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NON-EXEMPT

# HAVANT BOROUGH COUNCIL

HR Committee

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022

## Carers in the workplace Policy

### FOR DECISION

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Narinder Bains, Cabinet Lead

Key Decision: No

Report Number: HBC/036/2022

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#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. This paper is submitted to HR Committee for agreement to implement a policy which effectively deals with the wellbeing of carers in the workplace.

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1. HR Committee members are asked to approve the policy as set out at Appendix A.

#### 3. Executive Summary

- 3.1. Carers play a key role in society by keeping families together, contributing immeasurably to society and saving the economy a substantial amount of money. Caring for someone, whilst rewarding can be stressful and isolating for someone if they do not have the right level of support in place for themselves. For working carers the constant juggling of work, caring responsibilities and home life can take its toll on the most resilient of employees.
- 3.2. Research by the CIPD<sup>1</sup> indicates that almost a third of workers have not discussed their caring role with anyone in the workplace and a quarter of working carers were considering giving up their job entirely because of the difficulty combining work and caring responsibilities. The demand for unpaid care is on the increase due to the aging population and it will most likely affect most at some point in their working lives. Many will also now fall into what is known as the 'sandwich generation' – those who have caring responsibilities for ageing parents whilst supporting their own children. This all creates challenges for both the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/carers-friendly-workplace-guidance\\_tcm18-80345.pdf](https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/carers-friendly-workplace-guidance_tcm18-80345.pdf)

employee and employer to manage. Having a policy in place which sets out the support the employer will provide and the obligations on the employee with caring responsibilities creates a sound foundation for workable solutions to be found.

- 3.3. The Council does not currently have a policy in place which specifically supports carers in the workplace. As the growth of workers with unpaid caring responsibilities increases, there is a requirement for the organisation to consider the support and advice they offer employees and management to ensure employee satisfaction, productivity and wellbeing needs are met within the workplace whilst balancing the needs of the organisation.
- 3.4. In a bid to be proactive and minimise the effect this may have on the workforce, the introduction of this policy and the support offered, will give the employee additional and alternative options to balance their care-work lifestyle whilst maintaining performance and service delivery.
- 3.5. Carers in the workplace may find their wellbeing and productivity may be affected by the mental and physical strains of being an unpaid carer. If left unsupported by their employer, this may lead to employees feeling isolated and undervalued - resulting in increased absence rates, incurring additional costs and resourcing issues.
- 3.6. The implementation of this policy will also offer guidance for management, advising how to support their member of staff and reasonable adjustments they can offer. Actively supporting a carer in the workplace has been shown to hold significant value, and statistics from Carers UK *'Juggling work and unpaid care'* (2019) highlight 'employer's support' as one of the three early interventions that enabled a carer to continue to work. In the same report from Carers UK, it is estimated that 2.6 million employees have left work to care for their dependants in the last two years, with the expectation of that number to increase every year. The promotion of this policy will open the recruitment pool for prospective candidates with unutilised skills and encourage retention of staff.
- 3.7. This policy is in line with the public sector equality duty and offers support to employees and managers. The issues that can arise from carers in the workplace have a clear link to Sickness Absence, Parental Leave and Other Leave policies. The addition of this policy will advise the organisation to manage and support the expectation of the employee and the provision of carers under the Equality Act 2010.

#### 4. **Additional Budgetary Implications**

- 4.1. In line with the Council's Other Leave Policy and Remuneration Policy, the council is under no legal obligation to offer paid leave. Currently, up to 10 working days of unpaid leave is widely offered across other local authorities.

#### 5. **Background and relationship to Corporate Strategy and/or Business Plans**

- 5.1 The policy supports the Council's values to be a fair employer. The Corporate Strategies highlight the delivery of respect and support for each other, in addition to the wellbeing of our teams. This policy underpins this approach.

#### 6. **Options Considered**

- 6.1 Do nothing and remain with no policy position in place for carers in the workplace. Given the rise in the number of people with caring responsibilities across the UK this was not deemed to be the appropriate option.
- 6.2 Introduce a policy to ensure staff are clear on the policy position relating to this and the support available whilst ensuring performance and service delivery is maintained.

#### 7. **Resource Implications**

##### 7.1. **Financial Implications**

The recent application for Government's consideration '*Carer's Leave Consultation - August 2020*' acknowledged the need for employers to offer unpaid leave for all paid employment. Currently the government have proposed introducing one weeks' unpaid leave (Date TBC).

##### **S151 Officer comments**

Date: 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021

There are no additional financial implications to the adoption of this policy.

## 7.2 Human Resources Implications

There are no direct HR implications however many of the leave requests would be unplanned, the absence would be recorded and managed in line with the sickness absence policy's return to work process. The absence would not be recorded as sickness, however managers would still be required to monitor absence relating to caring responsibilities, prompting conversations around suitability of the role if absence is high (Exceeding the unpaid leave period). Flexible working, redeployment and capability policies would be actioned.

This policy will be added to the suite of HR policies. It will ensure that staff have an appropriate route to raise any issues and HR/Management will have the appropriate tools to deal with the matter reasonably and effectively.

## 7.3 Information Governance Implications

None identified.

Other resource implications

There will be a requirement for communications support to implement the policy across the Council. This is factored into existing resources.

## 7.4 Links to Shaping our Future Programme

No direct links. The policy will ensure that staff with caring responsibilities have a clear understanding of the policy position and support available. This policy will complement the suite of HR policies we have available which set out and shape the working experience for all our staff.

### Shaping Our Future Lead Comments/sign-off

There are no implications for the shaping our future programme.

*Vicki Potts – 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021*

## 8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, discrimination can occur when an employer treats an employee less favourably because of a protected characteristic that the employee does not personally possess in this case, an employee caring for a child, elderly relative or someone with disabilities (discrimination by association). Employers should be reasonable in their considerations when managing and supporting employees with caring responsibilities and ensure this is evident in their decision

making. In adopting this policy, the Council is demonstrating that it is conscious of and addressing its duties to carers under the Equality Act 2010.

*Gina Homewood*

*14 September 2021*

**Monitoring Officer comments**

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021

it has been reviewed by Legal and input added at paragraph 8.1

**9. Risks**

- 9.1 Carer's have additional rights under the Equality Act 2010, failure to input reasonable adjustments and manage within a supportive manner would leave the organisation open to sickness absence/retention issues, grievances and tribunal claims. All of which are timely and with financial implications. This can also negatively impact the reputation of the Council.

**10. Consultation**

- 10.1 Unison will be consulted on the policy in line with the usual consultation processes.

**11. Communication**

- 11.1. The policy will be communicated to all members of staff via internal channels.

**12. Appendices**

- 12.1. Appendix A – Carers in the Workplace

**13. Background papers**

- 13.1. None

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Agreed and signed off by:

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Narinder Bains 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021

Director: 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Monitoring Officer: 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Section 151 Officer: 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021

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