



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute  
Valuation Joint Board*

## Carers Leave Scheme

## Document Management - Version Control

<b>Carers Leave Scheme: Rationale/Driver for Review:</b>			
Introduction of Scheme to align with WDC scheme and to improve support for employed with personal difficulties. Additional provision for short term paid Carers Leave			
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## 1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board (the 'Joint Board') recognises the implications of, and its responsibilities under, the Equality Act 2010 and this Scheme enhances the support and assistance available to employees who have the responsibility of caring for an ill, frail or disabled family member, child, friend or partner.
- 1.2 For the purposes of this scheme those individuals who are cared for will be called 'dependants'. This does not include children who do not have a disability as relevant provision is made for and detailed in the Special Leave Scheme.
- 1.3 Carers provide unpaid care by looking after an ill, frail or disabled family member, child, friend or partner. These people are called carers but often don't see themselves as such and may simply view themselves as being a good partner, parent, son or daughter, friend or neighbour.
- 1.4 There are 6.5 million unpaid carers in the UK (1 in every 8 adults) and every day another 6,000 people take on a caring responsibility. Carers help with personal activities like getting washed and dressed, turning dependants in their sleep, helping to move about or administering medication. Carers may also help with shopping, laundry, cleaning, cooking, filling in forms or managing money/bills.
- 1.5 Employees who have caring responsibilities should talk to their manager to discuss their responsibilities, the impact of juggling these with work commitments and how the organisation can support them, perhaps with increased flexibility . At this point, the manager should highlight the relevant supports available. A 'Caring Conversations' form should be used to record this discussion (Appendix 1).
- 1.6 Employees of the Joint Board can be supported by the West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC)'s Carers' Support Network for ongoing assistance to all Employee Carers. This is an employee peer support group and is attended by The Carers of West Dunbartonshire Council, Macmillan Cancer Support and Working 4 U. In addition, WDC also operates a Carers' Register. This is a list of employee carers who are signed up to receive email updates on caring issues and meetings. Employees with caring responsibilities should be allowed time to attend this group where possible. Further details can be found on WDC's HR Online.
- 1.7 The Joint Board acknowledges that many of its' employees have to deal with the daily demands of caring for dependants and dealing with emergency situations. However, from time to time employees may find that longer term care for a seriously ill dependant is required. The Carers' Leave Scheme provides a range of leave options.

- 1.8** The following leave provisions should provide employees with good solutions to meet their caring responsibilities. They aim to encourage managers and employees to have open and honest discussions and to resolve these difficulties in a mutually acceptable manner. A flexible approach should be considered to support the employee to balance work and caring responsibilities.
- 1.9** Through the provision of Carers' Leave, the Joint Board aims to maximise employees' ability to remain in employment, when they would otherwise have needed to resign to provide care to a dependant. The Joint Board benefits by retaining valuable skills, knowledge and experience and improving wellbeing, resulting in improved engagement, loyalty and retention.
- 1.10** The impact and progress of the Carers' Leave Scheme will be reviewed in order to assess its effectiveness from both personal and organisational perspectives.

## **2. Key Facts**

- 2.1** There may be occasions when Carers' Leave is required. It may not always be appropriate or possible to use annual leave. The circumstances when the Scheme is applicable may vary, but could include:
- Time off to care for a dependant recovering from surgery/hospital stay.
  - Time off if a dependant has an emergency admission to hospital.
  - Time off to care for a dependant who is terminally ill.
  - Time off to provide respite care.
  - Time off to accompany a dependant to medical appointments.
  - Time off to attend assessments e.g. Single Shared Assessment.
- 2.2** Carers' Leave is considered paid or unpaid time away from work as a result of the employee's need to care for a dependant as defined in 1.1 – 1.4 above.

## **3. Paid Carers Leave (Short Term)**

- 3.1** If a Carer is required to accompany a dependant to attend a medical appointment with a GP, consultant or physician, or to be present for a needs assessment where possible, this should be arranged out-with working time. If this is not possible, time to accompany them would be granted as paid leave.
- 3.2** The Joint Board recognises that Carers may have to cope with an emergency situation and that they will need support and flexibility to manage these situations. In such occasions paid time off up to one day will be granted.

- 3.3 Short term leave will normally be paid up to a maximum of 3 occasions in a rolling 12 month period and should be requested and recorded using the Short Term Carers Leave request form.
- 3.4 Where an employee requires additional time to support dependants they should discuss this with their line manager in order that flexible working arrangements can be considered.

#### **4. Unpaid Carers Leave (Longer Term)**

- 4.1 There may be occasions when a longer period of leave is required to provide care for a dependant. In such circumstances a period of up to 12 weeks unpaid leave can be granted. Time can be requested in individual blocks of one week or more.
- 4.2 In order to support good financial management, the period of unpaid leave can be treated in one of two ways. The employee has the choice of an immediate deduction from salary or deductions spread over an extended period of time (up to a maximum of twelve months). The latter option ensuring that the employee does not have any periods of nil pay.
- 4.3 A minimum of 2 weeks notice is required to allow sufficient time for operational arrangements to be made. In exceptional circumstances, applications will be considered within this period.
- 4.4 All Carers' Leave granted will be counted as continuous service for contractual purposes.

#### **5. Guidance on Procedure**

##### Carers' Leave Procedure

- 5.1 If an employee wishes to request Carers' Leave, they must complete the relevant (Short/Long term) Carers' Leave form. Forms should be forwarded to the line manager in the first instance. Forms can be found on the DABVJB intranet and further information can be found on WDC HR Online.
- 5.2 Completed Long Term Leave forms should be passed to WDC Payroll section (see form for details) with a copy retained for inclusion in personnel files. Completed Short Term Leave forms need only be retained in personnel files, locally.
- 5.3 Carers' Leave should normally be granted. However, in exceptional circumstances and where services would be unduly disrupted if leave were taken during the period identified, the leave may be refused or postponed.

- 5.4** For periods of unpaid leave, the employee must decide at the point of application how salary deductions will be taken (e.g. single deduction, or spread over an agreed number of pay cycles).
- 5.5** Should the employee decide to have the immediate salary deduction and is a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme they will have up to one month from their return to work to “buy back” their pension for the unpaid period. Should the employee opt to spread the cost of the unpaid leave, they may opt to make other arrangements to top up their pension, e.g. Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVCs).

Full details can be found on WDC HR Online, by discussing with WDC Human Resources, or by contacting the relevant pension fund administrator.

- 5.6** Where the employee decides to spread the deductions from their pay they will be asked to sign an indemnity form agreeing to the amount and the period covered.
- 5.7** Should the employee leave the Joint Board before the amount owed is repaid, it will be deducted from their final pay. Where the full amount cannot be deducted from the final pay the employee will be issued with the appropriate account for the balance owed.
- 5.8** Additional money advice and support can be obtained from WDC’s Money Advice and Welfare Rights section on 0800 980 9070.
- 5.9** Full supporting information in relation to Carers’ Leave can be found on WDC HR Online, where additional support resources can also be found.

## **6.0 Related Policies, Schemes and Procedures**

- 6.1** Managers and employees should be aware of related policies to ensure that leave is being requested through the most appropriate route. These include:
- Disability Leave Scheme
  - Cancer Support Scheme
  - Special Leave Scheme

**Appendix 1**

**Caring Conversation Form**

<b>DABVJB Employee Notification of Caring Responsibilities</b>					
Name		Employee No		Position	
Location		Section		Line Manager	
Details of Caring Responsibilities					
Date Meeting with Line Manager					
Discussed:		Y/N	Comments		
DABVJB Carer Policy					
WDC Care Network meeting					
Time for Talking					
Carers of West Dunbartonshire					
Adjustments considered- include details of any adjustments agreed.					
WDC HR Notified					
Line Manager Signature				Date	
Employee Signature				Date	