



Student Carer Policy and Procedure

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History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authorised by	Date
1.1	New Policy	J Stalker	17 December 2019

West Lothian College is an inclusive organisation and all policies, procedures, strategies, plans, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services are assessed to consider the impact on staff and students covered by the Equalities Act 2010 by the completion of an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA). Protected characteristics are defined as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership (in employment only), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. All college policies and procedures can be provided in an accessible format.

Please see the bottom of this document for completed EIA.

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Introduction

West Lothian College is committed to providing a positive experience for all students. Caring responsibilities should not be a barrier to students succeeding therefore we are committed to being as flexible as possible to support students with their college education.

This policy provides advice and guidance to:

- individuals who are thinking about coming to college who are caring for a friend or family member who could not cope without their support
- students who, during their studies at West Lothian College are caring unpaid, for a family member or friend who could not cope without their support
- college staff that have a role in advising or supporting students who are carers or those who anticipate becoming a carer

Scope of Policy

This policy covers both prospective and current college students who have an unpaid caring responsibility for someone who is ill, disabled, are experiencing a mental health problem or an addiction. Ordinarily this does not include parents of children, except where a child has particular care needs resulting from a disability, or those employed in a caring capacity.

This policy does not cover students working in a paid caring capacity. However, it should be noted that the college recognises that all students will have unique needs and we will strive to anticipate and meet the needs of all students.

Equality and Diversity Statement

West Lothian College is committed to providing a culture and environment which is fully accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of the individual student. We do this by promoting equality, valuing diversity and inclusive practices through our Equalities and Access and Inclusion Policies.

We are committed to treating carers fairly, and having an inclusive and supportive environment for students who have caring responsibilities. We recognise our duties under the Equality Act 2010 to prevent discrimination, foster good relations and provide equality of opportunity.

This policy has been Equality Impact Assessed to ensure there is no detriment to any individual or group of individuals who have one or more protected characteristic.

Rights and Responsibilities

Disclosure and Confirming Carer Status

Any student can become an unpaid carer at any stage of their learning journey and their caring status can change over time. It is therefore essential that carers are able to declare their status at any time. It will be made clear at every stage of the application process that declaring student carer status is a positive step and will not affect an individual's chances of being offered a place on a course.

Every effort should be made to make use of pre-entry information provided by schools or other agencies in a timely manner to support effective identification of student carers and therefore impact positively on their retention and achievement. Similarly, staff should take every opportunity to prompt individuals to disclose student carer status to enable appropriate support measures to be put in place. Students are encouraged to disclose if they are a carer:

- Before applying: as part of a discussion about coming to college
- At initial application: by ticking the box on the application form
- At induction: through discussions with a member of staff
- At enrolment: by ticking the box on the enrolment form
- To a member of staff

Confirming student carer status is the responsibility of the student. As carers exist in a variety of different situations, proof status can come from many different sources, including:

- Self-certification regarding the nature of the caring duties and how this may affect their studies in the form of a short statement
- Letter from a general practitioner confirming carer status
- A local authority carer assessment, adult carer support plan or young carer statement
- Young carer authorisation card
- Other relevant documents, for example a letter from a care centre, other professional, social worker, teacher, carer group or documented evidence of receipt of benefits

In most situations, self-certification will be the most common form of evidence. However, West Lothian College may, at any point, request additional evidence.

Contacting the Support for Learning Team

We will work with students to minimise the impact their caring responsibilities may have on their studies. The Support for Learning Team is the first point of contact for student carers, however if the student feels more comfortable talking to a lecturer from their course or another member of staff then they can inform them directly. The staff member should then, with the student's permission, inform the Support for Learning Team so any necessary support can be put in place. If the student approaches the Support for Learning Team first, then they can help the student in how to best approach their lecturers and advise on what support can be put in place.

The Support for Learning Team is responsible for:

- Meeting with the student and agreeing a Student Carer's Plan
- Signposting the student to appropriate services either before or following completion of the Student Carer Plan for example Student Funds Team
- Referring to the appropriate academic member of staff for discussion regarding a potential Student Carer Plan
- Being the main contact for prospective students with caring responsibilities. Any queries in relation to studying at West Lothian College as a carer can be dealt with by the Support for Learning Team

Student Support Planning

After disclosure at enrolment a report will be created by the Student Systems Team and recorded through the Unit-e system.

Students will be contacted offering a one-to-one appointment to meet with the Support for Learning Team to discuss the support available and the student's individual needs.

During the meeting, a Student Support Plan should be agreed between the student and the Support for Learning Team detailing any arrangements and support requirements needed. The Student Support Plan details will be recorded through the Unit-e-system and updated as appropriate.

The Student Support Plan will encompass such things as:

- The nature of the caring responsibilities
- Possible impact on attendance
- Possible impact on time-keeping
- Possible impact on learning and assessment
- Wellbeing
- Funding

Some examples of the types of arrangements that could be made are listed below:

- Recognising the need to arrive late or leave early in order to place their cared for person(s) in appropriate daytime care.
- Agreeing periods of authorised absence and making arrangements for the student to catch up on missed classes for reasons relating to caring responsibilities to ensure they are not at a disadvantage.
- Providing timetables at least one month in advance to allow the student to make necessary alternative care arrangements and recognising that such students may not be able to attend activities where late changes to timetables are made.
- Ensuring that the student has adequate opportunity to make up missed time e.g. through access to any missed materials, or rescheduling of practical activities, or completing practical activities with another group, or accessing materials through a range of methods such as tutorials or VLE.
- Providing flexibility in relation to assessment deadlines where possible.

- Arranging regular contact with the Support for Learning Team if this is wanted by student.
- Taking account of caring responsibilities on courses which require an external placement. Priority should be given to ensuring the placement is within reasonable travelling distance to accommodate care arrangements.
- Providing a notice period of 3 weeks for placements to allow the arrangement of alternative care.
- Consideration of part-time study to accommodate needs of student carer if appropriate/possible.

Communicating the Student Support Plan to Curriculum Staff

The plan will be treated as confidential and stored on Unit-e. If the student gives permission, a summary of support will be passed to the key lecturer as soon as it is complete. It is the responsibility of the main lecturer to pass this information on to the individual lecturers where appropriate with the consent of the student.

Implementing and Reviewing Support

The Support for Learning Team will take responsibility for ensuring that the measures identified in the Student Carer Plan will positively impact on the student's progress.

It is the responsibility of the student to contact the Support for Learning Team if they feel the support is not working or needs adjusted. A meeting will be arranged to review the plan and the Support for Learning Team will then meet with curriculum staff to discuss an update and adjustments to the plan.

Withdrawal or Suspension from Studies

In some cases, a student may need to withdraw from the course or suspend their studies. On discussion with the curriculum area, a decision will be made as to whether a break is required or not, and for how long.

If a decision is made that the best course of action is for the student to withdraw from the course the appropriate paperwork will be prepared and the student will receive additional guidance and support.

Resuming Studies

If and when the student is ready to return, they should contact the Support for Learning Team. They can then meet with the curriculum centre and plan an appropriate return to study if this is possible.

Standards

Whilst every attempt should be made to support the student, precaution should be taken to ensure that this flexibility does not impact on the student's ability to meet the required academic outcomes of the course.

Recording Personal Information

It is important that any change to student carer status is monitored and recorded through Unit-e in order for the best support to be agreed and put in place. Information recorded for each student will be relevant to the individual's needs and will be required to enable the student to be properly supported. This information will include:

- The Student Support Plan
- A summary of agreed support
- Appointment details with individual students
- Details of alternative assessment arrangements
- Documentation relevant to agreeing support measures to be put in place
- Any other relevant information

Guidance for Staff and Staff Training

The college is committed to ensuring that all staff are appropriately trained and that learning and teaching practice is inclusive. The College is committed to ensuring that all curriculum staff are aware of their responsibilities and fully understand the importance of working in partnership with services to support learning.

Staff should be aware of GDPR and be sensitive to particular needs when working with students with caring responsibilities. The College will ensure that staff are given appropriate guidance and regular training to enable them to work with students with caring responsibilities to be treated fairly and supported to achieve.

Monitoring and Tracking

The number of students who have declared care status are recorded through Unit-e. Data is analysed to monitor student retention and attainment to ensure college equality and outcome agreement targets are achieved.

Complaints

Where a student is dissatisfied with the arrangements offered in line with their caring responsibilities, they can access information regarding the Complaints Procedure from:

<https://www.west-lothian.ac.uk/media/3200/complaints-policy-and-procedure.pdf>

ANNEX A: Additional Support and Information

Within College

Support for Learning Team supportlearning@west-lothian.ac.uk

This team assists students across the College with both personal support and academic support.

Chaplaincy Team listening@west-lothian.ac.uk

A dedicated team of volunteer Chaplains who are there to listen, support students' and staff's spiritual wellbeing and provide guidance.

Counselling Service supportlearning@west-lothian.ac.uk

This is an accessible short-term counselling service which is available through Student Support Team.

Student Funds Team bursaries@west-lothian.ac.uk

Provide advice and guidance relating to queries regarding money, bursaries, loans and fees.

Out with College

Carers of West Lothian office@carers-westlothian.com

Carers of West Lothian is a charitable organisation providing information, advice and support for all carers.

Carers Trust Scotland www.carersuk.org/Scotland

Can provide support for Carers through local Carer Centres across Scotland

Carers Scotland www.carersuk.org/scotland

Can provide policy information, training and support to carers in Scotland and also supports carers through local carer centres across Scotland.

Scottish Association for Mental Health www.samh.org.uk

SAMH is Scotland's leading mental health charity. They work to ensure people are talking about mental health by promoting policy, national campaigns, raising funds and supporting community based services.

Equality Impact Assessment

Before carrying out an EIA, you should familiarise yourself with the College's EIA Policy Statement and Guidance, along with further information and resources which are available on iShare.

EIA covers **strategies, policies, procedures, plans, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services**, but will be referred to hereinafter as 'policy/practice'.

Policy/Practice (name or brief description):	Carer Policy
Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (choose from the following options):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed new policy/practice Proposed change to an existing policy/practice Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice Other (please give detail): 	New Policy
Person responsible for the policy area or practice:	
Name:	L Jenkins
Job title:	Access and Support Service Leader
An Equality Impact Assessment must be carried out if the policy/practice:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> affects operational or strategic functions of the College is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance) 	
Why the EIA is being carried out	This policy is required to ensure the college is meeting the specific needs of students who are carers. The policy outlines the process by which student carers are identified and supported to remain on course and to attain a qualification.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Disability • race (including ethnicity and nationality) • religion or belief • sex • sexual orientation • gender reassignment • pregnancy and maternity • marriage or civil partnership 	<p>The policy supports students who fall into the category of “carer”. Student carers may have one, or more, protected characteristic and will be supported on an individual basis, taking account of these characteristics.</p>
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Record your assessment against the following statements:

Statement	Equality assessment
Detail the evidence of the needs of the identified equality groups and any gaps in information	Student needs will be gathered on an individual basis and action taken to provide appropriate support under the policy.
Will application of this policy/practice lead to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups?	No The policy ensures that individual needs are considered by staff within the scope of their work and that student carer needs are actioned on an individual basis.
If yes, how will the policy/practice be changed to contribute to advancing equality of opportunity	
State how this policy/practice will foster good relations:	The policy directs staff to act to ensure equality of treatment and good relations on an individual student basis.
Will the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups?	No
If yes, how will the policy/practice be changed to contribute to advancing equality of opportunity	

Which equality groups or communities have been consulted in the development and review of this policy/practice?	The policy has been reviewed by the equalities committee which includes representation from staff and the student association. Feedback from the committee has been taken on board to finalise the policy.
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<p>Equality Impact Assessment Outcome Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development/review of the policy/practice will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision. (Delete the options that do not apply):</p>	
<p>Option 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.</p> <p>Option 2: Adjust the policy or practice – this involves taking steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality and/or to foster good relations.</p> <p>Option 3: Continue the policy or practice despite the potential for adverse impact, and which can be mitigated</p> <p>Option 4: Stop the policy or practice as there are adverse effects cannot be prevented/mitigated against.</p>	
<p>Monitoring</p>	
When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?	3 year review, except if legislative change requires an earlier review period.
<p>Publication of EIA</p>	
<p>Can this EIA be published in full, now? Please state Yes or No</p> <p>If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply:</p>	Yes

Sign-off	
EIA undertaken by	
Name:	J Stalker
Date:	8 January 2020
Accepted by person responsible for the policy/practice named above:	
Name:	L Jenkins
Date:	8 January 2020
Approved by Equalities Committee	Yes
Date:	9 January 2020