

Carers Policy

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Version Data

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1	Victoria Aldridge Head of Patient Experience/Chair of Staff Carers Network	First Draft (New Policy) October 2023 Updated: 21 st November 2023 and 8 th February 2024	New Policy

1. Quick Reference Guide

- Definitions of a carer and their challenges
- Responsibilities of staff and line managers
- Flexible leave and reasonable adjustments
- Introducing the Carers Leave Act 2023
- Carers Rights
- Introduction to the Staff Carers Network

2. Background

- 2.1.** Research from Carers UK*¹ suggests that as many as 1 in 7 people in UK workplaces are juggling work and caring responsibilities. Caring for another person can have significant impacts on finances, health and employment. The average person has a 50:50 chance of caring by the age of 50.
- 2.2.** 59% of unpaid care is undertaken by women (Census 2021). Women are also more likely to become carers and to provide more hours of unpaid care than men. More women than men provide high intensity care at ages when they would expect to be in paid work (Petrillo and Bennett, 2022) *¹.
- 2.3.** Many working carers also face being tired, stressed and struggling to manage their own health as well. As a result, on average 600 people a day leave work to care (Carers UK, Juggling Work and Care) *¹.
- 2.4.** Additional research also suggests that 1 in 3 NHS staff provide unpaid care (NHS staff survey, 2022) *¹.

*¹ Source: [Carers UK](#) – [accessed 4th October 2023]

3. Purpose

- 3.1.** The purpose of this policy is to ensure that staff who have caring responsibilities for another person outside of their place of work understand their rights, entitlements and are also encouraged to identify themselves and ask for help when they need it.
- 3.2.** Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust is committed to ensuring that our staff who have caring responsibilities feel assured with equality of opportunities when requesting support for their caring role.
- 3.3.** This policy seeks to acknowledge the barriers and challenges of caring and aims to serve as guidance for both staff carers and line managers in relation to flexible working, reasonable adjustments and accessing support.

4. Definition of carers

- 4.1.** A carer is anyone, (including children) who look after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty,

disability, mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.

- 4.2. The activities that carers undertake are wide ranging, including help with personal care; help with mobility; managing medication; practical household tasks; emotional support; and help with financial matters or paperwork.
- 4.3. **Staff carers** are defined as employees of the Trust who identify with the carer descriptions in 4.1 and 4.2. When referring to carers, this definition is inclusive of both adult and young carers, however for the purposes of this policy, the assumption of a staff carer is that they are an adult.
- 4.4. Caring for children without additional needs is covered under the parental leave guidance [section of the Special Leave Policy](#) which allows for up to 18 weeks per child up to the age of 18 unpaid leave (capped at 4 weeks per year). See full guidance for exemptions and minimum service requirements.

5. Barriers to identifying a Carer

- 5.1. Caring for someone can often be complicated by the relationship they have with the cared for person, their want to protect their confidentiality and not feeling comfortable to disclose the full extent of their situation. They may also not have the consent of the person they care for.
- 5.2. There are sometimes barriers posed by cultural or familial expectations^{*2}. For many carers from Black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds some languages lack a distinct word for 'carer' making it more difficult for them to identify themselves in this way.

^{*2} Carers UK [Press release](#) 09/02/2023

- 5.3. Some caring responsibilities are hidden because of stigma and lack of understanding – for example, those caring for a person with a mental health condition or an addiction.
- 5.4. Caring for someone from a distance - i.e. supporting an elderly parent who does not live with the carer can also mean carers do not identify themselves as the support they provide may not be daily or within their own home.

6. Challenges of Caring

- 6.1.** Caring responsibilities can be transient or long-term, they can be stable and manageable for significant periods of time and then spontaneously change.
- 6.2.** Caring can be unpredictable and triggered by a crisis situation. It can happen suddenly, for example following a stroke, an accident or other significant trauma resulting in a change to independence.
- 6.3.** Conversely, it can develop gradually, for example a partner developing a debilitating long term health condition or the gradual deterioration of an aging parent.
- 6.4.** Some caring needs can be pre-empted, for example babies born with pre-known disabilities or special needs.

7. Our responsibilities as a Trust

- 7.1.** To continue to explore different ways of getting the right information to employees and managers, at the right time. Acknowledging that people will often only take information about caring on board when it becomes relevant to them.
- 7.2.** Encourage individuals to identify themselves as carers through education, use of language and staff surveys.
- 7.3.** Educate managers by including information and training packages aimed at ensuring understanding of the challenges for carers and how to signpost appropriate support.
- 7.4.** Continue to develop and maintain this policy in accordance with good practice and legislative changes.
- 7.5.** Adoption of the new Carers Leave Act 2023 and continued responsibility to ensure policies and guidance reflect new changes and new legislation.

8. Your responsibilities as a Staff Carer

- 8.1.** Employees are not obliged to disclose to their line manager that they are caring for someone but are actively encouraged to do so. This will

help Line Managers and the Trust to provide appropriate support when this is needed.

- 8.2. The Trust are committed to developing a compassionate culture where line managers and staff carers are engaged in regular and open dialogues about caring responsibilities. It is important that staff feel comfortable to have these conversations and where they do not feel able to, that there are alternative routes to seek support.
- 8.3. Staff carers who feel unable to discuss their caring circumstances with their line manager directly may contact the Staff Carers Network (see section [15](#)) or a member of the Organisation Development & People (OD&P) team for further support (sft.peopleops@nhs.net).
- 8.4. There may also be occasions when the individual who is being cared for uses our services. It is important in these situations that the staff carer recognises that they will be equally treated as a carer and not as a staff member and all the rules around patient confidentiality will be maintained at all times.
- 8.5. Staff who have caring responsibilities and who may require flexibility, reasonable adjustments or time off should where possible ensure to provide their line manager with as much notice as possible so that the operational function of the service/department can be appropriately balanced with these requests.
- 8.6. Staff carers are not obliged but are encouraged, to register their caring status on ESR (see section [10](#)) following discussion with their line manager. This status is linked to the employee record so will move with the staff member should they change positions or departments within the Trust.
- 8.7. Staff carers are not required to provide any formal “evidence” of their caring responsibilities in order to claim [Carers Leave](#) or any other form of flexible leave needed in response to their caring responsibilities.

9. Your responsibilities as a Line Manager

- 9.1. Ensure you have a clear understanding of what is meant by a “staff carer” and that you are able to support your staff member with identifying themselves and signposting where appropriate.
- 9.2. Refer a staff carer to this policy once they have been identified.
- 9.3. Signpost to the Staff Carers Network for support or information (see section [15](#))

- 9.4. Encourage your member of staff to record their carer status on ESR (see section [10](#))
- 9.5. Routinely undertake supportive and compassionate wellbeing conversations
- 9.6. Referral to occupational health where or when appropriate (sft.occupationalhealth@nhs.net)
- 9.7. Consult relevant SFT's flexible working policy when required to consider what reasonable adjustments can be made in order to support individual circumstances (see section [13](#).)
- 9.8. Line Managers do not require their staff member to provide evidence of their caring responsibilities, this disclosure should be based on mutual trust.
- 9.9. Approve requests for carer's leave, noting that leave cannot be refused only postponed in line with organisational needs in the same was as other statutory rights (like paid holiday).

10. Recording Carer Status on ESR

- 10.1. Once an employee has been identified as a carer, this is encouraged to be recorded on their Electronic Staff Record (ESR). It is the responsibility of the line manager to record this through the Manager Self Service portal. Full guidance on how to add a Carer can be found on [SALi](#).

11. Carers Leave Act 2023

- 11.1. The Carer's Leave Act has now received Royal Assent and will become law. The law will come into force from the 6th April 2024. The Trust have chosen to launch a Carer's leave policy ahead of it becoming law.
- 11.2. This new Act proposes to give unpaid carers balancing unpaid care with paid employment the legal right to five days of unpaid carer's leave.
- 11.3. This leave is available from the first day of employment with the Trust.

- 11.4.** This leave can be used for planned and foreseen caring commitments.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/18/enacted> [accessed 9th November 2023]

12. How to apply for Carer's Leave

- 12.1.** Carer's leave is a day one right for all employees at the Trust.
- 12.2.** You can apply for up to one week (five working days) of unpaid carer's leave per year (pro rata for part time staff). The leave can be taken flexibly, either in individual or half-days, up to a block of one week.
- 12.3.** This policy and procedure apply to all employees engaged on a contract of employment including fixed-term contracts. It excludes agency, contractor, bank and volunteer colleagues.
- 12.4.** The legislation does not require an employee to notify the Trust in writing regarding their request to take Carer's Leave, instead applications should be made using Health Roster, following an initial conversation with your line manager. As far as practicably possible carer's leave should be used for planned and foreseen caring responsibilities however it is accepted that this may not always be possible.
- 12.5** Staff carers are not required to provide any formal "evidence" of their caring responsibilities to claim [Carers Leave](#)

13. Flexible working

- 13.1.** In addition, all employees with caring responsibilities are entitled to request to work flexibly in order to attend to the needs of the individual whom they care for. This should be done in line with the Flexible Working Policy.
- 13.2.** Employees have a responsibility to discuss their needs with their line manager so that reasonable adjustments and flexible working options may be fully considered.

13.3. Employees can make a formal request ([Flexible Working Policy](#)) for flexible working. This request must:

13.3.1. Be made in writing

13.3.2. The Trust has the right to refuse the request if there is a valid business reason for doing so. However, if this request is refused, the employee is entitled to appeal the decision informally, by talking to their line manager, or formally in writing.

13.3.3. Your employer must consider your request within 10 calendar days of receiving your request, either by arranging a meeting with you (to discuss it in more detail) or by confirming it has been agreed in writing.

13.4. Any adjustments agreed should be documented using the appropriate application forms and reflected in ESR.

13.5. The Trust offers various opportunities for flexible working – these are summarised below, full details of these can be found in the [Flexible Working Policy](#) along with the necessary application forms and ESR recording guidance.

14. Support for Line Managers

14.1. The Staff Carers Network are able to offer short team talks or dedicated line manager training sessions. These sessions are aimed at helping staff to identify and support others who may have caring responsibilities outside of work.

14.2. Training and talks aim to cover:

- Barriers to identifying carers in the workplace
- The importance of regular wellbeing conversations; flexible working and compassionate leadership
- How to record a carer on ESR
- An introduction to Carers Rights and the new Carers Leave Act 2023
- Signposting for support

See links below for more information on SaLi intranet, regarding the above topics:

- [Resources for Line Managers for those with Caring Responsibilities](#)
- [Training for Line Managers](#)

14.3. Line manager training can be accessed via [LEARN \(MLE\)](#) register for “Identifying and Supporting our Carers” to attend. More information and support can be obtained through the Staff Carers Network: sft.staffcarers@nhs.net or consult the [Staff Carers Intranet Page](#).

15. Carers Rights

15.1. The right not to be discriminated against. Employers cannot treat carers less favourably than other people who do not have caring responsibilities.

15.2. The right to request flexible working.

15.3. The right to take time off work to deal with emergencies involving dependants. i.e. usual care arrangements have broken down or been disrupted, death, illness or accident involving a dependant. This is provided for in the Emergency leave policy provisions (link to policy).

15.4. The right to one week of unpaid carer's leave (coming in 2024) – See section [11](#).

16. Staff Carers Network – Support for Carer’s

16.1. The Staff Carer Network was established in November 2022. The Network is currently chaired by the Head of Patient Experience and Co-Chaired by our Carers Champion and Volunteer. The Network has Executive Sponsorship from the Director of Integrated Governance. Meet the team here on [SALi](#)

16.2. The Network meets regularly, through various formats including formal meetings, staff cafes, pop up events and trolley dashes. The Network will also use specific awareness raising opportunities such as Carers Week and Carers Rights Day to highlight caring issues and the support available. Full details of the Networks plans can be found here on [SALi](#)


16.3. There is a dedicated Carers Corner in the Healthcare Library which contains various support resources and condition specific information. If there is any additional or specific information you would like, please enquire with the Healthcare Library.

- 16.4.** The Network can be contacted through the dedicated email address: sft.staffcarers@nhs.net
- 16.5.** The Network can advise of both internal support and services that may be available within the Trust and also advice and signpost to external support that may be suitable.
- 16.6.** The Trust is currently supporting the Network to achieve a Carer Confident Employer status, progress against this accreditation can be found here on [SALi](#)
- 16.7.** The Network works closely with Carers UK as part of the Care Confident Employer accreditation, staff requiring practical support can also access this directly from Carers UK via their website: [Practical support | Carers UK](#) or by calling their UK telephone Helpline on **0808 808 7777** from **Monday to Friday, 9am – 6pm (excluding Bank Holidays)** or contact them by email (advice@carersuk.org).

17. Related Policies

- Alcohol & Substance Misuse Policy ([link](#))
- Dignity at Work (Bullying and Harassment Policy) ([link](#))
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure ([link](#))
- Equality and Inclusion Policy ([link](#))
- Flexible Working Policy ([link](#))
- Freedom to Speak Up (Whistleblowing) ([link](#))
- Grievance Policy ([link](#))
- Parental Leave Guidance ([link](#))
- Special Leave (Paid and Unpaid) Policy ([link](#))
- Stress and Wellbeing at Work Policy ([link](#))

Appendices

Appendix	Title	File / Link
A	Types of Flexible Working	 Appendix A - Types of Flexible Working.

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