



National Audit Office

Staff who are carers

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Who or what is a carer?

There is no definitive legal definition of an unpaid carer but a carer performs some or all of the following tasks:

- Provides care on an ongoing basis for a spouse or partner, relative or friend who has a disability;
- Helps with everyday tasks, for example dressing, bathing, personal care, cooking and cleaning;
- Gives emotional support
- Makes decisions on their behalf;
- Helps manage their finances.

The Civil Service Carers Network defines a carer as “anyone who cares for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support”

NAO definition of a carer

“Employees with caring responsibilities for someone with a **disability or long-term condition.**”

Why good support for carers matters

- Circumstances change
- A unique situation
- Greater mental and physical stress
- Employees worry about effects on work
- No 'one-size-fits-all' solution
- Make the NAO aware of the situation for support

How do we define disability?

The Equalities Act 2010 defines disability as:

- “A mental or physical impairment that has an adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out day-to-day activities”
- “Long-term”
- Some conditions are expressly deemed to be disabilities such as blindness, HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis.

NAO Disability Special Leave for Carers

Employees who have caring responsibility for a person with a disability may also request **Disability Leave to accompany their disabled dependent to appointments for treatment, tests or assessments etc.**

Subject to business needs, the NAO will consider allowing employees a period of Disability Leave for caring purposes, subject to a **maximum of 10 working days in any 12-month period.**

From HR Manual Chapter 12B Disability Leave Policy and Procedure

Starting the conversation – areas to discuss

Practical ways in which NAO might be able to offer support include:

- Flexible working
- Working from home where necessary
- Unexpected time off
- Changes to assigned work
- Disability Special Leave
- Paid Special Leave (if person is a dependent)
- Unpaid leave

Not all situations lend themselves to a short-term solution. Where appropriate, consider:

- Career break
- Use of annual leave

Discussions

Ongoing help and support

- Performance Coach
- HR Business Partner
- Assignment Manager/Lead
- HR Learning Support (if trainee or AT) for exam support

Peer support

- Carer support
- Disability Network for advice on Occupational Health and workplace adjustments
- Mental Health First Aiders

What support is available?

The **disAbility Network** can provide support and information about disability issues.

The **disAbility Network and Generations Network** run the NAO's carer support.

An **Information Sheet** is available on HR Guidance Pages to provide ideas to discuss with a member of staff who is a carer: [Carer Support \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Referral to **occupational health by the HR Business Partner** if the situation is having an adverse effect on the health of the staff member.

Employee Assistance Programme: EAP