

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

INVESTMENT, OUTCOMES AND GOVERNANCE CABINET MEMBER

INTRODUCTION OF A CARER SUPPORT PLAN

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To outline and seek approval for a new Carer Support Plan.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Being a carer means providing unpaid support to a friend or family member who, due to frailty, illness, disability, a mental health issue or substance misuse problem, cannot cope without that support. The care may be personal, emotional, practical or supervisory.
- 2.2 The Care Act 2014 recognises the equal importance of supporting carers and the people they care for. This means that more carers can have an assessment in their own right and be supported to continue in their caring role.
- 2.3 It is estimated that one in seven people of working age is likely to be a carer and there are over 19,000 carers in North Lincolnshire – potentially affecting many of our employees. Employees may struggle to balance their work and caring responsibilities and others feel they must make a choice between the two. Caring for someone can be physically exhausting and emotionally stressful which can lead to feeling unsupported and isolated. This can have a negative emotional impact to the employee's ability to manage their work/life balance and mental wellbeing.
- 2.4 The North Lincolnshire Council Plan sets out the priority of 'keeping people safe and well'. Carers play a vital role in our communities, providing essential care to those who need help and support with daily living. The carers themselves need support to look after their own health, wellbeing and employment potential. Supporting employees to

balance work with their caring role could contribute to people in our community remaining as independent as possible, and living well, for longer.

2.5 The North Lincolnshire Carers' Strategy identifies the priorities for all carers to ensure they are given the recognition and support they require to continue in their caring roles. One of the key outcomes is 'Well', where carers:

- Can live an active and healthy lifestyle;
- enjoy positive emotional wellbeing and mental health;
- receive access to health care and support that they need in their community where possible;
- are supported to achieve personal goals;
- receive the support they need at the right time preventing carer crisis/breakdown.

2.6 The Carer Support Plan is a tool designed to support employees with caring responsibilities. It encourages an open conversation between employees and their manager to identify specific needs and potential support, to enable the employee to combine work and their caring role.

2.7 The Carer Support Plan will form part of the Human Resources Manual and has been modelled on the Wellness Recovery Action Plan, which is used to identify barriers, triggers and possible adjustments for employees with mental health conditions.

2.8 Facilitating an open conversation, and identifying support needs or reasonable adjustments, will help with a healthier work/life balance for employees and may mitigate periods of sickness absence. It may also help to retain valued, experienced staff, if they feel they have no other option but to leave employment, if their caring role cannot be managed alongside their job.

2.9 Launch and promotion of the Carer Support Plan may also raise awareness of the issues surrounding caring, for affected employees, managers, and the wider workforce. This should increase understanding and encourage more carers to seek information, advice and support.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Option one – approve the new Carer Support Plan.

3.2 Option two – recommend revisions to the draft.

3.3 Option three – reject the draft Carer Support Plan.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

- 4.1 Option one – approving the Carer Support Plan will demonstrate our commitment to supporting carers, not only within our own workforce but more widely within the community, enhancing our position as Place lead. It also actively contributes to the council priority of ‘keeping people safe and well’.
- 4.2 Option two – the Carer Support Plan has been modelled on an existing HR document and an employee stakeholder group has been consulted. Making recommendations to the draft could result in a document that is not aligned with the style or tone of other HR documents and policies and would require further consultation with stakeholders.
- 4.3 Option three – rejecting the plan misses a key opportunity to contribute to the outcomes of the North Lincolnshire Carers’ Strategy and one of the council’s priorities. By not encouraging open conversations around caring responsibilities and promoting wider awareness, there is also a risk of ‘disability discrimination by association’ if employees are unintentionally treated unfairly for a reason related to their caring responsibilities.

5. FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (e.g. LEGAL, HR, PROPERTY, IT, COMMUNICATIONS etc.)

- 5.1 There are no resource implications with the Carer Support Plan being introduced: managers can integrate a discussion or review into the ‘My Conversations’ framework, alongside employee 1:1s, or at any time deemed appropriate.

6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)

- 6.1 None.

7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 7.1 Please see Section 8.

8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 8.1 The ‘Be Yourself at Work’ Carer Staff Network is a group of employee stakeholders, which has been consulted on the Carer Support Plan and

feedback was very positive; members felt it would increase support, encourage conversations and raise awareness.

8.2 The trade unions have been consulted and are also very supportive.

8.2 There are no conflicts of interest to be reported.

9. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 That the Carer Support Plan be approved.

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

[North Lincolnshire Carers' Strategy 2022-26](#)
[North Lincolnshire Council Plan 2022-25](#)

Carer Support Plan

Introduction

- 1.1 Being a carer means that you provide, or intend to provide, unpaid support to a friend or family member who due to frailty, illness, disability, a mental health issue or substance misuse problem cannot cope without your support. The care may be personal, emotional, practical or supervisory.
- 1.2 The Carer Support Plan is designed to support you as a carer and identify any assistance which may help you to balance your work and caring responsibility. The plan enables your manager to hold a supportive conversation with you, to identify your specific needs, and to support our understanding so that reasonable adjustments can be made.

How to use the Carer Support Plan

- 1.3 The Carer Support Plan template can be used to facilitate a discussion about:
- Your caring responsibilities and any challenges you anticipate facing at work.
 - Any impact your caring responsibilities may have on the team you work in and the service it provides.
 - Any reasonable adjustments which could help.

Challenges might include:

- Working hours, location or a particular requirement of the job.
- Potential 'pressure points' in your caring role.

- 1.4 The Carer Support Plan should be reviewed annually, or sooner if any of the following apply:
- The nature or impact of your caring responsibilities changes.
 - In response to changes to work e.g., changing role or team.

Employee name:	
Manager name:	
Service/team:	
Job title:	

Carer Support Plan

A. Who do you care for and where and when do you provide the care?
B. Can you broadly outline the nature of the care?
C. Describe any potential 'pressure points' in the caring role. Can these be planned/predicted or are they sudden and/or unexpected?
D. How could this affect you?
E. What steps can you take to manage these pressure points?
F. Are there any adjustments we can work towards to help manage their impact on you?
G. Are there likely to be any changes to your caring role over the next 12 months and if so, what are they?

Carer Support Plan

H. Are there any key elements within your work role that may be inflexible?

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I. Describe any flexibilities which may be supportive in your role to help balance work and caring.

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J. Are there any additional or different adjustments we could facilitate to help you?

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K. Is there anything else you would like to share which could help us support you?

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Signed (Employee):	Print Name:	Date:
Signed (Manager):	Print Name:	Date:
Date the plan should be reviewed:		

Version Control	
Author	HR Policy Team
Status	V1.0
Date approved	DRAFT
Last updated	