

# CARERS' POLICY

## Summary

**Carers Support West Sussex (CSWS)** recognises and values employees who have an unpaid caring role and the contribution they make to the health and wellbeing of the people they care for. We understand that many of our employees will be juggling work and care and we wish to support, as best as we are able, employees who are also providing unpaid care to a family member or friend.

## How we define a carer

A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who due to illness, disability, a mental health issue or an addiction cannot cope without their support.

## About unpaid family carers

There are more than 5.7 million unpaid carers across the UK providing care to someone who could not cope without their support. Three million of them are in full or part-time employment. It means that 1 in 7 people in any workplace are likely to have a caring role. Having to give up employment to care for someone else is a loss to employers, families, the UK, and local economies. 75% of carers in employment worry about continuing to juggle work and carer (Carers UK state of caring 2022) and nationally on average 600 people a day leave work to care. It is crucial that we identify, involve and support carers in the workplace setting to ensure that we provide them with the best support that we can provide.

## Aims

This policy aims to increase the likelihood of this organisation retaining qualified and experienced employees who may otherwise have to leave our employment or reduce the hours they can work for us because of the demands of their caring role. Employees who are carers will be more likely to be able to continue their caring role and not have to give up

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employment. We aim to do this by setting out clear guidelines and good supporting practices for them within the workplace.

## **Eligibility**

This policy applies to all employees of **Carers Support West Sussex**.

If you are a Carer and would like to inform Carers Support West Sussex, you can have a confidential conversation with your Line Manager or HR which can be noted on your HR File.

## **Related Policies**

This policy is fully supported by and integrated with other relevant policies such as:

- Flexible Working Policy
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Parental Leave Policy
- Diversity and Equality Policy

## **1. Our Commitment to Employees with a Caring Role**

**CSWS** will support employees with a caring role by:

- Supporting and encouraging employees with caring roles to identify themselves if they choose to
- Recognising that a caring role can begin at any point in an employee's time with us
- Providing regular opportunities for employees to tell us if they have a caring role e.g., application forms, supervisions, appraisals, return to work interviews etc.
- Monitoring the number of employees with a caring role and regularly evaluating the organisation's response to requests for support
- Ensuring that all employees are aware of this policy, the challenges employees with a caring role face and why it is important that we support staff with a caring role

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- Encouraging employees with a caring role to form an informal peer support network
- Being as responsive as we can to requests for flexible working for employees with a caring role
- Giving staff who have a caring role the opportunity to note their caring role with our HR (Human Resource) team and have it recorded on Citrus HR, so that they do not have to repeat information about their caring role to different managers or ask again for already agreed changes to their work pattern
- Consulting with staff on the development and reviews of this policy

Once an employee has identified themselves as having a caring role and is being supported by this organisation the employee must notify their line manager if there are any changes in the nature of the caring role e.g., bereavement of the cared for person or a change in the nature of the caring role.

## **2. Our Statutory Obligations**

This policy is designed to complement our statutory obligations which are outlined below. All employees who have 26 weeks or more service is entitled to make one **Flexible Working** request per year. Flexible working can mean reduced hours, flexitime, home working, job shares, shift swapping, compressed hours, annualised hours, job sharing, termtime working, part time working, flexible holidays and career breaks etc. For further information, please refer the Flexible Working Policy which is available in the Employee Handbook.

All employees have the right to take a reasonable amount of **Time Off for Dependants** to deal with emergencies. This time is unpaid. A dependant is defined "as someone who depends on an employee for care." For further information, please refer to the Attendance Policy.

All employees are entitled to have **Parental Leave** if they have worked for **CSWS** for at least one year and have legal parental responsibility for a child. Employees can take up to 18 weeks' leave for each child, up until their 18th birthday. A maximum of four weeks can be taken in one year for each qualifying child. Parental leave is unpaid unless the employee contract state otherwise. Employees have to take parental leave in blocks of a week unless the employee has a disabled child when the employee can take it a day at a time. The employee should give

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21 days' notice to take Parental Leave. For further information, please refer to the Parental Leave Policy or Workforce/Collective Agreement.

Under the Equality Act 2010, people who look after another person who is elderly, or disabled are protected against direct discrimination or harassment. Carers are protected by law as they are classed as being 'associated' with someone who has special **Protection from Discrimination**.

**CSWS** is committed to supporting, developing, and promoting diversity and equality in all its employment practices and activities and aims to establish an inclusive culture free from discrimination and based on the values of fairness, dignity, and respect. For further information, please refer to the **Employee Handbook – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy**.

### **3. Additional Support for carers from CSWS**

**Carers Leave:** In addition to statutory obligations **CSWS** will also consider up to 7 additional days paid leave for employees who have caring responsibilities in a rolling 12-month period. This is prorated for part time employees and calculations are stored on Citrus HR. This must be agreed **by a Team Manager or a member of the Senior Leadership Team** on a case-by-case basis. For further information, please refer the Attendance Policy.

**Splitting leave entitlements into hourly blocks:** **CSWS** recognises that carers need only an hour or less for an appointment, however, often must take half a day's leave to accommodate the appointments. **CSWS** allows employees with caring responsibilities can split 7 days of their leave days into hourly blocks, meaning that one or two hours can be taken instead of full or half days.

**CSWS** offer to all employees an **Employee Support & Assistance Package Scheme** to support employees with everyday issues (counselling, legal advice etc.). Details of our scheme can be found on the HR SharePoint <https://carerssupportws.sharepoint.com/sites/HR2>

As an additional workplace Support **CSWS** encourages peer support for carers. **We offer bimonthly peer support carer groups facilitated by an external coach**. These sessions can be found on the internal training calendar and employees are asked to inform their line manager of their wish to attend, before booking themselves onto the group. Details of the Carers' Policy, support group etc. are also given during the Induction process.

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**Telephone calls:** CSWS understands the difficulty that some carers face in needing to be available to support their cared-for, therefore carers are entitled to have their personal phones close by and take calls if needed at work in connection with their role as a carer.

#### 4. Accessing Carers' Support:

Employees who are in a caring role can register with CSWS for support and receive equivalent support to other carers resident in West Sussex. To register employees can complete the online referral form, speak to a trusted member of colleague of the employees choice or their line manager.

Following registering as a carer with CSWS, you can expect:

- **Information on the caring role will be saved on CSWS' carer's record system.** Employee's records are shielded from view from most colleagues, with a limited number of senior managers having access to these records and the ability to 'open' them up to a colleague to update with the support given.
- **Access to carer grants and equipment.** As a member of CSWS staff team, carers can access appropriate grants in the same way that carers in West Sussex can and with the same criteria. Applications for grant / fund awards for employees are approved by the Deputy CEO / CEO.
- **Access to carer support groups.** Employees may wish to attend carer groups or events but should be aware of the possible conflict of interest as a member of the staff team. If an employee feels that attending a group would be beneficial for their wellbeing, we ask that they discuss this with their line manager in the first instance. Time to attend these groups is unpaid and so employees may wish to ask their line manager for flexibility around their working hours to allow them to attend.
- **Access to Carer Information and Advice.** Employees in a caring role may value the support and guidance of a colleague and / or specialist advice. Sometimes this may conflict with the employee's preference to keep their caring role confidential. Where practical CSWS will facilitate this support through a colleague who does not work within the same team as the staff carer and all employees of Carers Support will adhere to confidentiality agreements to ensure that staff carer's personal circumstances are kept confidential.
- **Access to a Statutory Carer's Assessment.** Employees who would benefit from a Statutory Carers Assessment should contact their line manager or a trusted colleague to request this. The Carers assessment can then be arranged with either the CA

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manager or a Co-ordinator. If the employee prefers a particular assessor to carry out the assessment every effort will be made to accommodate this.

### Further information

The following pieces of legislation are relevant to Carers in the workplace.

- **The Children and Families Act 2014** gives all employees with at least 26 weeks' continuous employment the right to request flexible working.
- **The Employment Relations Act 1999** gives employees the right to take 'reasonable' time off to deal with unexpected situations involving a dependant.
- **The Equality Act 2010** brings together anti-discrimination law acts and regulations including The Disability Discrimination Act 1995. States that employers and employees have a responsibility to create and be part of a fair work environment which complies with the law.
- **The Care Act 2015** gives carers additional rights. One of these is that local authorities must offer **Carer's Needs Assessments** to all carers on the appearance of need. Assessments looks into the wellbeing of carers, the support carers need to continue in their caring role, the impact caring is having on their own life particularly in terms of work, education and training and quality of life. For further information, please contact your local authority.

### Production History:

Version No	Date Created / Reviewed	Author / Reviewer	Production / Revision / Review	Date Approved by Board	Date of Next Review
Version 1	23/5/23	Caroline Pope	Production	22/6/23	June 2024

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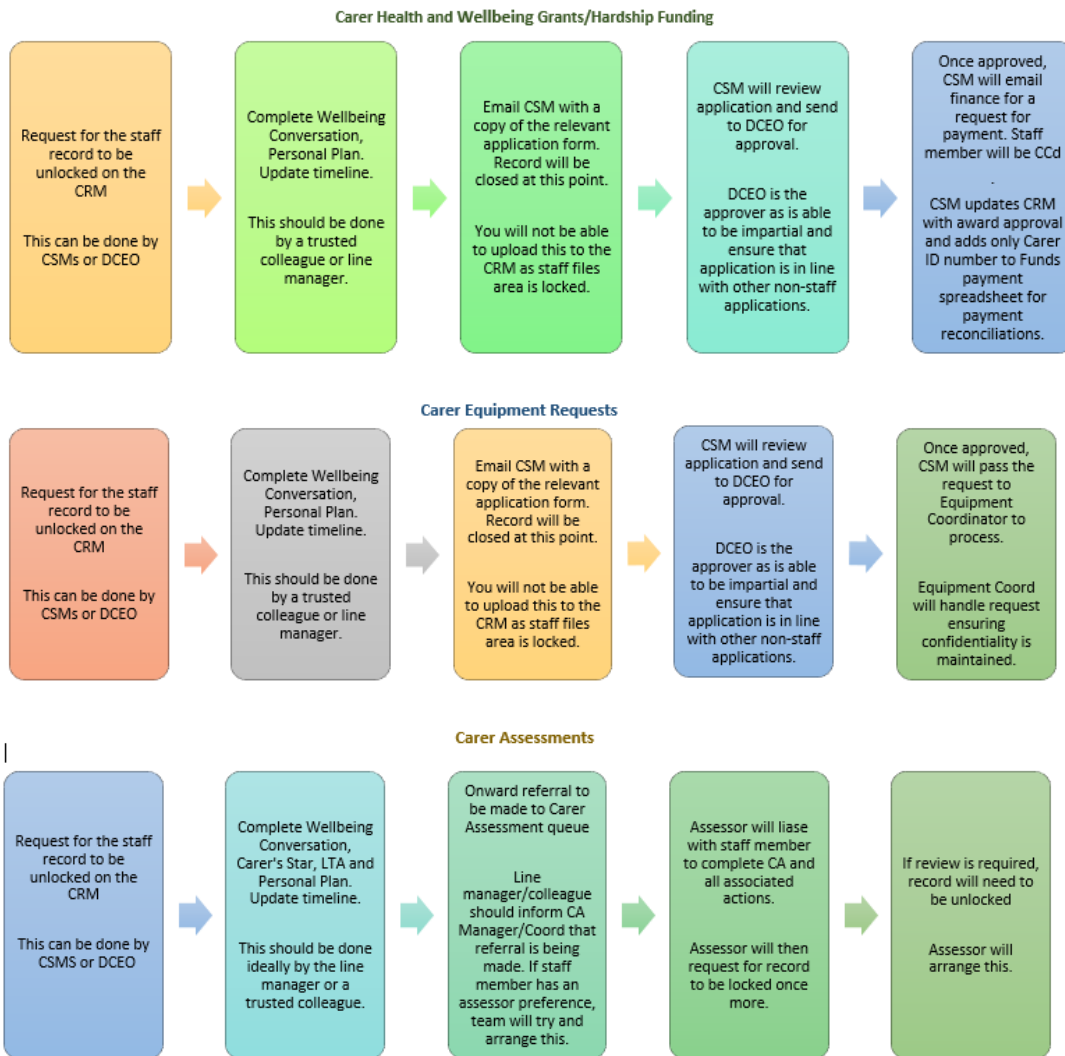
The flowchart below is in support of the Carers Policy and is available as a separate document on the HR SharePoint: [Staff Carer Process for Accessing CSWS Services Flow Chart May2023.pdf](#)

**Staff Carer Health and Wellbeing/CES Applications/Carer Assessment Requests**

All applications made by staff carers for Carer Health and Wellbeing Grants, Hardship Funding, Carer Equipment and Carer Assessments are treated with respect and confidentiality. Separate processes are involved for handling these applications to ensure that the minimum number of people are involved.

This process relates to CSWS Employee Wellbeing Policy and is correct as of May 2023.

The process for each is set out here:



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