
Carer's Leave Guidance

Introduction

1. SFC is proud to be recognised as a Carer Positive employer and is committed to supporting employees with caring responsibilities. While caring for others can be extremely rewarding, it can also be stressful and isolating if carers don't get the support they need. Many carers juggle their caring responsibilities with work, study and other family commitments, which can be physically, emotionally and financially challenging. Therefore, we are committed to providing a supportive working environment to ensure that you are able to maintain a better balance between commitments at work and outside.
2. This policy sets out SFC's support that is available for carers (internally and externally) so that they are able to openly discuss their needs with their line manager in order to balance their work with caring commitments. By creating a supportive and inclusive workplace, we believe that we can retain our staff as well as attract prospective candidates who have caring responsibilities.
3. The Carer's Leave Act 2023 gives all employees the right, from day one of their employment, to request unpaid leave to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need. The statutory right is up to one unpaid week of carer's leave in any 12-month rolling period. Employees can choose whether to take it as one continuous week of leave, or as multiple shorter periods throughout the year.
4. This policy applies to all SFC's employees but does not form part of the employment contract and may be amended with time. It does not apply to agency workers, contractors, consultants, or any self-employed individuals working for SFC.

Being a carer

5. A working carer is someone who is managing both paid work and unpaid¹ caring responsibilities. These employees are responsible for the care and support of a relative or friend who is older, disabled, seriously ill (physically or mentally) or has an addiction which makes them unable to care for themselves without support. This does not include individuals who are employed as a paid professional carer or whose caring role relates solely to a child or children who do not have a long-term illness or disability. Caring may involve, and is not limited to, one or more types of support:
 - Helping with personal care and/or mobility;
 - Doing the shopping;
 - Managing medication;
 - Co-ordinating care services;

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- Helping with practical household tasks (i.e. cooking, cleaning, gardening);
 - Accompanying to doctor and/or hospital appointments.
 - Providing emotional support; and
 - Assisting with finances and paperwork.
6. It is important to recognise that caring experiences vary:
- The amount of time a working carer spends on providing support may vary from a few hours a week to a daily basis;
 - The care might be at home or they might have to travel to support someone;
 - Caring might entail periods of high and low demand, depending on the health and needs of the person being cared for; and
 - Caring might be a sudden experience (following an illness or accident) or it might be more of a gradual process where the carer realises, for instance, that their parents can no longer manage without support.
7. Carers might find it difficult to distinguish their caring role from the personal relationship they have with the individual they are caring for, be it a relationship with a spouse, civil partner, child, parent, or friend. Therefore, some employees may not immediately identify themselves as a carer and may not think to raise any related issues with their manager in the first place. Others might self-identify as carers but may not feel comfortable sharing that information with their employers - carers' decisions concerning this should be respected, as some may not want to disclose their situation.

Entitlement to statutory carer's leave

8. Any employee who balances work with unpaid caring responsibilities is entitled to one week's statutory leave within any 12-month period, to care for, or arrange care for, a dependant with long-term care needs. This statutory leave is unpaid, and is a day one right, so there is no minimum service requirement to be eligible. A week means the normal length of time a person works in a 7-day period (for example, if an employee normally works Mondays and Tuesdays in a 7-day period then the statutory entitlement is to two days).
9. The [Carer's Leave Act 2023](#) defines dependants with long-term care needs as follows:
- 'A person is a dependant of an employee if they: are a spouse, civil partner, child or parent of the employee; live in the same household as the employee, otherwise than by reason of being the employee's boarder, employee, lodger or tenant; or reasonably rely on the employee to provide or arrange care'.
 - 'A dependant of an employee has a long-term care need if: they have an illness or injury (whether physical or mental) that requires, or is likely to require, care for more than three months; they have a disability for the purposes of the [Equality Act 2010](#); or they require care for a reason connected with their old age.'

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10. Employees have the flexibility to take carer's leave in full or half days or as a continuous block of five days, provided they give advance notice to their line manager, where possible, twice the length of time they intend to take.

Requesting support

11. We recognise that caring can be unpredictable and distressing. An employee may acquire caring responsibilities overnight or caring responsibilities may develop over time. We understand that some people may not want to disclose their situation as caring is a subject that not everyone finds it easy to talk about, therefore the choice of carers to self-identify themselves will still be respected. However, we encourage you to speak to your line manager about your caring responsibilities to explore how we can help you with any challenges that you are facing and discuss relevant support options available. If for any reason you are unable to approach your line manager, you can speak to HR.
12. You have the right to make a request for support without the need to provide evidence of your caring responsibilities and you will not be treated unfairly because of disclosing your role as a carer. Any information disclosed by you during discussions with your line manager or HR will be treated sensitively and in strict confidence.

Internal support

13. At SFC we go above and beyond the statutory requirements and offer a range of flexible working practices and leave options (paid or unpaid) that can be used to support carers either on a short- or longer-term basis:
 - [Special leave for care of dependants](#) is primarily to deal with sudden or unexpected emergencies involving a dependant, for example: a disruption or breakdown in care arrangements, having to take dependant to hospital, to help them whilst recovering from surgery/illness etc. We operate with guidelines of up to 10 days in a rolling 12-month period for care of dependants special leave with pay. This type of SFC paid special leave will be offset against the statutory right to one week's unpaid leave (see paragraph 8 above).
 - Where the caring responsibilities require a longer period of absence, employees should discuss alternative arrangements with their line manager, and this can include a [flexible working](#) arrangement, a period of [unpaid leave](#), a career break or use of annual leave and/or [flexi-time leave](#).
 - Unpaid [Parental leave](#) - employees are entitled to take up to 18 weeks parental leave per child, up until the child's 18th birthday. You can only take it in blocks or multiples of one week, but not more than 4 weeks in a year per child.
 - [Employee Assistance Programme](#) – a team of trained welfare and counselling practitioners can support you 24/7 through free, confidential, independent and impartial advice and guidance for a range of issues.

Document history

This guidance does not form part of SFC's terms and conditions of employment.

Owner: Human Resources

Version number	Changes	Date approved
1.1	New guidance from 6 April 2024 as per legislation: Carer's Leave Act 2023	02/10/2024 Ratified by JNCF