



South Lanarkshire College

Caring for Carers

Guidance

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1. Introduction

As part of its commitment to Equality and Diversity South Lanarkshire College recognises that staff may have caring responsibilities and that they may need support to combine work with care. This guidance document outlines the support available to employees who have a caring responsibility so that they can balance work with caring commitments and continue to be effective in their role.

2. Who is a carer?

A carer is a person who provides a substantial amount of unpaid care on a regular basis for another individual or a person who provides more occasional support to cope with changes in circumstances or health of another individual.

The College recognises that a carer can be a spouse, parent, sibling, child or other dependent and could be living in the same home as the person being cared for or further away. The activities that carers undertake include: -

- Help with personal care
- Help with mobility
- Managing medication
- Practical household tasks
- Emotional support
- Help with financial matters or paperwork

3. Support

The College appreciates that caring places demands on employees and at times it may be difficult for them to combine work and caring responsibilities. Therefore, the College will adopt the following principles:

- To give sympathetic consideration to requests for support from those who have caring responsibilities, based on a shared understanding of the situation and its impact at work;
- To view the making of requests for support as acceptable and ensure that no one is treated unfairly because of their caring responsibilities;
- To handle requests for support with discretion and tact.

It is also acknowledged that the needs of individual carers will vary. Caring can be unpredictable and emotionally upsetting. An employee may acquire caring responsibilities overnight, for example, where the employee's parent has taken a stroke, or some caring responsibilities develop over time, for example, an employee's partner has a debilitating long-term health condition.

Employees are not required to disclose to their line manager or HR that they are caring for someone but are encouraged to do so. This will help the College to provide appropriate support to the employee. Line managers should encourage them to discuss their caring responsibilities and should assure employees that their need for support and confidentiality will be respected.

Employees who do not wish to disclose their caring responsibilities to their line manager are encouraged to speak with Human Resources.

Where a line manager knows that an employee in their team has caring responsibilities, the line manager should inform the employee of the support that the College can offer carers and encourage them to access the support available.

4. Time off to care for dependents

The College recognises that employees with caring responsibilities cannot always plan ahead for time off.

A range of College policies can be used to help support employees who need time off to care for relatives or dependents either on a short or longer-term basis:

Flexible Working

Employees who have a minimum of 26 weeks continuous service have the right to request flexible working. Flexible working usually involves requests for permanent changes to working patterns, but it is also possible to ask for temporary or rolling requests to be considered to help carers through difficult situations. For example:

- A reduction in hours could be adopted for a 6-month period initially to allow a Carer to have more time for caring responsibilities. The arrangement could be reviewed after the initial agreed period and either extended or concluded depending on the Carer's circumstances.

Other options can be explored with HR in the first instance.

Parental and Family Leave

The College recognises that throughout their career in the College, staff will have differing demands on their time and energies at home as well as at work. The Parental and Family Leave Policy and Procedure aims to assist staff to achieve a reasonable balance between their home and working lives.

If a carer needs time off to care for their child up to the age of eleven the Parental and Family Leave Policy and Procedure may be of assistance. It also applies to staff who have adopted a child (ren) or is responsible for the child (ren) up to seven years from the date of adoption or the child's eighteenth birthday. A member of staff who has a child with a disability may take their parental leave entitlement until the child's eighteenth birthday.

Provided the parent has completed 13 weeks continuous service he or she may take up to 65 working days leave for each child. A total of 15 days of the 65 days entitlement will be paid, this will be restricted to a maximum of 5 days per employee per annum.

Further information can be found in the Parental and Family Leave Policy and Procedure which is available on the College Portal or from the HR department.

Personal and Domestic Leave Policy and Procedure

In support of the domestic and personal responsibilities that staff have outside of work the College provides a range of entitlements in order to enable staff to take period (s) of time off in extenuating personal or domestic circumstances.

Personal and Domestic Leave applies to all College staff regardless of length of service or number of hours worked each week.

In cases of serious illness of a close family member or an unexpected domestic crisis or emergency, staff may apply for up to a maximum of three working days paid leave in any 12-month period. This can be given to help a carer cope with the immediate impact of emergency situations such as a child falling ill at school or a parent having an accident and needing medical attention.

Further information can be found in the Personal and Domestic Leave Policy and Procedure which is available on the College Portal or from the HR department.

In certain circumstances employees may apply for special leave to cope with difficult or unusual situations not covered by other policies. Employees should speak to their line manager and/or HR for advice, but all requests will be treated with sensitivity.

5. Line managers

Each carer's situation requires a different response from the manager, so managers should take into account the whole range of College support available when putting in place support for carers and discuss with the HR team.

Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up the College's support for carers. Managers should create a workplace culture that is supportive of carers, by encouraging employees to make use of the support offered to carers and encouraging discussion around carers' issues.

6. Other support available

The following services and groups can be contacted for emotional support or informal advice: -

Carers Champion

The College has appointed a carers champion, who is Elaine Ballantyne, Equality Officer. Elaine's role is to raise awareness about caring, promote the take up of carer-friendly policies and ensure equal treatment for carers across the organisation. Elaine works within the HR team and employees may contact her or any other member of the HR team if they have any issues regarding combining work with care that they do not wish to discuss with their line manager.

Carer Support Group

The College has established a Carer Support Group where carers can offer mutual support and exchange experiences. It provides practical peer-to-peer support and information for carers and works with HR to raise awareness about caring issues and promote carer-friendly policies and practices within the College.

Adjustments

Employees with caring responsibilities, together with their line manager and HR, should also consider whether the ability to make or receive calls in connection with his/her caring responsibilities and access to a private space to make/receive calls.

Counselling service

This is a free confidential service for staff providing an opportunity to discuss problems or situations that are causing concern or distress.

To arrange an appointment contact 0141 228 6250 or email info@counsellingandcoachingsolutions.co.uk. Alternatively, you can speak with the HR team or your line manager and they will organise a referral.

Chaplaincy

The College offers a Chaplaincy Service in the Quiet Room every Tuesday from 12-1 pm. They are available:

- in time of difficulty including crisis and bereavement
- for 'active listening'
- for confidential conversations - for example, bereavement, relationships, pressure with workload, welfare
- for questions of faith and spirituality
- to students and staff of any faith or of none

The Chaplains are also contactable by email or telephone. Our College Chaplains are: -

Gordon Palmer
Minister, Claremont Parish Church
minister@claremontparishchurch.co.uk
Tel: 07804 817522

Anne Paton
East Kilbride Old Parish Church
apaton@churchofscotland.org.uk
Tel: 01355 220732

Deacon John McGarry
St Brides Church
jamcgarry50@btinternet.com
Tel: 07771 753849

Christine Bush, Humanist
(contactable by phone or email only)
Christine.bush@humanism.scot
Tel: 07952 478582

External support –The College has developed a Carers Information Board which is situated in the staff room and provides information about external sources of support for carers and their dependants. The information is also available under Carers on the College portal.

In addition, see Appendix 1 for a list of links to support groups and other advice and information.