# Guidance on ‘Create a Carer Friendly Employment Policy’

This needs to be in the form of a policy document or an extract from the staff handbook. It is recognised that each Practice has their own approach to policies and particular circumstances which will influence the scope and practicalities of a Carer Friendly Employment Policy. However, the GP Accreditation Panel will want to see an understanding of the particular situations of someone in a caring role and how this may impact their need for flexibility within the workplace.

The following is guidance on what to include, providing the workplace setting permits it.

**Why a policy specifically for carers rather than a more generic ‘flexible working’ or ‘caring for dependents’ policy?**

Carers’ needs are different from the needs of employees who have mainstream childcare responsibilities. Childcare responsibilities usually follow specific timescales and are, to some extent more predictable than those of someone in a caring role. It is usually more possible to plan for different situations which may arise.

Caring can be unpredictable – a member of staff who is a carer may be contacted suddenly or urgently and need to attend to the person for whom they care.

A carer may need to attend frequent or regular appointments with the person they look after.

The amount of care required may change over time, for example where the employee’s partner has a debilitating long term health condition, or where an elderly parent becomes more frail or dependent.

A carer may need to work shorter hours during a crisis or may request reduced hours in the longer term due to the demands of the caring role.

**Definition of a carer**

A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a family member or friend who could not always manage without their support.

For the purposes of the policy, they may be defined as ‘employees with significant caring responsibilities that have a substantial impact on their working life’.

Activities that carers undertake are wide ranging and include:

* help with personal care
* managing medication
* practical household tasks
* emotional support
* help with financial matters or admin
* help with mobility

**Informing the Practice of caring responsibilities**

A policy should state this is not required but encourage staff who are carers to do so. It should also stress that this is to enable their manager to offer support and signpost them to other support available.

**Flexible leave arrangements**

Employees with a minimum of 26 weeks’ continuous service are entitled to make a request for flexible working.

Employees need the opportunity to discuss with their line manager their caring commitments so that planned time off work can be arranged where possible.

Carers are encouraged to book appointments that they need to attend with the person they care for at the start or end of the working day, if at all possible, to minimise disruption to work. Equally it needs to be recognised that this will not always be possible due to the scheduling process of those appointments.

Employees with caring responsibilities cannot always plan ahead for the time off. The ability to take leave in an emergency is important for carers, who may be called at short notice.

Carers should have the option to make up time that has been taken to meet caring responsibilities at a later date.

Carers should also be able to take unpaid Carers’ Leave.

**Other support for carers**

This could include the following:

* the ability to make or receive calls in connection with their caring responsibilities and access to a private space to make or receive calls
* free flu jab
* NHS health check
* signposting to other sources of support in the caring role

**Free from discrimination**

Employees who are carers need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably as a result of disclosing their caring responsibilities.

It is important that an environment is created in which the staff team understands that there may be carers within the team and, in turn, carers feel able to talk about their responsibilities. This can be created by encouraging carers to speak about their experience and using positive language when talking about carers in the workplace.

The Equality Act 2010 protects job applicants and employees against direct discrimination or harassment if they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic, for example a disability.