



# NORTH STAR

Creating homes, building futures



## Supporting Carers – The North Star way

### 1 Context

Carers are staff, of any gender who have significant caring responsibilities that have a substantial impact on their working lives. They are providing regular or ongoing care and support for relatives or friends who are older, disabled or seriously ill. Caring is the act of looking after another's emotional / physical wellbeing, it does not have to be paid.

There are currently 3m working carers in the UK, overall there are 6 m people providing regular care and this is set to grow to 9 m in the next 30 years. Changing demographics and an ageing population means that 60% of people will end up caring for someone at some point in their life.

Life for working carers is very challenging with 1 in 6 giving up work or reducing their hours and 1 in 5 having seen their work negatively impacted as a result. (Carers UK 2015)

In 2022 Business in the Community (BITC) published a research report, ["Who cares – Transforming how we combine work with caring responsibilities"](#). The research involved interviewing working carers as well as surveying employers. The main findings were as follows:

Approaching half of the UK workforce (44%) are combining paid work with care at any one time. The majority of those with responsibilities are looking after children under the age of 18, but 36% of carers are responsible for an adult of working age or older.

The majority (but not all) of those caring want to share care with someone else – but this is not always possible

Difficulties combining paid work and care are pushing some groups down and out of the workforce

4 in 10 Carers said that their responsibilities prevented them applying for a job or promotion. This was more common among women (58%) and carers from a Black, Asian, Mixed Race, or other ethnically diverse background (50%). Compared to 20% of men and 39% of white carers.

The report contained a call to action for employers to:

- Consider caring the norm
- Champion equitable access to care for all genders in its policies
- Foster a culture that supports men to provide care
- Promote flexible working to men

Just over 15% of our staff are carers, and we have had a cocreated framework in place since 2016. This has been reviewed and updated within the context of the BITC report

## **2 Our framework**

We hold national awards for Employer of the Year, and accreditation at Investors in People Platinum level. This independently evidences the impact of our cocreated culture, and how we all work together, to keep North Star, its customers, communities, and its staff strong. We have a range of modern, flexible policies and approaches with which to support staff to achieve a healthy work-life balance.

This framework sets out our approach to supporting carers, provides information that carers may find useful and signposts them to useful resources. Further detail is provided in specific policies.

Our framework meets best practice, and includes:

- Flexible leave / Paid and Unpaid
- Hybrid working
- Flexible working
- Access to free counselling
- Signposting to advice and support organisations
- The training and development of line manager to ensure we support staff confidently and consistently.

### **3.0 Flexible Leave arrangements**

In addition to the standard annual leave allowance there are several other options that may be of benefit to carers

#### **Buying additional annual leave**

Staff can purchase up to a maximum of five days per year to be added to their annual leave entitlement. The buying of annual leave is a tax efficient benefit so that staff pay for it before the deduction of Tax and National Insurance. In approving the purchase of annual leave, and following consideration of special leave alternatives, Line Managers will consider requests in the context of the business and service commitments. Wherever possible we will approve such requests.

### Unpaid leave

Staff can request unpaid leave. Line Managers will consider requests in the context of the business and service commitments. Wherever possible we will approve such requests.

### Dependants/Carers leave

All staff are entitled to up to **five** days **paid** special leave over a 12-month period to deal with emergencies or any unexpected or sudden problem relating to dependants. In cases of illness, injury, or where care arrangements break down, a dependant may be anyone who reasonably relies on the member of staff for assistance.

### Extended Leave

Staff may on occasion want to request extended leave. The reasons for this request can be varied. Extended leave could be requested to enable a carer to provide care in extenuating circumstance. Staff will not be granted paid leave on top of their annual leave, or special leave. If a member of staff fails to return or resigns during this period, they will be required to repay any leave taken in excess of their entitlement.

## 4.0 Hybrid working

A hybrid working arrangement is an informal flexible working arrangement which allows you to work your contracted hours flexibly, and, split your working time between the workplace and an agreed remote working location. Hybrid working arrangements will differ depending on the nature of your role, duties and responsibilities and so are discretionary.

Most staff will have the ability to 'flex' their working hours to meet the fluctuating demands of their role, and customers. However, some staff will work fixed hours. This is to either; enable the delivery of services at a time that customers access the service, or to fulfil the conditions of a contract commissioned supported housing service. or they have approval for a formal flexible working pattern.

## 5.0 Flexible Working

We know that working flexibly can be very helpful to carers. All employees have a statutory right to ask their employer for a change to their contractual terms and conditions of employment to work flexibly (after 26 weeks' continuous employment).

Employers can refuse such requests if there are business reasons for doing so. We will consider all requests for flexible working fairly and reasonably and we will endeavour to accommodate such requests wherever possible. The range of working patterns available include the following:

### **Job Share, Reduced Hours and Part Time working**

We are open to considering requests from staff for permanent or temporary- job share, reducing hours or part time options.

### **Compressed Hours**

This is a set working pattern when normal weekly contracted hours are worked over a reduced number of days e.g. 35 hours over four days or 70 hours over nine days.

## **5.0 People Care counselling**

Research highlights that caring responsibilities can impact on feelings of wellbeing. Counselling can be an enormously helpful support when levels of wellbeing are low.

We provide a free, independent counselling service for any member of staff who wants to talk to someone about their concerns without fear of being judged or criticised. It is a place to express emotions in a safe environment, to 'off-load' or to step back and assess what is going on.

Counsellors will not tell you what to do or give advice but will help you become clearer about your difficulties. They will then support you in working out what the way forward could be for you. This can be difficult to do with family, friends, or work colleagues.

The counselling is confidential, usually lasts for around six sessions, and staff who have accessed the service are extremely positive about the outcomes.

You can access the service directly by ringing **0800 9757 141** or by emailing **peoplecare@oasishumanrelations.org.uk**

## **6.0 Signposting to support agencies**

A list of support agencies, contact details and web links is attached at Appendix One. This will also be displayed on the intranet and updated annually by the People service department

We also have an abundance of trained and qualified staff who are happy to provide advice and specific signposting. Their names are also included.

## **7.0 The training of line managers**

Line managers are trained and developed to provide consistent support to carers. Each manager is provided with a copy of our framework and can contact People services if they need further advice or guidance.

## Appendix One Support Available - Most services provide Carers with Advice, Advocacy and Direct Signposting

Name of Company	Phone Numbers	Website
Carer Services and Advocacy by Local Authority Area	<b>Middlesbrough</b>  Local support Carers Directory – 01642 223999  Carers Support –01642 488977	<a href="http://www.carerstogether.co.uk">www.carerstogether.co.uk</a>  <a href="http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2824&amp;p=0">http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=2824&amp;p=0</a>
	<b>Stockton</b>  0800 917 0204	<a href="http://stocktoninformationdirectory.org/kb5/stockton/directory/adult.page?adultchannel=950">http://stocktoninformationdirectory.org/kb5/stockton/directory/adult.page?adultchannel=950</a>
	<b>Darlington</b> 01325 357533  Text – 07624818780	<a href="http://www.darlingtondisability.org/carers/carers.htm">http://www.darlingtondisability.org/carers/carers.htm</a>  Email – carers@darlingtondisability.org
	<b>Redcar &amp; Cleveland</b>  Different phone numbers depending on area lived in, can be accessed via the website	<a href="http://www.carerstogether.co.uk/">http://www.carerstogether.co.uk/</a>  <a href="https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/redcar/fsd/files/guide_to_support_for_carers.pdf">https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/redcar/fsd/files/guide_to_support_for_carers.pdf</a>
	<b>Durham</b>  0300 005 1213	<a href="http://www.durhamcarers.info/Pages/Home.aspx">http://www.durhamcarers.info/Pages/Home.aspx</a> <a href="mailto:admin@dccarers.org">admin@dccarers.org</a>
	<b>North Yorkshire</b> Different phone numbers depending on area lived in, can be accessed via the website.	<a href="http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/23565/Carers">http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/article/23565/Carers</a>
<b>Carers UK</b>	Telephone - 0808 808 7777  Open Monday to Friday 10:00 - 16:00	<a href="http://www.carersuk.org">http://www.carersuk.org</a>
<b>NHS Carers Direct Helpline</b>	0300 123 1053	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/pages/carers-direct-helpline.aspx">http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/pages/carers-direct-helpline.aspx</a>
<b>NHS Carers Break and Respite Care</b>	Website provides links to respite in areas all over the UK.	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/pages/breaks-for-carers-respite-care.aspx">http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/pages/breaks-for-carers-respite-care.aspx</a>
<b>Gov.uk</b>		<a href="https://www.gov.uk/carers-uk">https://www.gov.uk/carers-uk</a>
<b>Age UK</b>	0800 169 2081	<a href="http://www.ageuk.org.uk/home-and-care/advice-for-carers/are-you-a-carer/">http://www.ageuk.org.uk/home-and-care/advice-for-carers/are-you-a-carer/</a>
<b>MacMillan Cancer care</b>	0808 808 00 00	<a href="http://www.macmillan.org.uk">www.macmillan.org.uk</a>
<b>Dementia UK</b>	0800 888 6678	<a href="https://www.dementiauk.org/">https://www.dementiauk.org/</a>

<b>Stroke Association</b>	0303 3033 100	<a href="https://www.stroke.org.uk/">https://www.stroke.org.uk/</a> info@stroke.org.uk
<b>National autistic society</b>	<b>0808 800 4104</b>	<a href="http://www.autism.org.uk">www.autism.org.uk</a>
<b>Social Services Emergency Duty Team</b>	Google Emergency duty team and the area that you live in.	

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