

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

GUIDANCE FOR UNPAID CARERS IN THE WORKPLACE

27th JANUARY 2022

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN DISCUSSION WITH
THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER, THE DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET
MEMBER FOR COUNCIL BUSINESS, CLLR M WEBBER**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet endorsement for the staff guidance (Appendix 1) that is specifically designed to inform unpaid carers in the Council workforce about the support available to them to help manage and balance work and caring responsibilities, and to clarify this support formally for managers
- 1.2. The report also presents the business case to Cabinet for introducing a new leave of absence for employees who have unpaid caring responsibilities.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1. Endorse the Working Carers Guidance (Appendix 1) and support its implementation.
- 2.2. Endorse additional specific paid leave arrangements for unpaid carers within the workforce of up to 5 days per annum.
- 2.3. Endorse the pursuit of a recognised accreditation scheme for working carers ‘

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. According to the 2011 Census, there were 3 million people in the UK juggling work and unpaid care, out of a working age carer population of around 4.3 million.

- 3.2. More recent research¹ by Carers UK from 2019 suggests the number of working carers was far higher at 4.87 million people – or 1 in 7 of all workers but the Carers UK (The State of Caring report) published at the end of 2021 suggests the pandemic has increased the number of carers in the general population to 1 in 4.
- 3.3. Nearly half a million people (600 people every day) – have given up work in the past 2 years as a result of caring. Those aged 45 and over were more likely to do so, with women more likely to do so earlier and care for longer than men.
- 3.4. There are no figures available on the number of unpaid carers within the RCT workforce as this is not recorded on HR records. However, using current workforce figures provided by HR and the findings from 3.2 estimated projections are:

1 in 7 workers	1,556 carers in RCT
1 in 6 workers	1,815 carers in RCT
1 in 5 workers	2,178 carers in RCT
1 in 4 workers	2,723 carers in RCT

Of note in RCT around 74% of the workforce are female, and the largest staff group is aged 45-54 (around 32%), which is the prime age to become a carer. Given this staff demographic the actual numbers of carers are likely to be higher than in the general working population.

- 3.5. In April 2021, the Welsh Government introduced a new National Strategy for Unpaid Carers. The Strategy contains four key priorities for public bodies to implement through their work and services. The fourth requirement is a new addition compared to previous Welsh Government strategies:

WG priorities for Local authorities

- I. Identifying and recognising carers - all carers deserve to be recognised and supported to continue to care.***
- II. Supporting life alongside caring - all carers must have reasonable breaks from their caring role to enable them to maintain their capacity to care and have a life beyond caring.***
- III. Providing information, advice and assistance - it is important that all carers receive the right information and advice when needed and in an appropriate format.***
- IV. Supporting carers in education and the workplace – employers and educational / training settings should be supported to adapt their policies and practices enabling carers to work and learn alongside their caring role.***

¹ “Juggling work and unpaid care: A growing issue”, 2019, report by Carers UK.

- 3.6. Carers Wales define working carers as: *“Employees with unpaid caring responsibilities that have an impact on their working lives. These employees are responsible for the care and support of relatives or friends who are older, living with a disability or seriously ill and unable to care for themselves.”*
- 3.7. In RCT a working group was convened in spring 2021 comprised of representatives from the People Development team, the Diversity team, HR and Adult Services to scope the possibility of introducing more specific support for unpaid carers within the RCT workforce (also referred to as working carers).
- 3.8. The working group conducted a SNAP survey with staff across the Authority in June 2021 to understand staff experience and consider priorities for support. The outcome of the survey is attached as Appendix 2 but in summary:
- Most respondents were not aware or not clear on what support they could access as unpaid carers now or in the future.
 - Most unpaid carers have used flexible working and annual leave to manage their caring role alongside their paid work.
 - 65% of respondents rated the challenge of managing paid work and caring as 3 or 4 on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being not at all challenging and 5 being extremely challenging).
 - There is evidence of differences in the way unpaid carers feel supported by their line managers. Rating the support provided; 34% said their manager understood their needs very well, whilst 21% said their manager did not understand their needs well at all.
 - The biggest support managers could provide seems to be allowing flexibility in work and showing understanding of the caring role.
 - Specific carers leave, time off to attend hospital appointments and increased flexibility in work were the most frequent suggestions for what RCT could do to further support carers, followed by clearer procedures and guidelines, and increased understanding among managers.
- 3.9. In response to the survey findings a draft Working Carers Guidance has prepared by the working group (Appendix 1). The guidance suggests small adjustments that could be explored within the workplace to support unpaid carers. It provides a pro forma for employees and managers to guide discussion around caring responsibilities and introduces an opportunity to join the RCT Working Carers Mailing List, managed within the Adult Services Carers Support Project, to receive useful information and advice.
- 3.10. The working carers guidance pulls together all existing leave arrangements currently available for staff in RCT including flexible working, emergency leave, parental leave, bereavement and the additional leave purchase scheme (see page 5 for the full table of additional leave arrangements that are currently available for unpaid carers to manage their responsibilities alongside work

3.11. The UK Government has recently published its intention to introduce unpaid carers leave as a statutory right, and it is proposed that the RCT Cabinet recognises the significant impact caring responsibilities can have on employees and endorse the recommendation to complement the existing leave arrangements already in place to include access to 5 paid leave days per annum to specifically support the following events as identified in the UK Government’s published statement on carer’s leave (see Appendix 3) to support carers make provision:

- Where a dependent has been taken seriously ill or is hospitalised.
- Making arrangements for long term care following serious illness or discharge from hospital.
- Relocation situations (i.e., to or from the cared for person’s home or into residential care).
- Attending benefit or legal appointments on behalf of the cared for person.
- Accompanying the cared for person to hospital appointments.

3.12. We are unable to accurately predict the financial impact of introducing paid carers leave as the number of paid carers in the RCT workforce is unknown. However, absence figures for 2019/2020 relating to Emergency Leave (where the highest rates were bereavement or Coronavirus-related) identify 1,794 days lost. Of note, a large proportion of the workforce are eligible for Emergency Leave and this figure does not appear excessive or indicate misuse. Emergency Leave is closely linked to how we are proposing Carers Leave would operate and therefore a significant increase in paid leave requests would not be expected.

3.13. The following table identifies the approach taken by other Local Authorities etc. in Wales for information. The table illustrates that most have already introduced a carers policy with the addition of the paid time off facility

Local authority	Do you have a standalone Carer’s Policy for staff?	Do you offer paid leave for staff who are unpaid carers?	Do you have any data regarding the uptake of paid carers leave?	Do you participate in any kind of benchmarking or employer forum for unpaid carers (e.g., Employers for Carers or Carer Friendly Employer)?
Blaenau Gwent	Yes	Yes	Last year 5 (out of 161) carers took leave with an average	Yes, Carer Friendly Employer

			of 3 days each	
Caerphilly	Yes	Yes, 22h 12mins (3 days)		No
Carmarthenshire	Yes	Yes		Yes, Employers for Carers
Ceredigion	Yes	Yes		Yes, Employers for Carers
Swansea	No	No		No
Cardiff	Yes	Yes		Yes, Employers for Carers and Carer Confident Accreditation Level 2
Denbighshire	Yes	Yes		Yes, NEWCIS
Flintshire	Yes	Yes		No
Gwynedd	Yes	No		No
Anglesey	Yes	Yes, 5 days paid, discretion to offer 5 further days unpaid		No
Merthyr Tydfil	No	No		No
Newport	Yes	Yes, 22 hours		Yes, Carer Friendly Employer
Pembrokeshire	Yes	Yes		Yes, Employers for Carers
Torfaen	Yes	Yes, 5 days		No
Hywel Dda Health Board	Yes	Yes, via special leave		Yes, Employers for Carers (and Carer Confident Level 1)
Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board	Yes	Yes, 5 days		No
Welsh Ambulance Service	Yes	Yes		Yes, Employers for Carers
South Wales Police	Yes	No		Yes, Employers for Carers
North Wales Police	Yes	Yes, 5 days		Yes, Employers for Carers

3.14. Further to the proposed provision for working carers in the Council the working group also recommends that Cabinet endorse the pursuit umbrella membership of 'Employers for Carers', managed by Carers UK, which aims to "ensure employers have the support to retain and manage employees with caring responsibilities". Membership would provide access to online resources, training, consultancy etc. (see Appendix 5) in addition to umbrella membership that extends beyond RCT Council to include local small and medium businesses (SMEs) with less than 250 employees, District Councils and health partners of any size in the Borough

- 3.15. Estimated rates (exc. VAT) for the membership is £3,500 per annum which will include access to the accreditation scheme

4. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no immediate equality and diversity implications associated with this report. An Equality Impact Assessment may be required if the Working Carers Guidance is agreed prior to implementation.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1. This report has been prepared by the working group with staff members from a wide range of service areas and departments represented
- 5.2. The recommendations have largely been derived from the findings of a staff SNAP consultation survey completed during the summer of 2021.
- 5.3. Third sector organisations including Carers Trust South East Wales and Employers for Carers have contributed their knowledge and expertise on working carers to inform the working group.
- 5.4. Research and best practice guidance from a variety of sources has been used to inform the proposals in this report, including Welsh Government, Employers for Carers, Centrica, Carers UK and Carers Trust.
- 5.5. If approved by SLT, the Working Carers Guide will be forwarded to the Disability and Carers Network for their consideration prior to the next steps

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. There are no direct financial implications associated with rolling out the Working Carers Guidance proposed by this report.
- 6.2. It is difficult to predict the uptake of paid Carers leave. However, it may be viewed as like Emergency Leave, which a large proportion of the workforce are already eligible for. HR information suggests Emergency Leave is not excessively used, and Carers Leave would have notable restrictions and eligibility criteria. Limited data from other Local Authorities suggest paid Carers Leave is not misused. Evidence from other organisations indicate benefits from supporting carers including staff retention, reduced unplanned absences and improved productivity.
- 6.3. Membership and accreditation of Employers for Carers (EfC) will incur a small annual cost as set out in point 3.15 above. For more information on the benefits of EfC membership see Appendix 5.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 7.1. The UK Government has published their intention to introduce statutory unpaid carer's leave (Appendix 3).

8. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/WELLBEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 8.1. There is a strong direct link to the Council's purpose: ***"To provide strong community leadership and create the environment for people and businesses to be independent, healthy and prosperous."*** Further there are links to the Corporate priorities as follows

- People: by ensuring carers in RCT are able to remain independent, healthy and successful by remaining in work.
- Prosperity: by supporting businesses in RCT to attract and retain employees that are carers through effective guidance and support.

- 8.2. In addition, there are links to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act:

- ***A healthier Wales:*** A society in which people's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
- ***A more equal Wales:*** A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances).

- 8.3. Supporting unpaid carers in the workplace also links to Priority 4 in the Welsh Government's National Plan for Unpaid Carers: ***"Supporting carers in education and the workplace – "employers and educational / training settings should be supported to adapt their policies and practices enabling carers to work and learn alongside their caring role."***

Additional information associated with this report

- Appendix 1:** Draft Working Carers Guidance
- Appendix 2:** Summary of staff survey results
- Appendix 3:** Statement from UK Government on the intention to introduce statutory carer's leave
- Appendix 4:** The business case for supporting working carers
- Appendix 5:** Employers for Carers membership benefits



LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

AS AMENDED BY

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background papers: None

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