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|  | Carers Leave Policy |

Document Overview

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| **Purpose** | The purpose of this policy is to detail the support the Organisation offers its employees when they have caring responsibilities outside of work and to ensure employees are supported in the most appropriate way to help them continue to come into work and perform their role to their full potential. |
| **Confidentiality** | This document is not confidential. |
| **Document owner** |  |
| **Status note** | Draft |
| **Distribution** | All DBF staff. |
| **Required action** |  |
| **Proposed next step** |  |

Version History

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| **Version** | **Date** | **Status Note** |
| 1.0 | 01.04.2024 | Draft |
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1. Introduction
   1. We appreciate that caring for a person can be very demanding; particularly when you have workplace obligations to fulfil. This policy aims to minimise, as much as possible, any difficulties an employee may experience at work and to ensure they are not prevented from being able to have an effective and fulfilling career.
   2. Specifically, this policy covers areas such as the definition of a carer, the support we offer for carers, explains the role that both employees and managers will play, and informs employees of arrangements relating to requesting a change to working patterns.
   3. The Organisation operates separate policies in relation to other types of time off eg maternity, adoption or shared parental leave. Employees should refer to those policies, available from the HR department, for more information on entitlements in those areas.
   4. The types of support required will range from simply demonstrating an understanding of the specific pressures faced by the employee to adjusting working patterns or making special arrangements for long-term unpaid leave and are detailed below.
2. Definition of a Carer
   1. There is no single definition of a carer, and the Organisation is aware there may be employees who do not recognise themselves as a carer but simply a supportive and loyal family member or friend. However, a carer can generally be regarded as a person who provides unpaid support to another person, most commonly a family member or friend, who would not be able to manage without that support. So, if the support the employee provides is vital for that person and they are dependent on the employee for it then the employee could class themselves as a carer.
   2. Caring responsibilities can take many forms and that might include looking after young children or someone who is disabled or frail.
   3. The length of time you have supported a person does not have a bearing on whether or not you could be considered a carer either. This may just be a responsibility you have taken on very recently but if you are providing indispensable support for another person then you would likely be classed as a carer.
   4. There are many different types of care roles and the Organisation appreciates that people will respond to the demands in their own unique ways. The Organisation also fully appreciates that the support a carer provides is usually not optional and certainly not insignificant. It can be a difficult experience and can adversely affect the employee at work but we are committed to ensuring this challenge can be overcome by working in a productive and sympathetic way with our employees who provide care for another person.
3. Employee Responsibilities
   1. The Organisation encourages its employees to inform their manager if they are caring for someone and if they feel they need any support. We will work together with the employee to try to find a solution to any difficulties faced due to their role as a carer.
   2. When an employee tells their manager that they have caring responsibilities, a meeting will be held to discuss the employee’s responsibilities at home and how they affect work life. Various options for support will be considered and the Organisation’s expectation is that a solution agreeable to both sides will be found.
4. Manager Responsibilities
   1. Managers will:
      * always show consideration and empathy for requests for support from employees who have caring responsibilities
      * ensure there will be a full discussion to gain a complete understanding of the circumstances and the effect it has on the employee
      * ensure that employees are provided with guidance on the full range of options available
      * ensure all employees will be treated fairly and consistently, while taking into account individual needs
      * ensure all decisions are in accordance with Organisation procedures
      * know where to direct carers if they need expert advice (for example employee counselling, EAP, Mental Health Supporters)
      * ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination against employees because they have caring responsibilities. The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against an employee because of their association with someone who has a disability
      * ensure full confidentiality for requests made for assistance.
5. Carers Leave
   1. In From 6th April 2024, Carers who are looking after dependants with a long-term care need are entitled to one week unpaid leave per year. This can be taken in half day blocks and must be agreed with the line manager. The half days or full days do not have to be taken consecutively.
   2. You should give notice to your line manager of your request, equivalent to twice as many days as the period of leave requested or 3 days, whichever is greater.
   3. We may ask you to postpone your leave if it unduly disrupts the normal course of business, however you will be entitled to take this leave within once month of the period that you originally requested and as long as we have given you notice within 7 days of the original request.
   4. You are not required to provide evidence of why or how you will use the Carer’s leave and will be trusted to use this time to care for your dependents.
   5. A long-term care need is defined as
      1. an illness or injury (mental or physical) that requires or is likely to require care for more than 3 months.
      2. A disability under the Equality Act 2010
      3. Issues related to old age
   6. For Carer’s leave to apply, you must:
      1. Have a dependent with long term care needs
      2. Want to be absent from work to provide care for that dependent
      3. Not have exceeded the entitlement of 1 week per year
   7. For Carer’s leave a dependent is classed as:
      1. A spouse, civil partner, child or parent
      2. Or they must live in the same house (but not be a lodger, employee or tenant)
      3. Or they must reasonably rely on the person to arrange/provide care for them.
6. Other ways we can support
   1. **Flexible working -** One possible option to consider for an employee with caring responsibilities is to amend the working schedule or the location of the workplace. This could be done on a temporary basis. See appendix 31 – Flexible working for more information.
   2. **Time off for dependants** - All employees have the right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during their working hours to deal with unexpected or sudden problems affecting their dependants and to make any necessary long term arrangements for their care. It is expected that in most cases the amount of leave will be less than one day or one or two days at the most. Employees may be able to take longer periods of leave under other arrangements with the Company. See the “Time off to care for dependants” section in the Staff Handbook
   3. **Parental leave** – Another option if you need to provide care for a child under 18. Under this policy a parent can take up to 18 weeks unpaid leave per child until their 18th birthday. They can take up to 4 weeks parental leave in one year. Parents can take leave in blocks of one week at a time, however Parents with disabled children can take single days at a time. See appendix 30 – Parental leave for more information.
7. Counselling/ EAP
   1. We would like to remind you that you have access to the Employee Assistance Programme through Health Assured, Access to our Diocesan Counsellor and onsite Mental Health Supporters, and we would like to encourage you to make use of them if you feel like you would like to talk to someone.