herts Council's salary sacrifice scheme enables employees to save on tax and national insurance. Further information is on the East Herts Council's intranet pages.

## 5. **Flexibility for Carers**

- 5.1 All of the following arrangements are subject to the needs of the service and agreement by the relevant manager in the service.
- 5.2 Agreement to permanent alternative working patterns may also be subject to a trial period, which should be jointly agreed.

### 5.3 **Flexible Working**

Flexible working hours allow flexibility in starting and finishing times along with the opportunity to take flexi time. The scheme does not however operate in all teams; managers

will advise what flexibility can be offered in a particular service area. For further information see the Flexi time (condensed) and Flexi time Guidance notes

The employee must inform their manager if their caring responsibilities change as the informal flexible working arrangement may need to be reviewed and the employee may require more or less support.

Managers have the right to review and turn down informal flexible working arrangements if they do not fit in with the business needs, for example, if an employee needs to work from home on the day team meetings are held.

#### 5.4 Flexible Working Requests

The Flexible Working Policy details the various flexible working options that can be requested on a permanent or temporary basis including:

**Part time working:** Reducing hours to meet caring responsibilities

**Home working:** Enables employees in certain jobs to work from home

**Annualised hours:** Employees who are contracted to work a specific number of hours over a year. This allows some flexibility in when hours are worked, e.g. reduced hours during school holiday periods and increased hours during term time

**Job sharing:** This involves two people sharing a full time post

**Compressed hours:** The working week is compressed into fewer working days e.g. 37 hours can be worked in a 4 day week or 4 1/2 day week

**Career breaks:** These enable employees to take an unpaid break from work for personal reasons; this includes caring for dependants or extending a period of maternity/adoption leave. For further information see the General Leave Policy.

## 6. **Time off for Carers**

6.1 Requests for leave should be made to the manager and recorded in line with the General Leave Policy.

### 6.2 **Attendance of Carer Support Groups**

Managers may approve flexitime for employees wishing to attend a carers' support group, if these fall within normal working hours.

### 6.3 **Emergency and discretionary leave**

Heads of Service may approve up to 5 days paid leave in any leave year for a variety of reasons including caring for sick dependants or dealing with unexpected care issues. For example, discretionary leave will normally be used by employees who need to be with a seriously sick dependant or relative if home-care arrangements break down and an employee suddenly needs to make alternative arrangements or an employee needs to collect a dependent due to an unexpected injury or illness. For further information see the General Leave Policy.

### 6.4 **Bereavement leave**

Managers may approve up to 5 days paid leave for employees to deal with the death of a close relative. For further information see the General Leave Policy.

### 6.5 **Unpaid leave**

Managers may approve reasonable unpaid leave to allow employees to resolve or deal with an issue arising, without notice, because of a dependant. Please refer to the General Leave Policy.

### 6.6 **Annual leave**

Employees can carry forward up to 5 days holidays for their annual entitlement per annum to help with caring responsibilities. For more information, please refer to the Flexible Working Policy and General Leave Policy.

## 6.7 **Maternity support and Parental leave**

In addition to the above, there are a range of options specifically available to help employees with parenting responsibilities including: Parental Leave, Maternity Leave, Shared Parental Leave and Adoption Leave. For further information, please refer to the Council's policies.

## 7.0 **Review**

This procedure will be reviewed every three years or sooner if there are any changes in legislation requiring amendments to be made.