

Information for Carers

Perth and Kinross Council is a [Carer Positive](#) Employer

The Carer Positive award is presented to employers in Scotland who have a working environment where carers are valued and supported. Carer Positive employers recognise the importance of retaining experienced members of staff, reducing absence, and cutting down on avoidable recruitment costs.

This guidance outlines the support available to employees of Perth & Kinross Council who have caring responsibilities. It is designed to enable you to explore the options available so that you can balance work and your caring commitments and continue to be effective in your role.

Who is a Carer?

An unpaid carer is anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and who cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid. Many carers live with the person they care for, but many look after someone who lives independently, in supported accommodation, in hospital, or in a care home. Carers often have little help and regularly suffer financially, physically and emotionally themselves.

Working Carers

There are around 270,000 people in Scotland who are juggling caring and holding down a job. This number is forecast to increase significantly as the population gets older and we continue to work longer. The Council is committed to supporting its workplace carers by making it easier for existing employees to remain in employment and to encourage potential employees to consider joining the Council by demonstrating that we understand their needs.

Some Challenges Facing Carers

[Physical and Mental Wellbeing](#)

Caring for someone can affect your mental health, it can make you feel stressed and worried and make it harder for you to stay well. You might find you spend a lot of your time thinking about the person you care for; about their illness and the impact it's having on both your lives. You might be having difficulty sleeping, not be eating properly and this may affect your mood and have an effect on your mental wellbeing.

Caring can be physically demanding. If your role involves lifting or carrying you could suffer from aches and pains, specifically with your back. You might feel run down and tired a lot of the time and be more likely to experience physical illness.

Isolation

Isolation can be a big issue for people who have caring responsibilities. You might feel that you no longer have time to spend on hobbies or interests you had before, and you might feel guilty about taking time out for yourself. You might feel your life is very different from other people's and they don't understand how you feel.

Frustration and anger

You might feel frustrated or angry, especially if you have had to give up parts of your own life to take on your caring role; or you might feel that you've had no choice about becoming a carer.

Low self esteem

Being a carer can have a huge impact on your self-esteem. You might feel you need to focus all your time and attention on the person you are caring for and feel that you're missing out on parts of having a normal life - this may lead you to losing confidence in yourself and your abilities to do anything outside your caring role.

Money Worries

You might find that you need to pay for extra medical costs, or you are spending more on travelling expenses. This can put a strain on your finances and can cause additional stress. You might be unsure if you're entitled to any financial support or benefits and not know where to find out about assistance. See [Welfare Rights](#).

Support

The Council is committed to creating a culture of acceptance and awareness around Carers and the pressures and challenges they may face juggling work and personal responsibilities. A Carers group was established in 2023, open to Carers throughout the Council. The group shares information and experiences on a Teams chat and regularly contributes to the development and revision of Council policy and guidance, from a Carers perspective, as well as helping to promote the cause through regular internal communications and the development of educational materials.

The challenges above are some examples of the effect on working carers; we understand the demands that caring places on employees and that at times it may be difficult to combine work and caring responsibilities. While you are not required to disclose caring responsibilities to your Line Manager, we would encourage you to do so if this applies to you. Disclosing this information, you will help your Line Manager understand your individual situation and provide appropriate support. Any information you discuss with your Line Manager will be treated confidentially.

Employees should be given every opportunity to discuss any caring responsibilities they may have, and the discussion should form part of 1:1 meetings, supervision meetings, Professional Discussion meetings or attendance meetings.

Policies to Support Carers

The Council has a range of policies which can be used to help support employees with their caring responsibilities.

Short Term Options

[Carer Leave](#)

Up to One Week Unpaid Leave (pro rata) - Employees who meet the definition of a Carer can take up to one week of leave every 12 months. A 'week' means the length of time they usually work over 7 days. For example, if someone usually works 3 days a week, they can take 3 days of carer's leave.

[Emergency Leave](#)

Emergency leave can be used when you need to deal with emergency situations. A maximum of 3 days' paid leave of absence per calendar year (pro rata for part-time employees) and can be used where you need time off to deal with incidents that require your immediate attention.

In exceptional circumstances additional periods of unpaid leave can be approved. Your manager will take the circumstances surrounding your request and also the operational impact of your absence into account when considering your request.

Longer Term Options

If your circumstances require you to be absent from work for a longer period of time, you may wish to consider the following options.

[Flexible Working](#)

The various flexible working options are designed to provide solutions which can support you in your caring responsibilities.

Some types of flexible working are:

- Part Time Working
- Flexi Time
- Hybrid Working
- Time Off in Lieu
- Compressed Working Hours
- Reduction in Working Hours

- Job Sharing
- School Term Time Working
- Staggered Working Hours

All flexible working requests are given reasonable consideration and will be assessed against a list of operational factors.

If you are making a request for flexible working to care for a child or a disabled person you should state this on your application along with some detail about the impact it would have on your family life if your request was turned down.

[Parental Leave](#)

If you need a longer period of time off to care for your child, then Parental Leave may be beneficial.

[Career Breaks](#)

Career Breaks are defined periods of unpaid leave which can be used for various reasons including accommodating caring responsibilities.

You should discuss your application for a Career Break fully with your manager and all applications will be given reasonable consideration.

[Unpaid Leave](#)

In exceptional circumstances periods of unpaid leave can be approved. Your manager will take the circumstances surrounding your request and also the operational impact of your absence into account when considering your request.

It is important to note the following:

If you are considering the options of Parental Leave, Career Break or Unpaid Leave you should also consider the implications of these types of leave have on your pension. You can find out further information on [how to buy back your lost pension](#).

Other Support

[Occupational Health](#) and [YourCare](#)

The Occupational Health service provides advice to the Council and its employees in relation to your fitness for work and the promotion of good health.

Your Care provides access to help and support for life's ups and downs, 24/7, 365 days a year. You'll find a wide range of care and support specialists waiting to hear from you. You can use this service as many or as few times as you like, there's no limit on the support you can receive.

[Financial Support](#)

Finding out the financial support you are entitled to can be complicated and confusing, contacting the [Welfare Rights Team](#) can help make this process simpler for you by providing a free, confidential and impartial benefits advice.

External Support and information

It can help to talk to people in similar situations - even if they aren't exactly the same as your own, it can make you feel less alone and isolated. There are different ways you can get in touch with others:

[PKAVS Carers Hub](#)

The PKAVS Carers Hub is a one-stop-shop where you can find lots of information and advice about what is available to you as a carer and what's going on for carers in Perth & Kinross.

[Carers Scotland](#)

Carers Scotland is a website dedicated to carers which contains help and advice relevant for carers Scotland-wide.

[Citizens Advice](#)

The Citizens Advice Bureau is a local charity that provides free and confidential advice, it is managed and used by local people in the community, and it delivers services that meet the needs of local people.

[Equal Partners in Care - information from NHS/Education Scotland](#)