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Finance and Resources
HR and Organisational Development

Carers Leave Policy

Supporting employees with caring responsibilities

This policy applies to Local Government Employees, Craft Operatives and Chief Officers
(Excluding Teachers)

Contents	Page no
1. Introduction	3
2. Purpose and Aims	3
3. Scope	3
4. Definition Carers and Carers Leave	3
5. Carers Register and Carers Leave	4
6. Making a request for Carers Leave	5
7. Considering a request and reaching a decision	5
8. Confidentiality	6
9. Impact Assessment	6
10. Monitoring and Review	6
11. Appendix 1 – Carers Register Application Form – HR&OD/CL/1	7
12. Appendix 2 – Carers Leave Request Form - HR&OD/CL/2	9

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council recognises that employees increasingly have caring responsibilities which sometimes can be challenging and may impact their ability to balance their work and home life.
- 1.2 For carers, work can often represent a lifeline, not only financially, but in providing a life outside of caring. However, juggling work and caring responsibilities can be extremely stressful. Research carried out by the Scottish Government indicates that over 3 million people in the UK combine paid work with caring responsibilities. In Scotland this figure is 270,000 and equates to 1 in 8 people across the Scottish workforce having caring responsibilities, with this likely to increase significantly as the population gets older and people remain in the work for longer.

2. Purpose and Aims

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to support the Council in managing carers leave requests with a clear, fair and transparent process, whilst supporting employees who are primary carers to balance home and caring commitments.
- 2.2 The policy aims to:
 - Demonstrate the Council's commitment to supporting employees who have caring responsibilities;
 - Provide support to help employees balance working and caring commitments;
 - Support the Council to identify and engage with employees who are carers to understand their daily challenges and seek to remove any barriers;
 - Raise awareness of support provisions available through the Council, for example, health and well-being and financial.
- 2.3 This policy compliments the Council's flexible working and special leave provisions already in place and will support employees who are primary carers with paid time off work.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Council employees, excluding Teachers. It does not apply to Teaching staff who have their own arrangements in place.

4. Definition of a Carer and Carers Leave

- 4.1 For the purpose of this policy, a carer is an employee who provides unpaid care to an ill, frail or disabled relative or partner. The employee is the primary carer and this is not the same as someone who provides care professionally or through a voluntary organisation.

4.2 Paid carers leave may be requested by employees with primary caring responsibilities. Although not an exhaustive list, some examples of when paid carers leave may be requested include:

- To manage an unplanned or temporary caring emergency assisting a relative or partner who is ill or injured and is unable to look after themselves;
- To make arrangements for the provision of care for a relative or partner who is ill or injured;
- To manage an unexpected breakdown of care arrangements for a relative or partner;
- To manage the transition from home to care home or hospital to home/care home;
- To provide support when caring for a terminally ill relative or partner;
- To manage the hospitalisation of a relative or partner.

5. Carers Register and Carers Leave

5.1 In order to qualify for paid carers leave, employees must firstly register themselves on the Council's Carers Register. This can be done by completing the registration form available at **Appendix 1**. To register employees must meet the qualifying criteria below:

- They are the primary carer;
- They have at least 26 weeks continuous service;
- Be able to provide evidence of their caring responsibilities and relationship through their GP or through their local Carers Centre such as Renfrewshire Carers Centre.

If this type of evidence is not available, other forms of evidence that demonstrate a primary caring responsibility exists will be considered.

5.2 The Carers Register will be held by HR & OD in full compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations. Placement on the register will be reviewed annually or following a change in circumstances. It will be the responsibility of the carer to inform HR & OD of any changes in circumstances.

5.3 The line manager will seek confirmation from HR & OD of their employee's eligibility to request paid carers leave. Employees who are eligible can request a maximum of **1 week** paid carers leave in any leave year. Carers leave approved will be pro-rated in line with an employee's hours/work pattern. Requests for carers leave can be made in hours, half or full days or a complete week.

5.4 The Council provides access to other support for employees with caring responsibilities that may compliment or be an alternative to carers leave. These include the:

- Special Leave Policy;
- Flexible Working Policy, including reduction in hours, compressed hours, home working;
- Supporting Attendance Policy;
- Occupational Health and Employee Counselling;
- Annual Leave and Additional Annual Leave;
- Flexi time.

5.5 The Council will establish a new Carers Support Network Group for employees on the Carers Register. This peer to peer group will provide an opportunity for employees to meet and share experiences of their caring responsibilities and support provisions available. The Council will invite local carers support organisations within Renfrewshire to participate.

6. Making a request for Carers Leave

6.1 Once listed on the Council's Carers Register, employees **wishing to apply for carers leave should complete the form at Appendix 2 and submit it to their line manager as soon as is practically possible. Employees must give reasonable notice to allow their manager to fairly consider their request. Key information the line manager will consider includes the following:**

- The employee has applied to and is listed on the Carers Register;
- Confirmation that the employee is the primary carer and details of the caring relationship;
- Confirmation that they have 26 weeks continuous service;
- The amount of carers leave requested (hours/days/week);
- The date the carers leave will start and finish;
- Details of any shared carers leave with a spouse, partner, family member or friend who also works with the Council.

7. Considering a request and reaching a decision

7.1 To consider a request for carers leave, a line manager on receipt must obtain confirmation from HR & OD that the employee is listed on the Council's Carers Register.

Note – Managers should consider the request and inform the employee of the decision within a reasonable timescale, taking into account the circumstances of the request. For example, within a period of up to a maximum of 14 days.

The line manager should discuss the request with the employee, taking into account the carer's personal circumstances. The line manager must clarify the reasons for the application and ensure that carers leave is the most appropriate option as other alternatives may be more suitable. Before

reaching a decision on the request, the line manager should consider the following:

- The carers relationship to the relative or partner;
- The nature of the relative or partner's illness;
- The expected duration of the carers leave;
- The operational impact on service delivery and costs associated with any backfilling if required and/or whether work needs to be redistributed.

Costs should be considered based on what is reasonable and fair, taking into account the circumstances of the request.

- 7.2 Requests for Carers Leave must be recorded in the same way as Special Leave requests. Managers must also inform Customer and Business Services and the Payroll section when carers leave has been approved.
- 7.3 If a line manager refuses a request for carers leave, the employee must receive from the line manager written confirmation providing the business reasons for the refusal. The manager's decision is final.
- 7.4 In the event that two employees of the Council share primary caring responsibilities for a relative, only one request for carers leave can be approved (unless the two employees are able to share the carers leave provision of 1 week). For example, if a married couple have caring responsibilities for a relative, carers leave could be shared with one employee receiving three days and the other employee receiving two days.

8. Confidentiality

- 8.1 Information relating to carers leave should be recorded, maintained and processed confidentially and securely by the relevant Service, HR and Organisational Development and Customer and Business Services. Information processed may include manual or electronic records and will be done so in line with the General Data Protection Regulations and will be used only to monitor the effectiveness of this policy.

9. Impact assessment

- 9.1 This policy has been impact assessed in line with the Council's obligation to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

10. Monitoring and review

- 10.1 This policy will be reviewed regularly and in line with any legislative and organisational changes. The recognised trade unions will be consulted on any future changes to this policy.

APPENDIX 1 – CARERS REGISTER APPLICATION FORM

<p>RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL</p> <p>CARERS REGISTER APPLICATION FORM - HR&OD/CL/1</p>	 <p>Renfrewshire Council</p>
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The Council’s Carers Register is a list of employees who have identified themselves as primary carers. The purpose of the register is to help the Council identify primary carers to ensure that they receive appropriate support and information. Acceptance on the register is conditional upon employees meeting the qualifying criteria set out in the Carers Leave Policy (Section 5) and detailed on this form.

1. Personal details

Name:			
Designation:		Service:	
Work location:		Home Address:	
Employee number:		Work phone Number:	

2. Application/Eligibility Criteria

I would like to apply to for inclusion on the Council’s Carers Register. I am making this application as I have primary caring responsibilities as defined within the Carers Leave Policy (Section 5).

I confirm:

I am a primary carer for a relative/partner (in line with the Carers Leave Policy)

I have provided evidence of my primary caring responsibilities from my GP/Carers Centre

I have 26 weeks continuous service

Please provide details if you share primary caring responsibilities with another Council

3. Consent and Declaration

I consent to you sharing this information with my line manager in the event that I request a period of carers leave.

I confirm that all information I have given on this application form for the Carers Register is accurate.

Signature:

Date:


4. GP/Carers Centre Confirmation

I confirm that _____ is a primary carer and regularly carries out primary caring responsibilities.

GP/Carers Centre Signature or Stamp:

Date:

APPENDIX 2 – CARERS LEAVE REQUEST FORM

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL CARERS LEAVE REQUEST FORM - HR&OD/CL/2		 Renfrewshire Council	
Note to the employee			
This form should be used to make a request for paid Carers Leave. Please ensure all sections are completed before sending to your line manager for their consideration.			
Note to the line manager			
On receiving a request for paid carers leave, the line manager should discuss the request with The employee, taking into account the carer’s personal circumstances. The line manager must clarify the reasons for the request with the employee and ensure that carers leave is the most appropriate option. Before reaching a decision on the request, the line manager should consider the following:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the carers relationship to the relative or partner; • the nature of the relative or partner’s illness; • the expected duration of the carers leave; • the operational impact on service delivery and costs associated with any backfilling if required and/or whether work needs to be redistributed. 			
1. Personal details			
Name:			
Designation:		Service:	
Work location:		Home Address:	
Employee number:		Work phone Number:	
2. Carers Leave Request			
I confirm I am eligible to apply for paid Carers Leave and I listed on the Carers Register as per Section 5 of the Carers Leave Policy.			
I would like to request paid Carers Leave as detailed below:			
Start Date	End Date	No of days requested	Reason for Request

3. Carers Leave Request Form Declaration

I confirm that all information I have given on this form is accurate. If this request is found not to be genuine the Council's Disciplinary Procedures will be applied.

Signature:

Date:

4. Outcome of Carers Leave request – To be completed by the line manager

Manager Name:

Designation:

**Request
Approved/Declined**

If the request is declined please provide the reason:

**HR & OD
Representative:**

I have checked that the employee is listed on the Carers Register and meets the qualifying criteria.

Signature:

Date:

**Date passed to
CBS & Payroll:
(if approved)**