

## CARDIFF COUNCIL

### SCHOOL CARERS POLICY

#### PURPOSE

1. The Council is aware that many employees at Cardiff Council have caring responsibilities, and that carers constitute part of its workforce. In order to assist all employees to achieve a balance between home and work responsibilities Cardiff Council introduced its Work-Life Balance Strategy in August 2006 with a revision in July 2007. This Carers Policy demonstrates the Governing body's commitment to trying to find ways to assist employees to manage their work alongside their caring responsibilities. The Governing Body is willing to join in partnership with employees in exploring all viable options to enable them to remain effective workers, and to support employees balancing work with their caring responsibilities by outlining a range of existing policies and employee support, and developing further the scope of this document.

#### SCOPE

2. This policy applies to all employees of the school, irrespective of status and/or grade. It does not apply to centrally employed staff who are covered by the corporate Policy.

#### KEY PRINCIPLES

3. The aim of this policy is to support employees to remain in work, fulfil their career potential and meet their caring responsibilities.
4. 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.
5. Carers can be men or women and this policy is designed to apply equally to male and female employees.
6. Employees will in no way be discriminated against on the grounds of their caring responsibilities and the principles of the 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

7. This Policy will be reviewed in the light of ongoing operational experience, after 12 months operational experience and/or any subsequent legislative changes.

## **WHO IS A CARER?**

8. A carer is 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 problem 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.

## **HOW MANAGERS CAN SUPPORT CARERS**

9. Headteachers have a key role in supporting employees to be able to fulfil their potential in work and to meet their caring responsibilities.
10. Headteachers should:
- Ensure that employees are familiar with the support that is available for carers
  - Give sympathetic consideration to requests for support from their employees who have caring responsibilities, based on a shared understanding of the situation and the impact it is having
  - Deal with requests in a confidential manner
  - Provide their employees who require support with guidance on the options available to them
  - Treat all employees fairly and consistently while taking into account the individual needs of a particular case
  - Be as supportive as school priorities allow.

## **EMPLOYEES**

11. Employees may be reluctant to discuss personal caring responsibilities and issues with their headteacher. However for a headteacher to help they need to be aware of the issues with which an employee is coping. Headteachers are required to respect any confidence given to them. All employees are entitled to approach their headteacher to discuss their employment in relation to their caring role.
12. Employees are encouraged to:
- Actively inform your headteacher if you are caring for someone and need any support. Explain your situation and what assistance you think would help.
  - Work together with your headteacher so that you can be helped where ever possible to continue in your job and effectively balance your work and care commitments.

## **WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE FOR CARERS**

13. The School has a number of options available to help carers to continue in their job and effectively balance their work and care commitments.

14. These options include:

- Flexible working options
- Leave options
- Supporting Carers returning to work
- The Employee Counselling Service. Teachers can also access Teacher Support Line Cymru.
- Stress Management courses
- Services provided for carers through Adult Services and Children Services
- Proposed Carers Discussion Forum
- Signposting the further information

## **FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS**

### **Flexible Working Patterns Policy and Procedure ([1.CM.088-Sch](#))**

15 The purpose of the policy is to formalise the right to request flexible working patterns. In 2007 The Work and Families Act gave carers who are working the right to request flexible working. (Individuals have a right to request flexible working patterns and headteachers have a responsibility to consider those requests). The decision to allow flexible working patterns must take into account the school's needs.

16. 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
- normally only allows one request 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)**

17. A request for flexible working can be used for permanent and temporary changes to working patterns. Before making a formal application to work flexibly, employees can try to work out and agree a temporary arrangement with their Headteacher.

### **Job Sharing**

18. The purpose of this policy is to encourage and increase the availability of access to part time work at every level within the organisation to men and women who wish to remain at, or return to work whilst still fulfilling significant commitments elsewhere.

19. The Policy:

- is of particular relevance to those with caring responsibilities for children or other dependant relatives or disabled people and people living with serious health conditions

- every job in the School, regardless of status, level or managerial/supervisory responsibility, is regarded as eligible for job share unless an exemption has been approved
- no job may be shared by more than 2 employees
- both employees must be able to carry out the full range of tasks and responsibilities of the full time post

## LEAVE OPTIONS

20. In addition to Annual leave, where applicable, Time in Lieu (TIL) can be accrued. Employees can also request Special leave, Time off for dependants, Parental leave, Career Break

### Special leave ([1.CM.081-Sch](#))

21. The purpose is to allow employees short periods of time off work to deal with various issues.
22. The Policy:
- defines the small number of occasions 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 time off for occasions such as bereavement, domestic/personal emergencies, medical appointments, public duties, training etc. etc.
  - will normally over ride policies such as Parental Leave and Time off for Dependants where the leave could also be approved under those policies

### Time Off for Dependants

23. The purpose is to allow an employee to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off and to make any necessary longer term arrangements.
24. The Policy:
- defines "a dependant" 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 (1.CM.084-Sch)**

25. The purpose is to allow a parent (natural, step or adoptive) to take unpaid time off work to look after a child or make arrangements for a child's welfare.
26. The Policy:
- offers up to 4 weeks unpaid leave in a 12 month period up to a maximum of 13 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, maternity support leave, adoption leave, Special Leave or career breaks
  - the leave is an individual right and cannot be transferred to someone else

## **Career Break**

27. 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.
28. 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 work for the School for a minimum of 10 working days during each calendar year
  - gives no guarantee of a return to work either to the original job or another job

## **SUPPORTING CARERS ON RETURN TO WORK**

29. Carers need to be supported to return to the workplace if/when their caring role comes to an end.
30. During the employee's period of absence from the workplace the Headteacher has a responsibility to ensure that they maintain contact with the employee to keep them informed of any workplace developments and any other information the employee may need to ensure that they still feel part of the team.
31. 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 their skills and their self-confidence and need work related training or retraining. This should be addressed by the carer and the Headteacher on or prior to their return to work.
32. Training and development needs can be identified by the Headteacher through the School's Performance Review Process and / or through discussions.

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

## EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

34. Caring for someone else can put a great deal of strain on carers. The Governing Body is very aware of the need to provide some stress management measures and ensure that employees who have caring responsibilities are aware of support for carers.

### The Employee Counselling Service

35. [The Employee Counselling Service](#) (ECS) offers free and confidential counselling to anyone who is employed by Cardiff Council. Teachers can also access Teacher Support Line Cymru.
36. 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.
37. The Employee Counselling Service is confidential. No-one will be told that an employee has been in contact: neither the Headteacher, nor colleagues in People & Organisational Development have to know.

Employees can access the Employee Counselling Service between 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday (answer phone at all other times). The telephone number is 029 2046 8565.

Teachers can access Teacher Support Line Cymru on 0800 085 5088

### Managing Stress

38. The Council currently has in place is the provision of stress awareness courses and managing stress courses.
39. For more information about courses:

Contact Sharran Fletcher of P&OD, Learning and Development Tel: 029 20876535 [sfletcher@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:sfletcher@cardiff.gov.uk) or contact Christina Lloyd of P&OD, Health and Safety Tel: 029 2087 2635 [c.c.lloyd@cardiff.gov.uk](mailto:c.c.lloyd@cardiff.gov.uk)

## SUPPORT FOR CARERS

40. 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. Adult Services and Children Services provide a number of these services and further details can be found by contacting them using, [Connect to Cardiff C2C](#).

For more information also see:

[4.AS.L.A.12E Support for Carers \(English\)](#)

[4.AS.L.A.12C Support for Carers \(Welsh\)](#)

## **CARERS DISCUSSION FORUM**

41. 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. Cardiff Council and the Governing Body recognise the importance to its employees who are carers, the opportunity to get together on a regular basis.
42. It is proposed that employees who are carers identify themselves in order to set up a carers discussion forum which will aim to give carers a forum in which they can express their views, have contact with other carers and support each other. It will be for the members of this forum to decide its purpose and format. The Governing Body may consider allowing members to attend / participate during working hours.
43. The Carers Discussion Forum can take the form of informal meetings or 'get togethers' or by setting up a carers 'chat room' on the Council's intranet.
44. The Carers Discussion Forum may choose to invite a nominated member of P&OD to dip into the forum on a regular basis or on an ad hoc basis to provide information on any changes which may be relevant, or to generally advise on particular issues. Also if an employee wishes to raise an issue on a private basis, they can post views or concerns anonymously.
45. The views and opinions of the members of the Carers Discussion Forum will be sought by People and Organisational Development to influence ongoing development of the Carers Policy.

## **USEFUL CONTACTS**

**Carers Centre**  
Victoria House  
250 Cowbridge Road East  
Cardiff CF5 1GZ

Tel: 029 2022 1421

**Carers Wales, (part of Carers UK)**  
River House  
Ynysbridge Court  
Gwaelod-y-Garth  
Cardiff

Tel: 029 2081 1370

Email: [info@carerswales.org](mailto:info@carerswales.org)

[www.carerswales.org](http://www.carerswales.org)

**Cardiff branch of Carers Wales**

Contact: Mary Marsh Tel: 029 2048 7635

**Work Life Balance**

More information about working flexibly can be found on the Council's intranet –

[\*\*Work Life Balance site\*\*](#)