

## Support for Working Carers

The County Council recognises that many employees, in addition to their paid employment, provide unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without this help. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has a mental health or substance misuse problem. In the UK there are 3 million working carers, one in seven of the workforce.

Caring is an issue which affects us all – three in five people will become carers at some stage in their lives. These responsibilities often cannot be planned – caring can happen over time, but it can also happen overnight.

According to Carers UK, the peak age for caring is 45-64. One out of five working carers gives up work to care. Many working carers will have significant skills and experience, which may be lost to a workplace unless they are supported. It is therefore vital we support our employees who want to combine work and caring.

Juggling work and looking after someone can be difficult. Oxfordshire County Council believes that people work more effectively when they are able to strike a healthy balance between their work responsibilities and other aspects of their lives. We all need support from time to time, but it can be difficult to find the support you need as a carer while also working.

This leaflet sets out:

- The range of options which may be available to support Oxfordshire County Council employees in achieving a work/life balance
- Some of the local and national resources available to support carers in their caring roles and in their health and wellbeing.

Carers Oxfordshire website [www.carersoxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.carersoxfordshire.gov.uk) - is hosted by Oxfordshire County Council. - It signposts carers to a vast range of local and national support including information on working and caring and your rights as an employee.

### Am I a carer?

A carer is someone who provides or intends to provide unpaid care on a regular basis for a relative, partner, child, or a friend who needs support due to a physical or mental illness, learning disability or physical disability, frailty or an addiction.

This may be help with personal tasks such as dressing or practical tasks like shopping and cooking. It may be emotional support or supervision.

A carer may or may not live with the person for whom they care, and some are long distance carers. Working carers come from all age groups and include men and women. Parent carers are carers who have parental responsibility for a disabled child under the age of 18 years. Young carers are under 18 years of age.

It is important to tell your GP you are a carer so your health needs as a carer can be taken into account.

## **How the County Council supports employees in achieving their work life balance.**

In addition to parents of children under 6 (or disabled children under 18), carers of adults who have more than 26 weeks service, now have the legal right to make a request for flexible working.

Click on [Toolkit 8](#) for more information about flexible working arrangements and for a copy of the council's [Flexible Working and Work Life Balance Policy](#)

In considering applications for flexible working, managers will seek to balance the needs of the service with supporting employees to manage their work and personal commitments.

### **What you could ask for?**

The Council has a range of flexible working options. Eligibility for each option must be agreed with the line manager because it will be subject to service requirements. See relevant policies for full details.

- 9-day fortnight
- Annualised hours and term time working
- Carer's planned leave
- Emergency leave scheme
- Flexible retirement
- Flexiplace
- Flexitime
- Job Sharing
- Maternity/Paternity/Adoption schemes
- Occupational health services including access to counselling services
- Parental leave
- Reduced working hours
- Special leave
- Staff Support (for employees in Social & Community Services and some parts of Children, Education & Families only)
- Unpaid leave

### **How to apply to work flexibly**

Speak to your manager to explore the possible options and think through the impact on your work and how this could be managed. If you wish to apply to work flexibly click on [Toolkit 8 Flexible working forms](#). Complete a form and send it to your line manager asking for the changes you would like and saying why these would help you. You would need to say if you did not wish the change in working arrangements to be permanent, for how long if appropriate, as well as how you feel the hours/work could be covered. A meeting will then be held to discuss the matter and you will be advised of the decision in writing.

It might be helpful for you first to look at some websites that provide detailed information and advice for Carers including: Oxfordshire County Council's public webpage [Looking after someone](#), the national charity [Carers UK](#) and the local

service [Carers Oxfordshire](#) . All of these websites provide helpful advice and guidance for carers.

### **Carer's Planned Leave**

Employee's with substantial caring responsibilities can apply for paid leave of up to 37 hours in a rolling 12 month period.

This leave can be taken in blocks of one hour or more, with the agreement of the line manager. Two weeks' notice should be given wherever possible, and evidence in the form of an appointment card may be requested. For full details click on [Toolkit 7 Carers planned leave](#) .

### **Rights of Working Carers**

- **The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004** This Act builds on previous carers' legislation. All carers are entitled to request an assessment of their needs, and that assessment must consider a carer's outside interests - work, study or leisure.

In addition, carers have rights under Employment legislation including:

- **The Employment Rights Act 1996.** Carers have rights in certain circumstances to take (unpaid) time off work to care for dependents.
- **Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999.** Introduced parental leave. Parents of disabled children can take 18 weeks unpaid leave (usually limited to 4 weeks in any year) up to the child's 18th birthday.
- **The Work and Families Act 2006** In addition to parents of children under 6 and of disabled children under 18, carers of adults who have more than 26 weeks service, now also have the right to make a request for flexible working.

### **Carer's Assessment**

Oxfordshire County Council has a major role to play in providing support to carers. If you think you may need social care support to continue to care for an adult, even if the person you support does not want an assessment or services, it can provide you with a carer's assessment to look at your own needs and things that could make caring easier for you. It can look at support available from a range of organisations. Carers' assessments must look at whether carers work or wishes to work. If you are a parent carer of a disabled child, it can provide you with a family assessment which will take your needs as a carer into account.

For more information about Oxfordshire County Council's services click on [Requesting an assessment](#) or call Social and Community Services on 0845 050 7666 or email at [carersoxfordshire@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:carersoxfordshire@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

[Carers Oxfordshire](#) was established in April 2011 to provide new, integrated information and support service for adult carers of adults in Oxfordshire.

By identifying carers much earlier in their caring lives and ensuring they are in contact with preventive services, the service aims to reduce the likelihood of crises and carer breakdown.

## Services

The Carers Oxfordshire service aims to make it easier for carers, whatever their situation, to access information and support. The service has four elements:

- a **telephone and web-based information service** - providing information about benefits and entitlements, support services, carer's breaks, emergency back-up, employment, looking after yourself, training opportunities to support you in your caring role and much more.
- an **outreach support** service – providing advice and support over the phone and face-to-face
- a network of **peer support groups** and
- **marketing**- to raise the profile of carers and caring and enable carers to identify themselves as carers.

Oxfordshire Carers' Forum works closely alongside Carers Oxfordshire and provides:

- opportunities for carers to have their voices heard - and acted on
- Confidence 2 Care programmes to enable carers to feel more confident in their caring roles.

## Contacts

Carers Helpline: **0845 050 7666**

Email: [carersoxfordshire@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:carersoxfordshire@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Website: [www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk)

Blog: <http://carersoxonblog.wordpress.com/>

In addition carers living in the South & Vale can access support from:

Carers Centre South & Vale  
5 Lydalls Road, Didcot, OX1 17HX

Tel: 01235 510212 or email at:  
[carers@svcarers.org.uk](mailto:carers@svcarers.org.uk)

## **Other organisations in Oxfordshire that can help carers include:**

- **Oxfordshire Carers Forum** (countywide organisation of carers for carers helping to inform and represent carer's views). Tel: - 01235 520440 or email [admin@oxoncarersforum.org.uk](mailto:admin@oxoncarersforum.org.uk)
- **Rethink Carer Support** (providing support and information for carers of adults of working age with mental health needs) Tel: 01865 455877
- **Age UK Oxfordshire-** (providing support and information for older people and carers of older people) Tel: - 0844 887005
- **The Oxfordshire Family Information Service** (OxonFIS) offers parents and Carers' information on a range of topics such as childcare, early years provision, help with the cost of childcare and activities for children, young people and families Tel: 08452 262636 or email [fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:fis.enquiries@oxfordshire.gov.uk) or look on our website [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk) and type 'Oxfordshire Family Information' Service in search field
- The Alzheimer's Society Oxfordshire Tel: 01865 876508
- Young Dementia UK younger people with dementia Tel: 01993 776295 <http://www.youngdementiauk.org/>

For further information on local resources, please contact Carers Oxfordshire or visit the Carers in Oxfordshire website [www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk)

## **National Numbers and websites include:**

### **Carers UK**

National carers' organisation providing information, advice, lobbying, free booklet on *Looking After Someone, a Guide to Carers Rights and Benefits*  
Tel: 0808 8087777 or 020 749 08818 or [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

### **Caring about Carers**

Government website providing details of legislation, services and information for carers [www.carers.gov.uk](http://www.carers.gov.uk)

### **Contact-a- Family**

Information and support for families with disabled children  
Tel: 0808 808 3555 or [info@cafamilly.org.uk](mailto:info@cafamilly.org.uk)

### **Children's Society**

Helpful information by, for and about young carers [www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

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