

Dependants and Carers Leave policy and procedure.

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Introduction

- 1.1 Employees with dependants or caring responsibilities have a statutory entitlement to take unpaid time off work to:
- deal with emergencies involving a dependant and
 - give or arrange care for a dependant.
- 1.2 This policy and procedure explains what leave is available and how to access it. It also signposts to [other resources](#) that might be useful for OU employees balancing their caring responsibilities with work.
- 1.3 The leave available under this policy is unpaid. Colleagues are advised to explore whether any paid leave is available under the [contingency leave policy and procedure](#).

Who this policy applies to

- 2.1 Dependants leave is available to all employees with dependants from their first day of employment with the OU.
- 2.2 Carers leave is available to all employees with caring responsibilities from their first day of employment with the OU.

Dependants leave

- 3.1 Employees can take a reasonable amount of time off work to manage an unexpected or sudden problem relating to a dependant and make any necessary longer-term arrangements.
- 3.2 A dependant could be a spouse, partner, child, grandchild, parent or someone who depends on the employee for their care.
- 3.3 There is no limit on how much dependants leave can be taken, or how

often it can be accessed, but the purpose of the leave is to provide time for an employee to deal with the immediate situation. In most cases one or two days will be sufficient, but it will depend on individual circumstances.

3.4 An unexpected situation includes but is not limited to:

- when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted.
- needing to arrange for the care of an ill or injured dependant.
- arranging or attending a dependant's funeral.
- dealing with an interruption to or problem with the care arrangements of a dependant.
- attending to an incident involving the employee's child whilst they are at school.

Carers Leave

4.1 From 6 April 2024 employees are also entitled to one week of unpaid leave in a rolling 12-month period to care for a dependant who has:

- a physical or mental illness or injury that means they are expected to need care for more than 3 months,
- a disability, and/or
- care needs because of their old age.

4.2 The dependant can be anyone who relies on the employee for their care, such as a family member, friend or neighbour who is disabled, has an illness or long-term condition, or who needs extra help as they grow older.

4.3 The leave can be taken in whole or half days.

- 4.4 The entitlement is one week per employee regardless of how many people they care for.
- 4.5 Employees should give as much notice of their leave request as soon as reasonably possible.
- 4.6 No evidence is required to support a request for leave.
- 4.7 Where the requested dates of leave would significantly disrupt the service, managers can postpone the leave, but must enable employees to take it within one month. Line managers must explain any postponement of leave in writing to the employee within seven days of the original request.

How to apply

- 5.1 Talk to your manager as soon as reasonably possible about what leave you need and why. We recognise that might be after you have had to leave work in emergency situations.
- 5.2 Submit the absence request on the SuccessFactors system as soon as reasonably possible. Your line manager may do this if you are unable to:
- For dependant's leave, use the 'Dependant/s' category.
 - For carers leave – use the 'Unpaid – General' category and note 'carer leave' in the comments section.
- Guidance on how to book leave in SuccessFactors is available on the People Services 'How to Guide for Time Off' under ['General Unpaid Leave'](#) or ['Other Leave Request Types'](#).
- 5.3 Following approval, the relevant adjustment will be made to your pay.

Other resources for employees with dependants and caring responsibilities

- 6.1 [Employee Assistance Programme](#) (EAP). All employees have access to this free and confidential advisory and support service for them and their immediate family members.
- 6.2 [Contingency leave policy](#). All employees have access to this policy which provides some paid leave for emergencies, unexpected situations and bereavement.
- 6.3 A [carer passport](#) and [guidance](#) is available for employees to use in conversations with their manager about their caring responsibilities at work. Developed by the Care and Caring Network at the OU, it provides a straightforward way to discuss and document the flexibility and support individuals can be given to enable them to combine caring with work.
- 6.4 All employees can ask to work flexibly, either temporarily or permanently. The OU's [Agile Working Policy](#) explains the different ways to work flexibly and how to apply.
- 6.5 Other policies which enable employees to request longer periods of unpaid leave include:
- [Parental Leave](#). This provides parents with up to 18 weeks unpaid leave for caring for a child up to their 18th birthday.
 - [Career Break](#). This policy enables employees with caring responsibilities to apply for a period of unpaid leave between one and three years.

- [Unpaid Leave](#). This policy enables all employees to request short or longer periods of unpaid leave.
- 6.6 There is a [Care and Caring network](#) open to anyone employed by the OU. The network focuses on knowledge exchange around care and caring, the promotion of carers' rights within the OU and the provision of information, advice and guidance in carer-related development.
- 6.7 OU employees can access a wide range of resources from Employers for Carers (EfC) which is an innovative service for employers to support employees who care for someone who is older, disabled or seriously ill. The EfC resources can be accessed using the link and code on [Wellbeing+ Life](#) (see Employers for Carers section).
- 6.8 The OU also participates in the Carer Positive Charter run by Carers Scotland. Their website: [Help and advice | Carers Scotland \(carersuk.org\)](#) offers a range of advice and guidance for carers.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

- 7.1 Policies are inclusive of all Open University staff, regardless of age, care experience, caring status or dependency, civil status, disability, family status, gender, gender expression, gender identity, gender reassignment, marital status, marriage and civil partnership, membership of the Traveller community, political opinion, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, socio-economic background or trades union membership status.

Version 1.0 – effective from 28 March 2024. **Summary of revisions:** combined policy and procedure; added new carers leave entitlement.