

Time off for Dependants (Unpaid Carer Leave)

1. Legislation gives employees the right to take reasonable time off during working hours to deal with unexpected or sudden emergencies and to make any necessary longer term arrangements.

Below are some circumstances where an employee has the right to take time off:

- When a dependant falls ill, or is injured or assaulted
- When a dependant gives birth – see also Special Leave Policy (Maternity Support) and the Maternity Handbook (Section 10 of the Employment Handbook)
- To make longer-term arrangements for a dependant who is ill or injured
- To deal with an unexpected incident involving the employee's child during school hours
- To deal with an unexpected disruption or breakdown in care arrangements for a dependant.

The illness or injury need not necessarily be serious or life threatening and may be mental or physical.

2. Employees do not have to complete a qualifying period of service in order to be able to take time off in an emergency and they have no statutory right to be paid for this time off. The right applies to all employees including those who are permanent, temporary, full and part-time and who have a contract of employment with the Council.
3. The 'emergency' must involve a 'dependant' of the employee. A dependant is defined as a husband, wife, parent or child of the employee, or someone who lives in the household e.g. a partner or an elderly aunt or grandparent. It does not include tenants, lodgers or live-in employees such as a housekeeper.
4. In cases of illness or injury or where care arrangements break down, a dependant may also be someone who reasonably relies on the employee for assistance. This may be where the employee is the primary carer or is the only person who can help in an emergency.
5. The amount of reasonable time off will vary according to the circumstances of the emergency. It allows time to deal with the immediate crisis and to make longer term care arrangements if necessary:
 - The right is intended to cover genuine emergencies
 - An employee cannot have unlimited time off and in most cases one or two days should be sufficient to deal with the problem
 - The right to time off does not enable employees to take time off in order to provide care for a sick child beyond dealing with the immediate problem or crisis
 - If employees know in advance that they are going to need time off and it is not as a result of an unexpected disruption or breakdown of care arrangements, they should request parental leave, flexi-time or annual leave in the usual way, depending on the circumstances.
6. In determining what is a reasonable amount of time off, the manager should always take account of the 'individual circumstances'. The manager should consider:
 - The nature of the incident that has occurred;

- The closeness of the relationship between the employee and the particular dependant; and
 - The extent to which anyone else is available to help out.
7. The time off is for unforeseen matters and to deal with the immediate crisis. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills advises that one or two days should normally be sufficient to deal with most types of single emergencies.
 8. There may be occasions when it is necessary for both parents to take time off work under this provision. Managers will need to adopt a sensible approach depending on the circumstances of the situation.
 9. The employee must tell their manager, as soon as practicable, the reason for their absence and how long they expect to be away from work. There may be exceptional circumstances, where an employee returns to work before it was possible to contact their manager, but they should still inform the manager of the reasons for absence on returning. It is not necessary to give notice in writing.
 10. The right to time off is intended to cover genuine emergencies. The employee has a responsibility to give the manager sufficient information so that the manager understands the situation and the need for the employee to be absent from work to deal with the situation.
 11. When approving Time off for Dependants Leave the manager may not take into account any disruption or inconvenience caused to the service by the employee's absence.
 12. Any misuse of this right will be dealt with under the Council's Conduct Procedure.
 13. In the event that an employee applies for Time off for Dependants Leave and believes that permission is refused unreasonably, they should raise a complaint using the Council's Grievance Procedure. If the employee still feels they have been unfairly treated, they may make an application to an Employment Tribunal. Employees are protected from being penalised or dismissed because they have taken, or have sought to take time off under this right. It is unfair to be dismissed or selected for redundancy for taking, or seeking to take time off under this right.

Working Carers

At Dacorum Borough Council we recognise a working carer as someone in our employment who cares for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without your help.

In your role as a carer you may find the following contacts of use to you.

1. Specific Illnesses

1.1. Alcohol & Drug Addiction, Self-Harming & Abuse

(For those between 10 and 25 years old requiring assistance)

Signpost: 01442 252868

1.2. Asperger's Syndrome and High Functioning Autism

The National Autistic Society: 0808 800 4104

1.3. Cancer

The Lynda Jackson MacMillan Centre: 01923 844014

1.4. Dementia

The Alzheimer's Society offers support through home visits, local support meetings and Dementia Café's.

01923 894222 for further information.

1.5. Depression/Anxiety

Wellbeing Team: 0300 777 0707

1.6. Disability Information DISH (Disability Information Service Hertfordshire)

Based in St Albans. Provides a free information service for carers on any subject related to disabled living. Telephone: 0800 181 067

1.7. Down Syndrome

Sande Nuttall or Barbara Billington at Up On Downs: 01462 630459

1.8. Multiple Sclerosis

West Herts Branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society: 07531 653307

1.9. Parkinson's Disease

Tracey Tucker of Parkinson's UK: 0844 225 3779

For information on medical professionals who can help you plus information on various support groups

2. Carers Support

2.1. Age UK Dacorum

Has a Carer's support scheme for carers of any age who are caring for a relative or a friend who is over 50. They can also support carers over 50 who are supporting someone younger, such as a disabled child. As well as providing a listening ear, they can provide information and assist you in accessing services that can make your life, and the life of the person you care for, that bit easier.

Telephone: **01442 259049 / 01442 221008**

2.2. Carers in Hertfordshire

Offers 1:1 telephone support, involvement Forums, workshops and events, a carers discount passport, as well as issuing a quarterly Newsletter updating you on all activities affecting your role.

Telephone: **01992 586969**.

They also run a carers support group at William Crook House.

Telephone: **01992 586969 for further information**.

3. Financial Advice

3.1. Citizens Advice Bureau (Berkhamsted)

Telephone: **0844 873 1303**

Herts County Council Money Advice Unit (Referral via Carers in Herts)

4. Herts Help Line

If none of the above are of immediate assistance please telephone **0300 123 4044** to obtain details of the right community group to support you.

5. Hospital Discharge Scheme

Run by **Age UK Herts**. They ensure for people over 55, that the person is settled in their home and has adequate heating and sufficient food after being discharged from hospital. In addition they will provide information about other services available and accompany a person to shops and appointments if necessary.

Telephone: **01727 850811**

6. Sitting service for the person you are caring for

6.1. Breakaways

Telephone: **01442 454280**

Email: **Breakaways@hertsc.gov.uk**

6.2. Crossroads

Telephone: **01462 455578**

7. **Social Services and Health & Community Services**

Telephone: **0300 123 4042**

8. **Tips for Carers:**

Make sure the person you care for has applied for their Attendance Allowance. This is an entitlement and is not means tested.

If they receive the Attendance Allowance, have they applied for a reduction in their Council Tax?

Register with your GP as a carer. This means your GP will take into consideration your caring role when he/she sees you.

In some surgeries you will be given priority when making an appointment. You will also be entitled to an annual health check.

You are entitled to a Carer's Assessment. If you have not been assessed please contact Social Services to arrange for one to be carried out.

NB: All of the above services only operate during normal office hours.