



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF AUCKLAND

NEW ZEALAND

Te Whare Wānanga o Tāmaki Makaurau

# Toolkit for Staff Carers

The University of Auckland



Equity Office - Te Ara Tautika  
**February 2020**

## **CONTENTS**

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SECTION ONE: General resources and support organisations .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>SECTION TWO: Resources for Specific Carer Roles / Responsibilities ...</b>	<b>7</b>
Caring for older people .....	7
Caring for someone with a disability .....	8
Caring for someone with a mental health impairment .....	8
Caring for someone with an addiction .....	9
Caring for someone with medical issues .....	10
Caring for children with special needs .....	11
Support for Māori Carers.....	12
Support for Pacific Carers.....	12
Caring for Someone with a Terminal Illness.....	13
<b>SECTION THREE: Combining a Carer role and working at the University of Auckland.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>SECTION FOUR: Flexible work arrangements.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>SECTION FIVE: Leave.....</b>	<b>19</b>
Sick and domestic leave.....	19
Special leave .....	19
Advice for managers.....	20
<b>SECTION SIX: Returning to work after long term leave .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>SECTION SEVEN: Caring for the Carer .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>SECTION EIGHT: Research and Publications .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>SECTION NINE: Frequently asked questions .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>APPENDIX ONE: University Contacts.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>APPENDIX TWO: Supporting a bereaved colleague .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>APPENDIX THREE: Legislation.....</b>	<b>30</b>

## Introduction

Many staff will, at some stage of their career, combine work with primary or secondary Carer<sup>1</sup> roles. *The NZ Carers' Action Plan 2019-2023 (Mahi Aroha)* notes that changes in demographics and medical advances will inevitably increase the need for support of a wide range of people. This includes the rapidly increasing number of older people as well as younger people with high support needs who are surviving and living longer. Currently, 1 in 8 NZ workers are family Carers

According to *Mahi Aroha*, a Carer is “Anyone who cares for a friend, family, whānau or aiga member with a disability, health condition, illness or injury who needs help with everyday living”. Some people use words such as ‘supporter’ or ‘manaakitanga’ to describe the way they see caring as a natural part of what they do for people they love. In this document, the term ‘Carer’ is used to describe the diversity of individuals, families, whānau and aiga who provide this support.

These responsibilities impact both men and women staff despite traditional expectations that women will take a lead in caregiving. Māori, Pacific and staff whose cultural backgrounds emphasise supporting family may have particularly strong engagement in caregiving. The Carer’s role as an “interpreter” and communicator to ensure mutual understandings can be vital when there are cultural and language differences between the person being cared for and other health providers. While the role of Carer can be enriching, ensuring a balance between work and carer commitments can be stressful especially when the person being cared for is in a fragile state of health.

The University of Auckland is committed to providing a high quality work environment and developing measures that recognise and respond to the needs of staff including those with family/Carer responsibilities.

This toolkit<sup>2</sup> is designed to provide practical information and resources for staff with Carer responsibilities, their colleagues and their managers. It also contains advice based on direct experience of Carers at the University of Auckland. The Equity Office is grateful

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<sup>1</sup> The upper-case “C” in “Carers” refers to ‘Anyone who cares for a friend, family, whanau or aiga member with a disability, health condition, illness or injury who needs help with everyday living’. It is not intending to cover paid professional carers and foster carers.

<sup>2</sup> A corresponding toolkit is available for students combining parenting and a career at The University of Auckland [Toolkit for Student Carers](#)

Please note both toolkits provide a range of information and will be regularly updated. Where possible links to other organisations that provide support services are included; however this does not imply that the University of Auckland formally endorses these organisations.

for the candour and generosity of these staff and students who have contributed to this toolkit.

## SECTION ONE: General resources and support organisations

Caring for someone and balancing this with work and other life responsibilities can be rewarding and also challenging. Equally, finding information about support services can be daunting, especially for new Carers. This section provides a range of resources that may be of assistance to Carers generally and, where possible, for specific Carer roles, eg, caring for an older person.

### **NZ Government action plans relating to Carers**

The following publications provide information related to the government's Carer initiatives.

Ministry for Social Development

*The New Zealand Carers' Action Plan 2019-2024* is part of a wider government process to improve the choices of parents and other informal Carers so they can better balance their paid work, their caring responsibilities and other aspects of their lives: See [Action Plan](#)

The following resources provide practical information for staff Carers at the University and links to other key organisations.

### **Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

As part of the University's Health and Wellness Strategy, EAP provides 24-hour access to a confidential, professional service to support and guide staff through personal or work problems. Staff facing difficult circumstances or decisions, personally or at work, can access EAP directly for help to work towards finding a personalised solution and peace of mind.

EAP recognises the reality of human problems in the workplace and acknowledges that most difficulties, including relationship issues, job and career issues, and emotional and family problems, are responsive to treatment.

The EAP service is free and is available to all staff except casual employees. The service is totally confidential and voluntary.

For further information visit [www.eapservices.co.nz](http://www.eapservices.co.nz) or call 0800 327 669.

### **A Guide for Carers, He Aratohu ma nga Kaitiaki**

Provides practical help for people caring for family or friends who are older or have ill health, a disability or a mental health, alcohol or other drug issue.

### **Carers NZ**

A national registered charity which provides information, advice, learning and support for families with health and disability. They also produce a regular informative newsletter. Phone 0800 777 797.

### **Ministry of Health**

Includes a wide range of information on health topics and available support services.

### **Health and Disabilities Commissioner**

Includes the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights

### [Work and Income](#)

Outlines financial assistance available to disabled or ill people.

### [Skylight Trust](#)

Offers a wide range of services to support those facing tough times of change, loss, trauma and grief - whatever the cause, and whatever their age.

### [Order of St John](#)

Provides a number of relevant services such as the 'Caring Caller' and Health Shuttles.

### [Auckland City Mission](#)

Auckland City Mission provides support to:

- People who are sick
- Isolated elderly
- People with mental illnesses
- People with addictions

They have a team of community social workers who can provide practical assistance and social work support to people in their own homes. By working with people where they live, social workers are able to identify appropriate solutions and review their effectiveness for the individual or family.

## SECTION TWO: Resources for Specific Carer Roles / Responsibilities

The following organisations provide support services and/or information related to caring for people in particular categories. Please note that the first section, "Caring for older people", includes information on resources that may equally apply to younger people with certain conditions, eg, dementia and stroke.

### Caring for older people

An increasing proportion of caregiving is dedicated to older people, and this trend is predicted to continue as the Baby Boomer population ages. Māori, Pacific and staff whose cultural backgrounds emphasise supporting family and the elderly may have particular responsibilities for older people.

While many older men and women are able to continue living independently there may be times where they require some level of caring, eg, through an accident or illness where periods of more intensive care are required. In other cases a gradual decline in health and wellbeing means that ongoing support will be required.

Support services and information related to caring for older people are available from a range of organisations. Terminology includes "adult dependent care" and "eldercare".

#### Ministry of Health support services

- "Health of Older People in New Zealand" [www.moh.govt.nz/olderpeople](http://www.moh.govt.nz/olderpeople)
- "Disability in NZ" [Ministry of Health](#)

#### **Needs Assessment**

A Needs Assessment to identify a person's support needs and services required, is available for people over 65 years of age. Contact the Older Persons Health unit in [your local DHB](#).

#### Eldernet

Eldernet undertakes to provide timely, relevant, and comprehensive information about services for older people in New Zealand. The Eldernet site includes a nationwide database directory and comprehensive information about community groups and organisations, home help services, rest homes, retirement villages, residential care, private hospitals, dementia care, public hospitals and other third age services for seniors.

#### Mental Health Commission

Provides information which may be relevant if you are caring for an older person who has a mental health issue (eg, dementia).

#### Inland Revenue

Outlines financial assistance for those over 65 years.

#### Age Concern

Age Concern produces publications that promote positive ageing and suggest ways for older people, caregivers and families to keep seniors safe and healthy.

#### Access: Home-based Support

A national healthcare organisation specialising in home-based healthcare and support.

### [Older People's Health](#) (Auckland District Health Board)

Older People's Health looks after the over 65-year-old population of Central Auckland and offers assessment, treatment and rehabilitation services. This website also provides information on common conditions.

### [LGBT Aged Care Guidelines](#)

A resource kit to educate rest home workers about homophobia is getting the thumbs-up from the gay community. The package was created by the University of Auckland's School of Nursing in collaboration with a working group drawn from the aged care and gay sectors.

### [Alzheimers](#) New Zealand

A support and advocacy organisation for people with dementia, their Carers, family, whānau and community. They also provide training for Carers.

### [Tearai Research Group](#) Palliative care and end of life Research Group

## **Caring for someone with a disability**

"Disability can impact on anyone at any time. It may be due to complications during the birth of a baby, diagnosed during childhood, acquired after an accident, caused by the natural and inevitable effects of ageing, or the result of illness or medical misadventure...In New Zealand, different systems apply to different people depending on their age and the cause of their disability."<sup>3</sup>

From 1 October 2013, the Ministry of Health provides funding for some disabled people to pay a family member to provide personal care and household management.

For more information visit: [Disability services](#)

### [Weka](#)

This website provides information for disabled people, their families, whanau and caregivers, health professionals and disability information providers. It includes key processes and points of contact for support, information and resources.

### [Ministry of Health](#)

The Ministry of Health website provides fact sheets, pamphlets and links to information about funded disability support services including respite care.

### [CCS Disability Action](#), New Zealand

Provides information, advocacy and support to children, youth, adults and their family and whanau.

## **Caring for someone with a mental health impairment**

"Mental health illness is a term that refers to a group of illnesses that affect a person's mind. It is invisible but can affect how a person thinks, talks, feels and behaves towards others and themselves<sup>4</sup>." Current statistics show that one in five adult New Zealanders experience mental health or addiction problems. Many young people also experience these problems, and specialist support services are available to them and their family/whanau. There are a wide range of mental health impairments with depression

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<sup>3</sup> "New to Disability" Weka <http://www.weka.net.nz>

<sup>4</sup> "Everyday people and mental illness" Ministry of Health (November 1997)



and anxiety related illnesses among the most common. Other serious, but less common, mental illnesses include schizophrenia and bi-polar disorder.

### **[Mental Health Foundation](#)**

The Ministry of Health is New Zealand's Government principal advisor on health and disability: improving, promoting and protecting the health of all New Zealanders.

### **[Mental Health Commission](#)**

Provides information on the different types of mental health services available, as well as treatments, support and recovery. There is also information for those leaving mental health services.

### **[Like Minds](#)**

"Like Minds, Like Mine" is a national, publicly funded programme aimed at reducing the stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness.

This website provides information and resources on the programme, looks at who is involved and shows how you can contribute to creating a nation that truly values and includes people with mental illness.

### **[Supporting Families in Mental Illness New Zealand](#)**

(Formally Schizophrenia Fellowship New Zealand)

Supporting Families in Mental Illness New Zealand has a network of branches throughout the country that provide information, education, support and training to the families/whanau of people experiencing mental illness. For more information visit:

### **[Young People and Mental Health](#)**

Programmes, activities and resources specifically to assist young people improve their mental health.

### **[The Wharerata Group](#)**

This an international network of Indigenous leaders working in mental health and addictions, who share a vision in which Indigenous peoples achieve and maintain optimal health and wellbeing.

### **[Eating Disorders](#)**

EDANZ is an incorporated society established to provide support and education for parents and caregivers of people with eating disorders. The society was established in September 2007 by a group of Auckland parents who all have children with eating disorders.

**[Student Counselling](#)** Services at the University of Auckland provides a range of online self-help resources which staff can access including information on eating difficulties.

## **Caring for someone with an addiction**

Information and support services relating to addiction are often included within those for mental health. The following links are to information relating specifically to addiction.

### **[Alcoholics Anonymous](#)**

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

### [Al-Anon](#)

Family Groups are a fellowship of relatives and friends of alcoholics who share their experience, strength, and hope, in order to solve their common problems with alcohol.

### [Drug Foundation](#)

The NZ Drug Foundation takes the lead in Aotearoa New Zealand educating, advising and standing up for healthy approaches to alcohol and other drugs.

### [Families Commission](#)

The Families Commission Kōmihana ā whanau produced a report “Living with Addiction: exploring the issues for families”.

### [Mental Health Foundation](#)

The Mental Health Foundation has numerous resources to support and influence individuals, whanau, organisations and communities to improve and sustain their mental health and reach their full potential.

### [Counselling Service](#)

The University of Auckland Counselling Services offers a range of self-help resources which staff can access online including information on gambling and on alcohol and other drugs.

### **National Helpline Numbers**

- Gambling Problem Helpline Service 0800 654 655
- Alcohol Drug Association 0800 787 797
- Alcoholics Anonymous 0800 229 6757
- Alcohol Hotline 0800 787 797

## **Caring for someone with medical issues**

Medical issues can occur for anyone at any time. They may be the result of genetics, illness, accident, or caused by the natural and inevitable effects of ageing. It is often difficult for health professionals to accurately predict how long a medical condition may last.

*Right from the start the goal posts always moved in terms of both new diagnoses and complications with her treatment which made it very difficult to commit to anything. I got to the stage where I thought that in fairness to everyone I had to push the leave period out a long way as there were too many variables.*

*It was a relief when I was no longer feeling torn between work and my caring role. I needed tunnel vision where I could just focus on my sick daughter and her older sister who also needed support and care.  
(Carer of child with medical condition)*

Information and support services are generally found under the specific medical category concerned. The following links are to organisations that provide information across a range of categories.

### [Ministry of Health](#)

The Ministry of Health provides a range of information including Health Topics A-Z.

### [Cancer Society](#)

Offers a range of free support services for people affected by cancer, as well as their family/whanau and friends.

### [Centre for Brain Research](#)

Community Partners works together with The [Centre for Brain Research](#) in the University of Auckland's Faculty of Medical Health Sciences to provide a network of charities and support groups to help people living with neurological disease.

### [Stroke Foundation](#)

Provides help and support to people and their families/whānau affected by stroke.

### [Parkinsons NZ](#)

Provides education, information and support for all people with Parkinson's, their caregivers, friends and families.

### [Community Partners](#)

Community Partners works together with The Centre for Brain Research in The University of Auckland's Faculty of Medical Health Sciences to provide a network of charities and support groups to help people living with neurological disease. Specific information and links to relevant organisations is provided on:

- Aphasia
- Dementia
- Epilepsy
- Huntington's disease
- Motor Neurone Disease
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Muscular Dystrophies
- Parkinsonism
- Stroke

## **Caring for children with special needs**

Special needs can include physical, intellectual, medical and behavioural issues. Some children and young people may have a combination of special needs, for example physical and intellectual, or physical and medical.

*Some people do not always acknowledge and understand the specialised care our children require. They say things like 'All children need care.' but it is different when a child has a significant disability because you can't just leave them with anyone– it's not fair on them or your child.  
(Carer for a teenager who lives with a disability)*

### [A Guide for Carers, He Aratohu ma nga Kaitiaki](#)

This guide includes a section on children with special needs and what help is available.

### [Parent to Parent](#)

Parent to Parent is a support and information network for parents of children with special needs. Support is provided voluntarily by Trained Support Parents

## **Support for Māori Carers**

Māori Carers experience many of the same issues as other Carers, including the need for information and financial support. Consideration of the needs of Māori for support requires an understanding of whānau relationships and wellbeing.

Services for both recipients and caregivers need to be culturally safe and readily accessible.

### **Ministry of Health – Māori Health**

The Government and the Ministry of Health have made it a key priority to reduce the health inequalities that affect Māori. If Māori are to live longer, have healthier lives, and fulfil their potential to participate in New Zealand society, then the factors that cause inequalities in health need to be addressed.

### **Te Puni Kōkiri**

Te Puni Kōkiri works within the public sector, and with Māori communities, to support Māori collective success at home and globally. Te Puni Kōkiri means a group moving forward together. As the name implies, we seek to harness the collective talents of Māori to produce a stronger New Zealand.

### **Te Pou – o Te Whahaaro Nui**

Te Pou works to support and develop the mental health, addiction and disability workforces in New Zealand. Te Pou incorporates Disability Workforce Development and Matua Raki.

### **Māori Disability support services**

The Ministry of Health is one of a number of agencies providing support and services for disabled people. A number of Māori provider organisations offer services for Māori who have a disability, and have services specifically for Māori.

## **Support for Pacific Carers**

Support for Pacific Carers is likely to come from their extended family, aiga and churches. Pacific people will often be accompanied by family members when they attend medical appointments and will consult carefully with family about appropriate care. Cultural expectations related to age and gender can result in young people caring for older relatives.

### **Ministry of Health – Pacific Health**

The Ministry of Health is committed to working with the health and disability sector to improve Pacific peoples' health outcomes and reduce inequalities experienced by Pacific peoples.

### **LeVa**

Le Va takes a holistic perspective to flourishing and wellbeing - encompassing the physical, mental, social, environmental and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing. This is reflected in Le Va's diverse portfolio across Pacific mental health, addiction, disability, public health, general health, suicide prevention, education, as well as in sport and with local government.

### **Vaka Tautua**

Vaka Tautua is a charitable organisation that aims to help improve the health and wellbeing of Pacific people in New Zealand. They provide community support for older people, people living with disability and those needing support for mental health.

### **[Fonua Ola](#)**

Fonua Ola is a social services provider based in Auckland, predominantly supporting the local Pacific community in times of economic, social and cultural adversity. With a head office in Otahuhu, network members are based in Mount Albert, Otara, Glen Innes and Mangere. Services include social work, counselling, youth mentoring, parenting programmes and budgeting.

### **Caring for Someone with a Terminal Illness**

There are few experiences more difficult than caring for someone diagnosed with terminal illness or at the end of their life. [Hospice NZ](#) has a booklet, A Guide for Carers which may assist. Topics include; on being a caregiver, caring for a loved one, circles of support, home nursing tips and practical matters.

The Cancer Society NZ also has a range of resources on living with cancer, relationship and communication and a booklet, Talking about Grief and Loss.

The UK National Health Service has a helpful website with information on coping, planning and communicating when you have been diagnosed with a terminal illness. See [Coping with a terminal illness](#).

## SECTION THREE: Combining a Carer role and working at the University of Auckland

NB: A corresponding toolkit is available for staff Combining parenting and a career at the University of Auckland at [www.equity.auckland.ac.nz/cpc](http://www.equity.auckland.ac.nz/cpc)

Managing the responsibilities of combining work with a Carer role can be stressful. This guide is designed to provide clear and accessible information to support staff with Carer responsibilities and their managers.

### Carers Role

A Carer role may:

Emerge over time, eg, an older person or someone with an illness gradually becoming frailer and requiring additional support.

- Be sudden and unexpected, eg, the result of a stroke, accident or unexpected diagnosis<sup>5</sup>.
- Involve travelling to the place of care, ongoing visits, emotional support, providing services, living away from own home to take up Carer role, or adjusting the physical home to accommodate the needs of the person being cared for.
- Be short or long term (it is often difficult for health professionals to give an accurate prediction).
- End positively with the person recovering, or end under more stressful circumstances if a person dies or becomes too ill or disabled to be supported in the way initially undertaken by the Carer.

Sudden transitions into a Carer role often put a person under pressure. It is also not unusual for Carers to have multiple Carer roles either simultaneously or one after another.

*When my husband was diagnosed it took me a while to work out how our lives would change, what support systems would need to be in place and what the most suitable solutions would be. (Carer of a partner with a medical condition)*

Everyone's path to becoming a Carer is different. But often they begin with having little understanding of where the role might lead and how it might impact on their own health and lifestyle (

*"...when seeking employment always be 'up front' about your needs for flexibility in employment. 'Make it obvious right from the outset' so that it can be negotiated" (Carer of a teenager who lives with a disability).*

### University Support

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<sup>5</sup> Stages and Transitions in the Experience of Caring. CES Report 1 [www.carersuk.org/professionals](http://www.carersuk.org/professionals)

## **Familiarise yourself with the University's Policies**

While combining a career and a carer role you may wish to request temporary or long-term flexible work arrangements and/or take leave or request other support. Please see later sections in this booklet for more detail and consider the following University Policies and Guidelines which are accessible to all staff via the Staff Intranet or the links below:

- [Equity Policy](#).
- [Flexible Work Policy](#)
- [Work, Life, Family and Carers Policy](#)
- [Retirement and phased retirement](#)
- [Merit Relative to Opportunity Policy](#)
- [Academic Timetabling Policy](#)
- [Types of leave](#)
- [Supporting staff with children](#)

*Acquaint yourself with what help is available in the form of policies and talk to key people such as the Staff Equity Manager who knows the variables of these and different interpretations. This will help you make a good case to your manager if required. (Carer of child with medical issues).*

### **Car parking**

The University provides a limited number of parking permits for staff with family and Carer responsibilities on a case-by-case basis. This can be especially helpful for staff who usually rely on public transport but sometimes need to drive to work due to critical Carer responsibilities. These parking permits can be used at any University car park, but they are not allocated spaces.

For more information contact the Equity Office [equity@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:equity@auckland.ac.nz).

If you have been granted leave and have a University car park which you will not be using, you can hand your permit in to the Security Desk at 11 Wynyard Street with a note detailing your finish and return dates. Security will notify payroll to have your deductions stopped. You can pick your permit up on your return to work and Security will again notify payroll to resume deductions.

For more information contact Car Parking Administrator Property Services Building 409 24 Symonds Street City Campus ext 88485 or email: [carparking@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:carparking@auckland.ac.nz)

### **Support from managers and colleagues**

The University is sensitive to the needs of staff with family/Carer responsibilities as identified in the Equity Policy. Leadership, support and accountability for achieving equity outcomes are delegated to Deans, Directors and Managers. These staff will be assisted to achieve best practice through information, training and professional development.

Support arrangements for staff with Carer responsibilities will be determined on a case-by-case basis and may result in granting leave, arranging flexible work hours or providing more suitable duties, taking into account the University's needs.

*Some people hide a caring role. A manager needs to hear about caring roles – it can be a learning process for both parties. Managers must have trust in their staff and the faith in their staff to deliver.*

(Carer of a teenager who lives with a disability)

Managers need to be aware that in some cases Carers will have little or no warning when taking on a Carer role or requiring adjustments which may affect their working hours or other aspects of their job.

*Establish an atmosphere of two-way empathetic and caring conversations and communicate often. This will contribute to a feeling of mutual trust to get the best possible outcomes for the individual and the organisation. Understand that people care about the organisation and want to make it work as well as possible. Flexibility is the key.*

(Carer of a child with medical issues)

It is important for managers to discuss with the staff member what they would like colleagues to know about their situation and what they would like to remain private.

*I was shocked when a colleague who reported to me rang in to say her son (who was in his early 20s) had just died of cancer. Her son lived with her but she hadn't told anyone at work that he was terminally ill or even that he was unwell. She had taken a lot of days off for various reasons and at times seemed very withdrawn but we didn't have any idea what she was going through. She later explained that she hadn't spoken about it to anyone at work because she only wanted to receive support from her close church community. She also wanted her work environment to be the one place where she didn't need to discuss what was happening.*

*This situation made me aware of the different ways people might respond to these kinds of stressful situations. I think the key thing is to be respectful of the person's wishes and to talk to them about what would be the most appropriate way to offer.*

(Manager of a staff member with a terminally ill son)

*Colleagues genuinely want to help but they need to know what would be helpful and you need to ask, because people won't keep offering. I have colleagues who have picked my husband up from hospital when I have an important meeting or taken him for a blood test when I was away. These things are really great practical help and my colleagues feel good about supporting me and my family.*

(Carer of a partner with medical issues)

Please refer to each section of this toolkit for further considerations for managers.



## SECTION FOUR: Flexible work arrangements

The University's Work, Life, Family and Carers Policy and the Flexible Work Policy confirm its commitment to supporting employees who have Carer responsibilities. Flexible work arrangements include, but are not limited to:

- Part-time work.
- Changes to hours of work.
- Leave without pay.
- Partial retirement.
- Reduced responsibilities.
- Working from other places.
- Job sharing.

In situations where you are not able to manage your normal hours of work together with your Carer responsibilities, it is important to discuss the options available with your manager and/or Human Resources. Levels of support will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

*Flexibility of academic work is helpful – people can take time out and make it up afterwards. Most people at University are there because they love what they do and are able to work after hours.  
(Carer of parent with dementia)*

### **Temporary short-term arrangements:**

If you require a temporary short-term arrangement you should discuss your situation with your Manager and/or Human Resources.

In some cases temporary arrangements may not require a formal request, but you can use the Flexible work arrangement Application form..

### **Longer-term arrangements**

You may wish to request flexible work arrangements for a longer period. Staff who care for others have the statutory right to request flexible working options such as hours, start/finish times, days of work or place of work. This includes options such as term-time working, job sharing and working from home.

The University's Flexible Work Policy encompasses both requests which relate to Carer responsibilities within the Employment Relations Act 2000 Part 6AA, and broader needs for flexibility. Staff and managers should refer to:

- [Work, Life, Family and Carers Policy](#)
- [Guidelines for Work, life, Family and Carer Responsibilities](#)
- [Flexible Work Policy and Procedures](#)
- Flexible Work Policy Application Form

Staff are also welcome to make their request under the Employment Relations Act 2000 (Flexible Working Arrangements). Forms are available from Employment NZ's [Flexible Work Toolkit](#).

Staff need to write to the University and include the following information:

- The date and your name.
- That the request is made under the Employment Relations Amendment Act 2007 Part 6AA, Flexible Working Arrangements.
- The change you would like, whether it is permanent or temporary, and if temporary when it should end.
- How the change will help you provide care.
- Any changes you think the employer would need to make to the workplace arrangements if your request was approved.

The University is required to consider your request. If your request cannot be granted, it may be possible to reach a compromise.

*Discuss with friends and family all the possible options. In my case I needed some time in the first instance to re-organise my life. I needed to train my youngest child to get the bus to and from school and support my teenager to get her driving license. Once some of the new supports and routines were in place I felt confident about returning to full time work. (Carer of a partner with medical issues)*

More information on Work-life balance can be found on Employment NZ's [Flexible Work Toolkit](#).

## SECTION FIVE: Leave

To view the University policy documents relating to the various types of leave, visit the [Human Resource policy](#) site and view [types of leave](#). Depending on your situation, you can apply for any of the types of leave specified below.

### **Sick and domestic leave**

Parents/Carers are often required to take short term leave to care for family<sup>6</sup>. In most instances this can be taken as part of the Carer's sick leave entitlement.

Details of entitlements are contained in the University's employment agreements:

- Academic Collective Agreement
- Medical Academic Collective Agreement
- Professional Staff Collective Agreement
- Unisafe, Gardeners and Associated Employees Collective Agreement

Professional and Academic agreements can be accessed at [collective agreements](#).

### **Special leave**

There is provision for special leave which can be granted with or without pay. For example, it is possible that it could be provided to a general staff member whose sick leave is used up. It could also be used to cover unusual or emergency situations.

If you are considering requesting additional leave to care for a person with ill health, a disability, mental illness, an addiction, or in their old age which in most instances will be unpaid leave, suggested steps are to:

- Estimate the amount of leave that may be required. The amount of time will depend on many factors, both professional and personal.
- Meet with your manager and/or Human Resources to discuss your situation and, if appropriate, how your duties and responsibilities could be handed over.
- Apply for Leave.

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<sup>6</sup> The University's Work, Life and Family Policy defines the term 'Family' in the broadest sense and encompasses single people, relatives of all ages including the elderly, whānau, culturally diverse family groups, de facto, same sex relationships and relationships which involve responsibility to care for another person.

### **Advice for managers**

Each request will need to be considered sensitively on a case-by-case basis. Remember that the exact length of time required may not be easy for the staff member to accurately predict so there may need to be an initial arrangement with a review period.

Take time to give people the chance to talk if they want to – try to slow down in the workplace. The small bits of disclosure in a corridor conversation can give rise to wider understanding. If there are ‘things going on’ staff may feel comfortable to give ‘hints’ but unwilling to make greater disclosures in a public place. It can be important for a manager to convey that their door is always open – show a disposition of openness to discussion.

*Critic and conscience role is not just about society out there – it is the constructive critic and humane conscience around the detail of human relations.*

*(Carer of a parent with dementia)*

Where appropriate seek additional advice from your Manager/ Human Resources Adviser.

### **Coverage while on leave**

Depending on the length of leave the staff member requires, work can be re-allocated, or a temporary replacement appointed. Discussions should include arrangements for handing over specific duties and responsibilities, whether to a temporary replacement or other staff. This can be an opportunity to consider secondments.

### **Staying in touch while on leave**

Depending on the situation, it may be a good idea to discuss what kind of contact would be appropriate for the staff member while they are on leave.

Options may include:

- Checking in to see how they are.
- Obtaining access to University websites and email from home for the staff member.
- Asking a colleague to send pertinent information and/or to telephone regularly with updates on what is happening at the University.
- If appropriate, letting them know that temporary or casual work is sometimes available, and that they can contact you or their HR Manager if they are interested in this possibility.

### **Accessing work email and the intranet from home computers**

In some cases staff who are working flexibly or on leave may wish to have access to their email and/or the intranet. Providing staff get authorisation from their line manager and their home computer complies with University security standards (see [www.security.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.security.auckland.ac.nz))

Staff can access email, the intranet and files through VPN. Staff should discuss access with their manager if appropriate for their situation.

Note: The University has a commitment to reducing the risk of Occupational Overuse Syndrome (OOS), so computers are expected to comply with all Health and Safety regulations for appropriate computer use.

### **Entitlement to benefits while on leave**

#### Southern Cross Healthcare Plan

Contributions through the University group scheme can be maintained on the discounted premium received while on leave. Staff need to contact Southern Cross on 0800 800 181 and arrange to be invoiced for premiums.

#### Superannuation schemes

Staff participating in one of the University's superannuation schemes need to contact payroll to discuss what to do while on leave. The GSF (Government Superannuation Fund) requires contributions while on leave. Contributions while on leave are optional in the NZUSS (New Zealand University Superannuation Scheme).

KiwiSaver does not require contributions from staff on leave but you do need to contact the scheme provider to discuss this with them.

### **[A Guide for Carers](#) He Aratohu ma nga Kaitiaki**

This resource provides practical help for Carers including financial help available from government and other agencies.

## SECTION SIX: Returning to work after long term leave

When returning to work after a period of long term leave there are a number of things to consider:

- Giving notice of your return to work. To enable the University to plan appropriate staffing levels it would be helpful to provide as much notice as possible.
- The basis on which you want to return to work – full or part-time flexible work options.
- Re-orientation to your department/work area.

*I have been able to undergo a gradual transition back into the workplace from one day a week through to three days. This period of time has been conducive not only to supporting my daughter (back into school and ensuring she gets to all the regular follow-up appointments she requires) but it has also been conducive to my own well being and I've noticed the difference in how I can reassess work/life balance feeling stronger and able to look ahead to the next transition considering possibilities that would have seemed impossible before.*  
(Carer of child with medical issues)

### Fulltime vs part-time

Circumstances permitting, staff returning to work may be able to work reduced hours or part-time. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis by managers and Human Resources. Again, staff need to provide one month's notice in writing but ideally as much as possible to be considered for part-time employment.

*Going back into a supportive team has also been a major factor in being able to look positively at my career and professional development opportunities.*  
(Carer of child with medical issues)

### Considerations for managers

Survey information has indicated that staff place a very high value on the support provided by managers to ease their transition back into work. It is recognised that supportive managers and colleagues will have far greater impact on the quality of working experience than other forms of formal assistance through policies.

Welcoming staff members who have taken longer term leave back into the workplace is an important way of acknowledging their value. How this happens will require sensitivity depending on their individual circumstances, especially if the person being cared for has died. [Refer to Appendix 1 "Supporting a bereaved colleague: A Guide for Heads of Departments, Managers and Supervisors".]

Managers should provide induction for staff who have been away for three months or longer. This should include introductions to new staff who have been employed since the staff member has been on leave, information about new IT systems which may have been introduced, timetabling changes, and any new policies, and procedures. Depending on the length of leave, it may be appropriate to attend training at SODU or CAD to refresh skills.

If "Welcome to the Faculty/Service Division" seminars are held for new staff, returning staff may appreciate an invitation to meet new staff from outside their department.

## SECTION SEVEN: Caring for the Carer

Depending on the situation, it is not unusual for the person who is taking on a Carer responsibility to experience a range of emotions and feel stressed or daunted at the prospect. It is also difficult to predict what the short or longer term impact will be on the Carer's own health and lifestyle.

*When there is a warm, collegial and reciprocal atmosphere people are often pleased to be asked [to assist] and welcome the opportunity to return favours.*

(Carer of a parent with dementia)

Without good networks Carers, especially those who have taken longer term leave, can experience feeling isolated and stressed. It is important that they know how to access support and services needed to undertake their role (refer to Section One) and also to maintain their own health and wellbeing.

*It is important to be particular and well organised, eg, normal things like cooking. It is very important to be reflective and take time to think 'Is this right?' 'Is this working for us?' Otherwise quite quickly things can become overwhelming.*

*Always have a back-up plan if things don't work. Pool people you can draw on – when you need specialist support there may not be many you can use.*

(Carer of a teenager who lives with a disability)

The following resources may provide support and information to assist the Carer gain support for themselves in managing the different stages of caring.

*Take all the help that people offer and don't get caught up on reciprocity at this stage.* (Carer of child with medical issues)

### **University of Auckland Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

As part of the University Health and Wellness Strategy, EAP provides 24 hour access to a confidential, professional service to support and guide staff through personal or work problems.

Staff facing difficult circumstances or decisions, personally or at work, can access EAP directly for help to work towards finding a personalised solution and peace of mind.

EAP recognises the reality of human problems in the workplace and acknowledges that most difficulties, including relationship issues, job and career issues, and emotional and family problems, are responsive to treatment.

The EAP service is free and is available to all staff except casual employees. The service is totally confidential and voluntary.

For further information about the Employee Assistance Programme and the services they offer, please visit [www.eapservices.co.nz](http://www.eapservices.co.nz) or phone 0800 327 669.

## **Carers NZ**

Established in the early 1990s by family Carers, Carers NZ is now a national registered charity which provides information, advice, learning and support for families with health and disability needs. [www.carers.net.nz](http://www.carers.net.nz)

## **A Guide for Carers, He Aratohu ma nga Kaitiaki**

This is a useful resource which provides practical help for people caring for family or friends who are older or have ill health, a disability or a mental health, alcohol or other drug issue. This [Guide](#) also provides a section on taking care of yourself which includes options for support.

*Towards the end of the treatment period I was low in resources and sick leave. Close friends were worried about me losing perspective and advocated taking action and applying for leave in order to and help my daughter recover from her illness and to regain my own well being. I looked at the University of Auckland policy on flexible work and used this to apply for a period of leave, which was granted.*

(Carer of child with medical condition)

## **Care for the Carers, National Health Committee Consultation**

This booklet was produced by the National Health Committee (NHC) who looked at what could make life easier or more difficult for those who care for people with disabilities.

The booklet describes what Carers do and what they need, suggests what is hindering them from having those needs met and provides some strategies for meeting those needs. (1998) Access the booklet here [Caring for Carers](#).201

## **Parent to Parent**

[Parent to Parent](#) is a support and information network for parents of children with special needs. Support is provided voluntarily by trained support parents who have a child with the same or similar needs.



## SECTION EIGHT: Research and Publications

This section provides links to research and publications that are relevant to the Carer role.

### Publications:

**Ministry for Social Development** *The New Zealand Carers' Action Plan 2019-2023* is part of a wider government process to improve the choices of parents and other informal Carers so they can better balance their paid work, their caring responsibilities and other aspects of their life. See [Action Plan](#)

**[Tearai Research Group](#)** Palliative care and end of life Research Group. Work includes research about family carers, eldercare, indigenous care, community support etc.

### Responding to an aging academic workforce

Universities New Zealand - Te Pōkai Tara commissioned Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL) to analyse the academic workforce, identify possible scenarios for the future and present the universities with options and recommendations to prepare for these changes. BERL's report, entitled *Academic Workforce Planning - Towards 2020*, is the latest contribution to a wider academic workforce planning project. A summary of key findings from the BERL report and the report in its entirety may be downloaded from the Universities NZ Website ([www.universitiesnz.ac.nz](http://www.universitiesnz.ac.nz)).

### Research reports related to the experiences of Carers in New Zealand:

**The [Experiences of Informal Caregivers](#)** in New Zealand (January 2009) Jorgensen, D. Parsons, M. & Jacobs, S. The Carers Assessment of Needs Study, carried out by Dr Diane Jorgensen of Auckland University's School of Nursing during 2007/2008, is one of the largest qualitative studies about Carers in the world. It was undertaken with help from national non-profit Carers NZ, which enlisted Carers to participate.

**The [LiLACS](#) NZ longitudinal study** was started in 2010 by the School of Population Health at the University of Auckland and is ongoing. It is a world leading research programme that aims to determine the predictors of successful advanced ageing and understand the trajectories of health and wellbeing in advanced age.

The study has produced numerous reports about both the care and carers of the elderly.

## SECTION NINE: Frequently asked questions

Q. **How can I find out what benefits I am entitled to?**

A. Ask your manager, contact Human Resources, the Equity Office or use the resources in this toolkit.

Q. **I am a Carer and am finding it very difficult to manage my current situation. Where do I go for help?**

A. In addition to Carers New Zealand and the other sources above, you may also wish to contact EAP for assistance 09 3582110.

Q. **Are there specific policies at the University that cover Carer responsibilities?**

A. There are several relevant policies. The Equity Policy and the Work, Life, Family and Carer Policy both confirm the University's commitment to supporting Carers. The Flexible Work Policy contains provisions to enable Carers to modify work arrangements and the Academic Timetabling Policy provides the opportunity for Carers to request that their significant caring responsibilities be taken into account in timetabling.

Q. **My manager and I are having difficulty coming to an agreed arrangement. Who can assist us?**

A. Your HR manager or the Equity Office can provide advice.

## APPENDIX ONE: University Contacts

### 1. **The Equity Office – Te Ara Tautika**

The Equity Office leads the University of Auckland's commitment to be a safe, inclusive and equitable place to study and work. Our work includes strategy, policy, projects, advice information, networks and events. Visit [www.equity.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.equity.auckland.ac.nz) or contact:

Cathie Walsh  
Staff Equity Manager  
Phone: + 64 9 3737599 ext 87844  
Email: [cathie.walsh@auckland.c.nz](mailto:cathie.walsh@auckland.c.nz)  
Physical address  
Clock Tower, 22 Princes St  
Bldg 105 Room 126

### 2. **Human Resources** are concerned about any issues that affect staff and will do what they can to assist.

Phone: + 64 9 373 7599 ext 83000  
Facsimile: + 64 9 373 7454  
Email: [askhr@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:askhr@auckland.ac.nz).  
Postal Address  
Human Resources  
The University of Auckland  
Private Bag 90219  
Auckland, New Zealand

### 3. **The University of Auckland Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)**

As part of the University Health and Wellness Strategy, EAP can provide you with 24 hour access to their confidential, professional services which can support and guide you through your personal or work problems.

The EAP service is free and is available to all staff except casual employees. The service is totally confidential and voluntary.

For further information about the Employee Assistance Programme and the services they offer, please visit the [www.eapservices.co.nz](http://www.eapservices.co.nz).

Alternatively, you can contact them directly, Employee Assistance Programme  
Phone: 0800 327 669.

### 4. **TEU Branch Organisers**

The Tertiary Education Union  
Phone: +649 8158029  
Email: [teu@teu.ac.nz](mailto:teu@teu.ac.nz)  
PO BOX 52066,  
Kingsland, Auckland 1352  
or 4 Western Springs Road, Morningside, Auckland 1021.

## APPENDIX TWO: Supporting a bereaved colleague

### A Guide for Heads of Departments, Managers and Supervisors

#### **As a manager or supervisor:**

The way you respond a bereaved employee can have significant effect on their ability to cope with the process of grief. Responses to loss are very individual. Some people want to withdraw from their responsibilities for a time. Each will find his or her own means of coping, and we cannot assume that we know what is best for the bereaved person.

The death of a loved one often makes the bereaved person feel that their own life is out of control. Whilst your support is needed and your advice may be valued, they may not want you to talk over and decide what kind of assistance they need and should be given. So ask the staff member what they feel is needed, how you can help, and whether any temporary change in their responsibilities would ease the inevitable strain they are experiencing. For example, an employee whose job involves a lot of contact with people may not be able to face too many strangers and may appreciate being able to withdraw from the front line occasionally. (Remember to acknowledge the efforts of other staff members who fill in for their bereaved colleague when needed.)

Ease up on deadlines for the time being, and make it clear that you know they may need more time to get things done. There may be days when the person needs privacy, eg, the chance to sit behind a closed door with a diverted phone or to go home early.

Be aware that there may have to be significant changes in the staff member's lifestyle. There could be problems in practical areas such as transport to and from work, or child-care arrangements. They may need assistance and some flexibility in working hours and conditions to accommodate these changes. Ask what they need and give them all the practical help that you can. The University may seem a very bureaucratic and distant establishment to a bereaved staff member, and you can help to overcome this by ensuring they get the support they need.

Remember that as manager or supervisor you also have a role to play in showing the other staff members in your department how they can be of help to their colleague, and it is important that someone senior takes responsibility for informing the staff of what has happened. The staff member's privacy is to be respected, but one of the hardest things for a recently bereaved person is finding a way of telling other people of their loss.

Above all, do not inhibit the right and need of the person to express their grief. Attempting to bottle up pain can cause the person to become alienated from their workplace and could even lead to the resignation of a valuable staff member. Do not presume that after a finite period the employee will revert to "normal". They have undergone an experience which may have changed their life forever, and their outlook and attitudes to many things will have altered.

If the bereaved employee is from another cultural group to your own it is important to find out about any practices and responsibilities that may require additional considerations. Please refer to the Bereavement / Tangihanga leave section under " on the Staff Intranet under [Types of leave and how to apply.](#)

## **Funerals**

When a colleague suffers a personal bereavement, it can be difficult for people in the department to decide whether or not they should attend the funeral. They are often unsure of just how close their relationship is to their colleague and wonder if their presence would be appropriate. In fact, it is most important that work colleagues, including the head of department do consider attending the funeral or memorial service if it is not a private one. Your presence may appear to go unnoticed; nevertheless you will have played your part in the ceremony and visibly shown your support for your bereaved colleague.

If the person who has died is from a different religious or cultural group than your own, you may feel nervous about the protocol attached to the ceremony, but this should not put you off. You will find that friendly and supportive guidance is readily given on these occasions and your attendance will be all the more appreciated. (For information relating to Tangihanga refer to "[Tikanga Whakaaro](#) Key Concepts in Maori Culture" by [Cleve Barlow](#) Paperback, 208 Pages, Published 1991 by Oxford University Press, Usa)

Make sure that information regarding the ceremony is conveyed to others in the department, as well as to other University colleagues who have had some close connection with the person concerned. Encourage fellow staff to make personal contact with their bereaved colleague and to express their support and sympathy by sending cards or flowers. In some instances, there may be especially tragic or traumatic circumstances surrounding the death. In such cases it is suggested that the department approach the University's counsellors or chaplains for support.

## **Support**

Even in less harrowing circumstances, it may be helpful to recommend to your bereaved colleague the resources that are available within the University. This could be appropriate at the time of crisis or possibly a few weeks or months later, when life in the department has resumed normality. Your colleague may find it helpful to seek support beyond that which family and close friends are able to give.

You may also find aspects of your colleague's grief difficult to cope with, possibly because it brings back to the surface some past sorrow of your own. You may question whether your words and attempts at being supportive are in fact adequate. It may not be appropriate to discuss these doubts with others close to the situation. However it might help to talk with a counsellor or EAP yourself, or do some reading to find a broader understanding of the issues involved when faced with bereavement.

## APPENDIX THREE: Legislation

Several pieces of legislation relate to staff with Carer responsibilities. Under the Human Rights Act 1993 it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a person because they have responsibility for care of children or other dependents. See the [Human Rights Commission](#) for relevant legislation and the [Guide to flexible working arrangements](#) from Employment New Zealand.

Supported Living Payment is assistance for people who have, or are caring for someone with a health condition, injury or disability. The Ministry of Social Development's Work and Income information gives detail on these [Supported living payments](#).

The Employment Relations Act 2000 makes provision for flexible working arrangements for those with Carer responsibilities. Refer to [Flexible Working Arrangements, Employment NZ](#).