

Work life balance and family

Carers and Dependency Leave Policy

1. Introduction

We understand that for some of you, life outside work may include caring responsibilities for dependants, such as children or seriously ill or disabled dependent relatives, partners or close personal friends.

We appreciate the demands this may place on you, and that at times you may need support and flexibility to combine work and caring responsibilities.

Our commitment is to continuously develop a workplace culture that is supportive of those with caring responsibilities in order to help you balance working and caring commitments.

2. Scope

This is an inclusive policy and applies to all staff including those on fixed term contracts and apprentices (excluding temporary agency staff and contractors). There is no qualifying period of service and you are entitled to carer's and dependency leave and pay from day one of your employment.

The purpose of this document is to outline the support we offer to staff with dependents and/or caring responsibilities for other relatives, or close personal friends. This document also offers guidance to managers to help them support staff to balance their working and caring commitments effectively.

3. Key principles

We aim to support carer's and those with dependants by:

- Treating staff fairly and consistently, while taking into account the individual needs of a particular case.
- Giving sympathetic consideration to requests for support from those who have caring responsibilities, based on a shared understanding of the situation and its impact.
- Encouraging a workplace culture in which staff feel safe and supported and can talk about the challenges they may face, ask for help, and have the confidence that no one will face unfair treatment due to caring responsibilities.

- Ensuring that staff who need support will be given guidance on the options available to them.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of our support and the experience of carers and those with dependants. We will do this through our engagement with internal GLA groups, such as the Carers and Parents Staff Network and UNISON.

4. Definitions

This policy is inclusive of those who are carers and those who have dependants.

The person you are taking time off to support must be a family member, partner or close personal friend.

They are a dependant if they live in your home, as a family member and depend on you for care.

Dependants do not need to be ill, frail, disabled, experiencing mental health problems or the effects of an addiction in the same way that, a carer does, for staff to be eligible for leave.

You can take leave to support this person in unforeseen emergency situations. See section 5 for more details.

You are considered a carer if that person needs help for one of the following reasons:

- They have a physical or mental illness or injury that means they are expected to need care for more than 3 months
- They are terminally ill
- They have a disability
- They need support because of an addiction
- They need care related to frailty or old age

The person you care for does not need to live in your home. You do not have to be a registered carer or be the only carer for that person.

You can take leave to support this person in unforeseen, emergency situations and for planned events. See section 5 for more details.

As this policy is inclusive of those who are carers and those who have dependants, it therefore includes those who:

- Look after a dependant but are not a carer for them. For example, a child who lives with you but has no additional needs that require a carer. Or a parent that lives with you, but they have a separate dedicated carer.
- Look after a dependant, and they are also a carer for them. For example, a child with a disability.
- Are a carer for someone who is not a dependant. For example, a relative or close personal friend with a disability who does not live with them.

- Are required to be a carer themselves, but also look after a dependant, for example a child, and/or are a carer to a family member, partner or a close personal friend.

5. Carers and Dependency leave

The GLA has enhanced the statutory entitlements to carers leave and dependency leave. If you meet the definition (section 4) outlined above, you will be entitled up to 10 days' paid leave in one leave year (1 April - 31 March). This entitlement will be pro-rated if you work part-time. 10 days equates to 72 hours for staff on a compressed hours working pattern.

This entitlement is per member of staff and does not increase in relation to the number of people you care for or the number of dependents you have. This entitlement can be used for either:

- reasons connected to carers leave;
- reasons connected to dependency leave;
- or a mixture of the two.

The situations where leave can be used are:

Dependency reasons

- To deal with an accident to, or illness of, a dependant which requires your attendance. These do not have to be life-threatening or need full-time care.
- To respond to an assault of or injury to a dependant. This could be either a mental or physical situation.
- Attending emergency medical/GP, dentist, clinic or hospital appointments with a dependant.
- Dealing with a dependant's discharge from hospital or other medical care facility.
- If a school or childcare, or adult care setting closes unexpectedly, including short notice strike action.
- To respond to the unexpected breakdown or disruption to normal care arrangements for a dependant.
- To deal with an incident that's taken place during school time, where you are contacted by the school to attend and/or discuss matters with a teacher or head of the school.

Dependency leave will not be granted to cover planned or routine hospital admissions, as these are known in advance. Neither will it be granted to cover school closures where notice is given, for example elections or teacher training days.

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Dependency leave only applies to unforeseen, emergency situations and not to situations you know about in advance. Therefore, if you have more than 48 hours notice that you need to take leave, paid dependency leave may not be granted.

Dependency leave can be taken in hourly increments or as full days up to a maximum of 2 days per emergency situation.

Carers reasons

- To provide personal support, assist with mobility or to keep someone company.
- Supporting someone practically or psychologically during a period of convalescence or recovery.
- To provide practical support around the home including housework, home maintenance, making meals or running errands.
- To help with official or financial matters, such as paperwork, accompanying someone to a meeting or supporting them with correspondence over the phone or online, paying bills or collecting pensions/benefits.
- To give personal or medical care relating to prescriptions, medication, dressings, washing, bathing, getting dressed and accompanying them to medical appointments.
- Arranging support related to someone's independence, including dealing with support organisations, or making home adjustments / adaptations.

Carers leave applies to both emergency and non-emergency situations. For example, staff can use carers leave for medical appointments that are planned, routine or emergency appointments. For carers leave the amount of notice that they need to take leave can vary. Carers leave can be taken if there is more than 48 hours notice.

Carers leave can be taken in hourly increments or full days up to a maximum of 10 days.

Staff needing more than 10 days leave per year, can request statutory leave or use another type of leave as outlined in section 6.

Statutory Dependency Leave

You have a statutory right to a reasonable amount of statutory unpaid time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. There is no set amount of unpaid time off as it depends on the situation but this leave only applies to unforeseen, emergency situations and not to situations you know about in advance.

Statutory Carers Leave

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You have a statutory right to unpaid time off to deal with caring responsibilities. The amount of unpaid time off is limited to 1 week per year. This applies to situations that could be considered an unforeseen emergency and some situations that are known about in advance.

Requesting Carers and Dependency leave

You should use the same request process for both GLA enhanced carers and dependency leave, for statutory dependency leave and statutory carers leave.

Some requests will be due to unexpected events or an emergency, (dependency leave reasons) while other requests can be planned in with more notice. Regardless of the reason you should contact your line manager at the earliest opportunity if you wish to request carer's and dependency leave.

All requests for leave should be requested and agreed with your line manager before the leave is taken, although it is recognised this may be at short notice on occasions. The leave should be entered on [MyHR system](#) by employee, however if access to [MyHR system](#) is not possible, this should be entered upon return to work.

6. Other support

We recognise that Carers and those with dependants need support to maintain a balance between their quality of life and work commitments. We therefore commit to providing a range of support with these responsibilities, while also taking into account the requirement to meet the needs of our work commitment to Londoners.

Carers and those with dependents may find the following provisions helpful.

Ordinary parental leave

If you have completed one year's service with the GLA, you have a statutory right to unpaid parental leave to look after your child's welfare. You can take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave for each child up to their 18th birthday. The maximum is 4 weeks for each child in a year and you must take parental leave as whole weeks rather than individual days unless your child has a disability. You don't have to take all of the leave at once. The GLA has enhanced this statutory entitlement and if you meet the qualifying criteria, you will be granted up to 10 days paid parental leave in total.

Sabbaticals

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If you want to take a longer period of time off, you can apply for an unpaid sabbatical leave for up to 12 months. While on a sabbatical, you will remain an employee of the GLA and continue to accrue continuous service for statutory purposes such as annual leave. Sabbatical leave is subject to eligibility criteria and have line manager approval.

Flexible Working and Hybrid working

Our hybrid working policy aims to enable and encourage flexibility in jobs, subject to job type and individual circumstances. You should talk to your manager about the level of flexibility that is appropriate in your area. Other flexible working arrangements include:

- Job sharing – sharing duties and responsibilities with another GLA employee
- Change of hours – moving to part-time or full-time working
- Compressed hours or term-time only hours
- Working from home/remote working
- Flexi-time – core hours but adjusting start/finish times

If you wish to make a longer term or permanent change to your working hours or pattern, you can make a flexible working request.

Annual leave

If you have taken 10 days of carers and dependency leave, and you need further time off for these responsibilities, you may prefer to use annual leave rather than take unpaid leave. Using annual leave at short notice for carer and dependency leave reasons, or going back and changing a period of unpaid leave to annual leave will be supported and accommodated where possible.

Employee Assistance Programme

Staff who are carers or have dependents can use the GLA Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) for support. The EAP offers online resources for parents, carers and those dealing with family matters as well as confidential helpline counsellors who can support with any issues that affect your day to day life.

Workplace adjustments

Some staff may need adjustments to support with caring responsibilities or dealing with dependents. Where adjustments are minor and/or temporary, they can be agreed informally with the line manager. If adjustments involve significant changes, for example to work patterns, and/or are likely to last for some time, these should be made through the Workplace adjustment policy which has a workplace adjustment passport, reviewed at regular intervals.

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There is no requirement to seek Occupational Health guidance for a workplace adjustment passport in these circumstances. Unless the staff member also needs adjustments in relation to their own health condition. This means that staff don't have to repeat conversations about agreed adjustments when they change jobs within the GLA.

Childcare loans

Staff needing to pay an Ofsted registered childcare provider a lump sum payment upfront to deal with registration and deposit fees can apply for an interest free loan, of up to £1,500. The Childcare Fees Loan application form is on the MyHR Portal.

Our full suite of family friendly employee policies are available on the [MyHR policies page](#)

7. Employee responsibilities

- You are actively encouraged to inform your manager if you are caring for someone and need any support.
- You should work together with your line manager to ensure that, wherever possible you can continue in your job and effectively balance work and care commitments.
- You should give your manager as much notice as possible of any time off that you may need.
- You should report any instances of harassment, victimisation or discrimination because of your caring responsibilities.
- You should ensure that any carer's and dependency leave which has been agreed with your line manager is entered into [MyHR system](#).

8. Manager responsibilities

Line managers play a key role in supporting employees who are carers and those with dependants. Each situation is different so managers should take into account the range of organisational support and existing policies available when putting support in place, and:

- Show empathy, understanding and give sympathetic consideration to requests for support, from those who have caring responsibilities, particularly those who are providing palliative care.
- Treat all employees fairly and consistently, while considering the individual needs of a particular case. Staff need to feel confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up any support available.

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- Ensure that there is no discrimination against employees because they are a carer or have dependants.
- Treat all information about an employee's request for Carers and dependency leave sensitively and in the strictest confidence, in accordance with the data protection policy.
- Take appropriate action regarding alleged harassment, victimisation and discrimination against another employee in relation to being a carer or having dependants.

9. Further information

We encourage you to talk to your line manager as soon as possible if you are a carer, or have a dependant, and need support. However, we understand that you may find this difficult and may be worried about confidentiality, how information will be used or being judged by work colleagues.

You can also choose to talk to:

- A member of the [People Function](#)
- A [Unison](#) representative
- A member of the [Carers & Parents Network](#), [Staff Network for Disability](#), and other [Staff Networks](#)
- The [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP) at any time; any discussion will be in confidence and will not be disclosed to anybody in the GLA

Details of external organisations and helplines are given in [Appendix 1].

Version	
Date	September 2020 4 th November 2020 - Clarification added to the definition section, no material changes to the policy. September 2022 Minor changes in readiness for HR shared service March 2024 Changes to reflect the Carers Leave Act
Next review date	March 2026
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Owned by (Department)	People Function
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Appendix 1

External sources of information and support

Organisation Name	Website/Email
Age UK	Help and support for carers respite & support Age UK
Alzheimer Research	www.Alzheimersresearchuk.org/about-dementia/helpful-information/support-for-carers/
Carers Trust	https://carers.org
Carer UK	www.carersuk.org
Centre 404	https://centre404.org.uk/about-us/
The Children's Society	https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/home
Contact	https://contact.org.uk/
Independent Age	Family, friends and carers Independent Age
Macmillan Cancer Support	Cancer Information And Support Macmillan Cancer Support
Mencap	https://www.mencap.org.uk/advice-and-support/children-and-young-people/support-parents-and-carers-children-and-young-people
NHS Choices – Carers Direct Helpline	www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support/carers-direct-helpline/

Appendix 2

Worked examples

Example 1

Your partner has cancer and has to travel daily for routine, ongoing treatment. This means that you cannot start work at 9.00 at your usual time.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave under the carer's reasons. If you have already used your 10 days paid leave, then you can use statutory unpaid carers leave or another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 2a

The day centre which looks after your mother with dementia has had to close for a week due to problems with the central heating.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave, under the carer's reasons. If you have already used your 10 days paid leave, you can use statutory unpaid carers leave or another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 2b

The day centre which looks after your mother with dementia has had to close on Fridays for a month over the summer as they do not have staffing levels to remain open all week.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave, under the carer's reasons. If you have already used your 10 days paid leave, you can use statutory unpaid carers leave or another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 3a

Your child is on a school trip and has an accident, they need to go to hospital for an x-ray and are not well enough to go to school for the remainder of the working week.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave under the dependency reasons. You can take a half day for the day of the accident and full days for the remainder of the working week. If your child needs your care for longer at home, you can use another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 3b

Following the accident on the school trip during their first week at home, your child is told by medical professionals that they can not go to school and should rest for a further 2 weeks, their injury will not last 3 months.

You are not eligible for carers and dependency leave after the first week at home. The injury is too short term for you to be considered a carer and you have had notice of the need for you to take leave. You can use another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 4a

Your child's school is closing for planned strike action, you are given 2 weeks notice.

You are not eligible for carers and dependency leave. You have had notice of the need for you to take leave. You can use another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 4b

You are notified by your child's school that it will be closed tomorrow due to adverse weather conditions.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave under the dependency reasons. If you have already used your 10 days paid leave, you can use statutory unpaid carers leave or another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 5

Your grandfather lives with you and it's his 100th birthday. You want to take him out for a special family meal. You are not eligible for carers and dependency leave, this is not a valid reason for taking leave under either criteria. You can use another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 6a

Your parent was independent and did not need you for caring responsibilities, however following a stay in hospital, you need to make some longer term care arrangements at a residential home. You need some time off to visit the available options and support your parent to move from their home.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave under the carers reasons. If you have already used your 10 days paid leave, you can use statutory unpaid carers leave or another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 6b

Your parent was independent and did not need you for caring responsibilities, however following a stay in hospital, they need some home adaptations to allow them to be discharged and continue safely return home. You need some time off to arrange and supervise a specialist supplier to install some equipment and to make some minor adjustments yourself.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave under the carers reasons. If you have already used your 10 days paid leave, you can use statutory unpaid carers leave or another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 7a

Your child goes to a childminder after school, they contact you one evening to say they have caught a stomach bug and are too unwell to work tomorrow. They would normally collect your child from school and look after them until you have finished your working day.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave under dependency reasons. Leave can be taken in half days. If you have already used your 10 days paid leave, you can use statutory unpaid carers leave or another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 7b

Your child goes to a childminder after school, at the start of term they explain that they are getting married abroad during school time towards the end of term. They have not been able to provide cover for their business and you will need to find alternative arrangements.

You are not eligible for carers and dependency leave. You have had notice of the need for you to take leave. You can use another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 8

You need to support your close friend who you care for to attend an important medical appointment which was scheduled 12 weeks in advance.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave under the carers reasons for the time needed to travel to, attend and travel back from the appointment. If you have already used your 10 days paid leave, you can use statutory unpaid carers leave or another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 9a

You are responsible for supporting your aunt who you care for to manage her finances as she is unable to do so independently. You need to sit with her to make some urgent phone calls to the bank and utility providers during your normal working hours.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave under the carers reasons. If you have already used your 10 days paid leave, you can use statutory unpaid carers leave or another support option as outlined in section 6.

Example 9b

You are responsible for supporting your aunt who you care for to manage her finances as she is unable to do so independently. You need to send a short email on her behalf to a utility provider some time over the next few weeks.

You are eligible for carers and dependency leave under the carers reasons. If you have already used your 10 days paid leave, you can use statutory unpaid carers leave or another support option as outlined in section 6.