

# Harlow Council Carers Leave Policy

## Document Information

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## **1. Scope & Purpose**

- 1.1 This policy applies to individuals directly employed by Harlow Council.  
The purpose of this policy is to help employees balance their work and caring commitments, allowing them to continue working and be effective in their role with minimal disruption to the council.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 The Council recognises and values the contribution of carers; and understands the additional pressures carers face when managing both their work and caring responsibilities. To support our employees with caring responsibilities the Council offers up to 5 days' paid carers' leave per annum (pro-rated for part-time employees). The offering of 5 days paid carers' leave is in addition to other special leave provisions and available to those who satisfy the eligibility criteria.

## **3. Eligibility criteria**

- a. Everyone's caring responsibilities are different, and people may join the council with pre-existing caring responsibilities. Therefore, employees are eligible to request, with appropriate notice, carers leave upon commencing employment with the council. However, to be eligible a carer must have a relationship with the individual which falls within the one of the below categories:
- A spouse or civil partner
  - An employee's child
  - A parent or parents of partner

- A person who lives in the same household as the employee (otherwise than by reason of being their employee, tenant, lodger, or boarder)
  - A person who reasonably relies on an employee for care, for example an elderly neighbour with no relatives, who is living alone.
- b. In addition, the individual requiring care must have a long-term care need. The care need may be due to illness or injury (physical or mental), a disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010 or issues related to old age. In most cases, one or two days will be the most that is needed to deal with the immediate issues and arrange longer-term care if necessary.
- c. Employees may be granted up to 5 days paid Carer's leave (pro-rata for part-time employees) within any 12-month period. Carers leave can be taken flexibly as whole or half days or a block of one week.
- d. Carers leave will not affect annual or sick leave provisions and employees are not required to exhaust their annual leave before carers leave is granted.
- e. Approved applications must be recorded by completing an authorised absence form to submit to the employee's line Manager

#### **4. What carers leave can be used for**

- a. Carers leave can be used to carry out a wide range of caring activities which may include one or a combination of the following:
- **Providing personal support**, such as keeping an eye out for someone, keeping them company and staying in touch. Accompanying someone to medical or other appointments.
  - **Attendance at appointments**, concerning the welfare and care of above, (e.g. child guidance, making arrangements for resettlement of people in long-term sheltered accommodation/nursing home, psychiatric care etc).
  - **Providing practical support**, such as making meals, going shopping for them, laundry, cleaning, gardening, maintenance, and other help around the home.
  - **Helping with official or financial matters**, such as helping with paperwork, dealing with 'officials' (also over the phone and the internet), paying bills/rents/rates, collecting pension/benefits.
  - **Providing personal and/or medical care**, such as collecting prescriptions, giving medications, changing dressings, helping them move around the home, getting dressed, feeding, washing, bathing, using the toilet.
  - **Making arrangements**, such as dealing with social services or the voluntary sector, moving someone into a care home, making home adjustments or adaptations.

This list is not exhaustive, and Carer's leave may be granted for other reasons which fall under the spirit of this policy.

- b. All time off work should be recorded in the relevant HR systems.

## **5. Making a request**

- a. Where an unforeseen situation arises, employees should contact their line manager as early as possible to inform them of the situation and request leave. Where an employee has to accompany someone on a planned appointment, employees should give their manager as much notice as possible; the leave must be requested in advance of the date required and where reasonably possible notice should be twice the length of the leave being requested, plus one day.
- b. Legally, line managers cannot unreasonably decline a request for carers leave however, in some circumstances it may be necessary to postpone the leave. The grounds on which they can do so will be strictly limited to where the manager considers that the operation of their service would be unduly disrupted. Managers should discuss with their employee a new arrangement if they are unable to approve the original request.
- c. All approved requests must be recorded by the line manager on the HR system. If Carer's leave has been authorised, the employee should complete an authorised absence form to submit to their line Manager. The manager should then record the leave on iTrent system, and the form must be scanned to HR.

## **6. Identification and disclosure**

- a. Carers are not required to disclose to their line manager their caring responsibilities, however the success of this policy will rely on managers and employees having open and honest discussions therefore employees are encouraged to do so.
- b. Upon disclosing caring responsibilities, managers should inform employees of the support options available within the council. Please contact Human Resources for support options.
- c. Carers are not required to provide evidence to request carers leave, however false claims for carers' leave will be considered serious and may be handled in line with the Council's disciplinary policy.

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