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**How to support staff with caring responsibilities**

Many employees (around 1 in 9 people in the UK) are balancing work whilst also providing care for a family member or friend. This figure is predicted to rise. Caring is sometimes seen as a hidden issue, as often carers don’t talk about their responsibilities, or even identify themselves as a carer.

Many cares leave the workplace or are underemployed based on their skills and experience, as a result of their caring responsibilities. A supportive organisation can make a key impact in retaining staff with caring responsibilities.

Managers should:

* Familiarise themselves (and their member of staff) with the Special Leave Policy – staff may be entitled to paid leave in some circumstances, such as the breakdown in care arrangements.
* Ensure that the member of staff is aware of the right to make a flexible working request.
* Signpost sources of support such as the University counseling service or the peer support group for staff with caring responsibilities.
* Discuss with the member of staff what support they need. Often only small adjustments may be required, such as some flexibility of working hours in order to attend medical appointments or access to take or make telephone calls during working hours.
* Respect the member of staff’s preferences regarding confidentiality of their caring responsibilities.
* Be aware that caring can be immensely stressful – be alert for signs and symptoms and approach the member of staff appropriately if you feel they may need help or support.
* Note that when providing care urgent situations can occur quickly and the member of staff may need to take time off at short notice.
* Understand that flexibility and understanding are the most important factors for staff that are balancing work and care.