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Carers

Guide

About this guide

At NHS Golden Jubilee, we are fully committed to promoting an environment where staff are supported and we have a range of flexible working policies and practices to support carers manage their work responsibilities around their personal lives. Individuals drawn into a caring role may face challenges in trying to balance caring responsibilities with paid employment. As a result, carers may be compelled to reduce working hours, take time off work or even decide to give up work entirely.

This guidance is intended to assist staff and managers by highlighting the range of flexible working policies and advice that exist to help carers manage their work and personal circumstances. This guidance should help colleagues who are carers, as well as their managers, by outlining our relevant work life balance policies.

The organisation recognises the importance of having carer-friendly employment practices and policies in place, which can assist carers remain in, or take up employment, if they so wish. This guidance applies to all NHS Golden Jubilee staff.

What is a carer?

A carer is anyone who is responsible for looking after or supporting a family member, friend or partner who is older, disabled, seriously ill, a person with mental health problems or an addiction and cannot cope without the support, and the care and support provided is unpaid.

In Scotland, around 1 in 7 people within the workforce is currently caring for someone and it is forecast that this number will rise significantly as the population gets older. It is often the case that people may not self-identify as a carer as it may be viewed as being a normal part of their responsibilities as a supportive family member or friend.

Asking someone to imagine a separation between their role as a spouse, parent, sibling, child or friend from that of their care role with that individual may be a difficult, if not impossible, task.

Being a carer can place a strain on an individual as they try to balance their own needs with the needs of the person they are caring for.

Identifying support for staff

It is recommended that a member of staff who has carer responsibilities discusses this with their line manager. Where they prefer, they may contact a member of the Human Resources (HR) team or Occupational Health for an initial discussion.

During the initial discussion the member of staff and line manager should discuss the circumstances and explore what support may be needed, such as adjustments within the workplace or any additional support they may need including Occupational Health Support. It may be that initially no adjustments or changes are required, however, the member of staff and line manager will continue to communicate any changes should the circumstances change.

If any changes are put in place, the line manager should ensure that these arrangements are subject to regular review to ensure that the member of staff is continuing to manage to cope and balance their work life and external circumstances.

The scenario

“My child has been admitted to hospital after being unwell. I have been told that they have a condition that is manageable through ongoing treatment and review, however, they need to stay in hospital for a few days before going home. I have been given various appointments to attend at the hospital clinic over the coming weeks and have been told that I need to observe them for 24 hours after the initial treatments. I’m due on shift tonight but I don’t think I will be able to come in. I know that I have a mixture of upcoming day and night shifts and I’m worried I won’t be able to commit to my shifts because of the appointments. I’m feeling a bit overwhelmed – what should I do?”

The solution

You should contact your department and ask to speak to your manager to explain that you will not be in for your shift. Your manager may be able to confirm at this stage how your current absence will be facilitated or alternatively they may advise you this will be confirmed when you come back to work. Either way it is important that you arrange some further time to meet with your manager to discuss the support you need in the forthcoming weeks. In order for your manager to assess what support can be offered they will need to know the dates and times of your appointments and any aftercare arrangements that are required.

A change in your working hours or shift pattern could be offered to ensure you are available to attend all planned appointments and look after your child after their treatment. Alternatively it may be an option to arrange some leave if you feel this is needed. The more information you can provide the better as it will help plan things in advance and ensure you are adequately supported. Further information about the support that may be available to you can be found in the NHS Scotland Workforce policies of Worklife Balance Policies (Flexible Work Pattern, Special Leave, Career Break and Parental Leave Policies).

Occupational Health Service

It is recognised that carers may suffer from poor health as a direct consequence of caring and our Occupational Health Department can provide advice on fitness to work, including making any recommendations on workplace adjustments on a temporary or permanent basis, and provide access to other services such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).



In addition, the [Staff Carers page on the Staffnet Hub](#) has a range of support, advice and resources available for staff.

By putting support in place for staff and reducing stress levels, it will improve the wellbeing of carers and reduce any flexibility by making any reasonable adjustments in the working environment to enable carers to meet their personal responsibilities.

Worklife balance policies

There is a suite of Worklife Balance Policies which have been developed nationally in Partnership with staff. These policies provide all staff with a range of flexible working options and leave arrangements to help balance lifestyle, whilst maintaining and promoting the best possible service to our patients and service users within a 24 hours a day, 365 days a year service.

The range of policies recognise that successful service delivery depends upon our workforce – staff are at their best when they are able to strike a balance between life inside and outside of their work. Responsibilities are clearly defined in the policies and staff, line managers and Trade Union Representatives are required to:

▶ Staff responsibilities

- recognise that with rights come responsibilities to act reasonably;
- make use of the provisions of these policies fairly and reasonably; and
- be prepared to agree solutions and working arrangements that take account not only of their own needs, but also the needs of colleagues and the service.

▶ Line Managers' responsibilities

- ensure fairness and consistency in the application of the provisions set out within these policies;
- give genuine consideration to all applications made under the provisions set out within the policies and to ensure that no application is unreasonably refused;
- ensure that they understand their role and responsibilities under the policies, and that they seek further information and guidance where required; and
- support work to promote the provisions set out within the policies.

▶ Trade Union/professional organisation responsibilities

- support work to promote the provisions set out within national policy; and
- support employees and NHS Golden Jubilee in ensuring fairness and consistency in the application of the provisions set out within the national policy.

Short term arrangements

The Special Leave Policy is useful for carers who might need to organise leave on short notice, such as responding to an emergency, a breakdown of caring arrangements or time off to deal with domestic or unforeseen crises. This policy allows for up to a period of 1 week paid leave (with the possibility of an extension of up to a further week of paid or unpaid leave at the discretion of the manager).

The Special Leave Policy is applicable to all staff, irrespective of length of service, hours of work or grade, and no employee will suffer any detriment as a result of making an

The scenario

“My father has recently been diagnosed with a terminal condition. His health has recently deteriorated and he now needs more care. Although we have arranged a care package to help assist him during the day, he needs someone to stay with him overnight too. My brother lives overseas and my sister has young children so can only help at weekends so I will be the main carer for my dad. I’m not sure how I will be able to cope with caring for my dad and work. I’m worried I might need to leave my job - what can I do?”

The solution

You should speak with your manager as soon as possible. Depending on the circumstances it may be possible for you to access a period of leave if you feel you cannot work just now. Alternatively, you might be able to reduce your working hours on a temporary basis and discuss the hours and shifts you could work that would still allow you to look after your dad at night.

The support you need may change with your father’s health so it is important that you regularly speak with your manager and keep them up to date. It is also important to look after your own wellbeing at such difficult times so you may find it beneficial to access further support through Occupational Health or Spiritual Care. Further information about the support that may be available to you can be found in our suite of Worklife Balance Policies, (Flexible Working, Special Leave, Career Break Policies).



Long term arrangements

Sometimes carers may benefit from making more structural changes to contractual working patterns to enable the staff member's family life and work requirements to be balanced for an appropriate period.

Flexible work policies allow for such contingencies and all staff have a right to request these. In turn, managers have a duty to consider any such request seriously and consider how flexible working may contribute to a healthier work life balance for their staff. Some of the forms of flexible working provisions covered by the policies are described below.

► Flexible Work Pattern Policy

Staff members can request a change to the hours they work (i.e. work part-time), or a change to the times when they are required to work or a change to the place they are required to work. Consideration could also be given to compressed working hours where a staff member compresses their normal working hours into fewer working days.

This policy also describes the introduction of flexi-time, which is a system that a department can introduce whereby staff members may vary start and finish times at work.

Self-rostering could also be introduced - an arrangement when members of a team are allowed to be self-sufficient by scheduling their own shifts, whilst maintaining agreed service levels.

The scenario

“I help look after my niece when I am not at work. She has a condition that affects her mobility and has recently started a new school. As yet we don't have a care package in place to help with her personal needs when at school. My sister is on her own as her partner works away and I would really like to be there to support her. I have been told by my colleagues I can get special leave for this. How do I access this type of leave?”

The solution

Under these circumstances, you should speak to your manager to discuss which type of leave is appropriate. Although you help with your niece and would like to be there to provide support for her and your sister, for the purposes of special leave you are not regarded as the main carer, therefore it is unlikely this type of leave would be granted. However, you may be able to access some annual leave if you can provide your manager with the dates in advance. This would then allow you to provide your sister with support and assist your niece.



Job share

This enables staff members to work alternative work pattern hours while maintaining their career prospects and personal development.

Reduced working year

Enables a staff member's contract of employment to remain in place, but they take paid/unpaid leave during fixed periods of the year such as during school holidays.

Annualised hours

This enables contracted hours to be calculated over the period of a whole year. They may consist of both fixed and unallocated shifts, ensuring that core times are filled and remaining times are flexible.

Flexible home location

This applies to any post where work can be performed at or from home instead of from on site for a significant proportion of the contractual working hours.

Career break policy

This policy enables staff members to apply for an unpaid break from work where the contract of employment does not terminate.

The scenario

“My partner has a chronic health condition and has had to give up work because of their health. They have good and bad days, however, he is generally worse in the morning, but improves as the day goes on. He needs some help to get washed and dressed. He is independent otherwise and not yet ready to accept outside support. I’m feeling really stressed trying to juggle work and looking after my partner, but I’m not sure what options I have?”

The solution

You should speak to your manager to see what options are available to you. It is important to look after your own health too, so it might be helpful to make an appointment with Occupational Health for some support. Your manager can refer you or you can self-refer. It might be possible to agree a different shift pattern or working hours with your manager for a period of time.

Shorter shifts might be an option or even a range of flexible shifts if you can work more flexibly at weekends. If a longer-term adjustment is needed, redeployment to another role with more suitable working hours could also be considered, however, this would only be considered after exhausting all other options. This would also depend on whether there is a suitable role available. Further information about the support that may be available to you can be found in our suite of Worklife Balance Policies, (Flexible Work Pattern, Special Leave, Career Break Policies).

Further information and support

NHS Golden Jubilee is committed to improving and promoting health and wellbeing and preventing ill health within the workplace. It is recognised that as a result of their circumstances, carers may be more vulnerable to stress, potentially adversely affecting an individual's mental and physical wellbeing.

The NHS Golden Jubilee Health and Wellbeing Strategy promotion of physical and mental wellbeing in the workplace dovetails with the Scottish Government's commitment to carers in Scotland. More information can be found on the NHS Golden Jubilee Health and Wellbeing Hub website and Staffnet pages.

Within NHS Golden Jubilee the Lead Dementia Nurse, whilst primarily focused on patient care and support, is keen to provide advice and support to staff carers. In addition, Carer's Cafes which are run on the last Thursday of the month in the Golden Bistro are open to staff carers.

For further information, please contact the following:



HR department

Extensions 5188 / 5005 / 5569



Occupational Health

Extension 5435



Spiritual Care

Extension 5060



Lead Nurse Dementia

Extension 4278

Further information on the above contacts and also Confidential Contacts is available on Staffnet.