



UCL



Guidance on supporting working parents and carers

Why is it so important to support staff with dependents?

3 million people in the UK juggle paid work with unpaid caring responsibilities: 1 in 7 people in any workforce. Looking after dependents is an issue that is likely to affect the majority of the workforce at some point in their working lives, particularly as people are living longer. In the UK, the majority of those who undertake unpaid care are women ([Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2013](#)).

UCL has a long history of being inclusive. For these values to have meaning today, they have to be translated into the 21st century working environment. What this means in practice is that every effort should be made to support those with responsibilities outside work to achieve a sustainable balance between work and other responsibilities, in the interests of equality and wellbeing.

As a progressive institution, UCL also has a role to play in transforming restrictive gender norms so that men feel able to play an active role in supporting their partners and looking after their families. We recognise that the family unit is very different from twenty or thirty years ago and that there are more lone parents, gay parents, step families and other non-traditional arrangements. During my time at the EHRC, I was most proud to be part of a 'Working Better' campaign, including the shift to shared parental leave, now reflected in UK legislation and in UCL policy. It will take time for this to become 'the new normal', but at last policy is catching up with, and supporting, social and attitude changes.

People also tend to live further away from their extended families, especially international staff, so there is less informal support from family members nearby. Travelling long distances to care for elderly relatives can be stressful and time consuming.

Flexible working is a two way street: if we can support staff in finding a sustainable way to juggle all of these responsibilities, they are likely to stay with us, be loyal and go the extra mile when needed. A reduction in stress levels is also likely to lead to a more productive and harmonious workforce. The philosopher most closely associated with UCL, Jeremy Bentham - who saw education as the key to reform and to the achievement of the greatest happiness of the greatest number – would be proud of us!

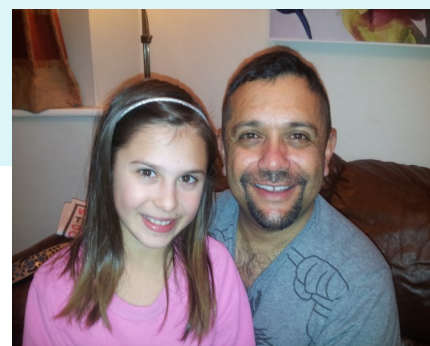
**Dame Nicola Brewer
Vice-Provost (International)**



Case Study 1 - Compressed hours

When I applied to work a compressed nine working day fortnight in April 2005, my daughter Daisy was 2 years old, and my son Will was 6. Trying to balance demanding working hours, domestic responsibilities, and the cost of childcare, gave me the impetus to really put my family first. I wanted to play a far more hands-on parental role at this formative stage of their lives. My manager and team were happy to pilot the arrangement, which I still refer to as 'Daisy Days', and I am glad to say it has worked so well that not only do I still work compressed hours (gradually reduced on my request to two days per school term), but many colleagues still do not realise that I do so! The flexibility works both ways and my Daisy Days are fitted around work priorities. Thanks to UCL, and my past and present manager, I have spent much more quality 1-2-1 time with Daisy, I have been able to do much more in and around school, and even now I can be there for the odd assembly, to pick up from school, and simply to be around for the children and my wife on a school day.

Bob Carey
Senior Human Resources Consultant



What the law says

The Equality Act 2010 has specific legal provisions that relate to staff with dependents:

- Discrimination by association – the concept of 'discrimination by association' was introduced as a result of the *Coleman v Attridge* case in 2008, which concerned a woman with a disabled child who requested time off to look after her disabled son. The request was, unreasonably, refused and it was established that Coleman was discriminated by virtue of her connection to her disabled son, even though she wasn't actually disabled herself. The concept of discrimination by association was enshrined in the Equality Act 2010 and applies to the other 'protected characteristics' of the Act, such as age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. In the context of looking after dependents, what this means is a carer of, for example, an elderly relative could potentially be protected by age discrimination legislation if they were treated less favourably in the workplace.
- Indirect sex discrimination – recent case law *Cooper v House of Fraser* has established that inflexible working practices, and a requirement to work full time in particular, have a much greater impact on females than males as a group, due to the fact that women undertake the majority of unpaid care work. Previous case law had asserted that this was not a sex discrimination issue.
- Maternity and pregnancy are a protected characteristic in the Equality Act.

Parental leave policies at UCL

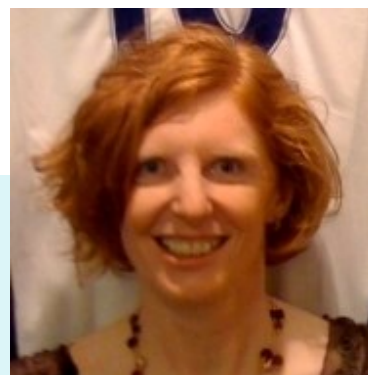
- Maternity Leave and Adoption Leave – allows for 18 weeks leave on full pay and statutory maternity pay for those who qualify, regardless of length of service or funding source. Staff can take up to 52 weeks leave. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/parental-leave.php> Please also see the maternity leave FAQs - http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/maternity_faqs.php
- Shared Parental Leave – allows parents to share up to 50 weeks leave between them, taking leave in up to 3 blocks, either alternatively or concurrently. UCL offers 18 weeks leave on full pay and statutory shared parental leave pay for those who qualify regardless of length of service or funding source. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/parental-leave.php> Please also see the shared parental leave FAQs - http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/shpl_faqs.php
- Paternity/Partners Leave – up to 20 days full paid leave, regardless of length of service or funding source (this is double the legal requirement for paternity leave). <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/parental-leave.php>
- Keeping in Touch (KIT) days – those on maternity or adoption leave can take up to 10 KIT days, and those on shared parental leave can request up to 20 ‘Shared parental leave in touch’ (SPLIT) days. You will receive the equivalent time off in lieu for time spent at work for KIT or SPLIT days. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/parental-leave.php>
- Sabbatical Leave– provides a term free from teaching commitments for research-active staff returning from maternity or shared parental leave to get their research back on track (see paragraph 9) <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/sabbatical.php>
- Ordinary Parental Leave - OPL can be used by employees wanting to spend more time with their children, in order to balance work and family commitments. Staff with one years continuous service at UCL is entitled to up to 18 weeks unpaid leave per child up to the age of 18. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/parental-leave.php>

Flexible working at UCL

- Right to request flexible working – any member of staff – whether they have caring commitments or not – can request flexible working arrangements. Any request must be given serious consideration by your line manager.
- There are a number of ways to work flexibly at UCL, for example working from home, condensed hours, term-time working, job shares or flexitime.
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/work_life_balance.php
- Work-life balance policy – includes the right to request flexible working for all staff and a list of different flexible working options. Managers must give each case proper consideration, only taking into account legitimate business reasons. It is not always necessary to formalise arrangements, although a contractual matter such as a reduction in hours will need to be done formally. The process for making a formal flexible working application can be found at Appendix 2 http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/work_life_balance.php
- Core hours – UCL's core hours are between 10 and 4. All core business should take place between these times wherever possible (see paragraph 2.3)
http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/work_life_balance.php

Case Study 2 - Flexible Working

I am lead of UCL Medical School's Medical Ethics and Law Unit and academic lead of the Medical School's widening participation project *Target Medicine*. I am also a practicing clinician in Sexual and Reproductive Health and have three kids under the age of thirteen. Balancing work and childcare responsibilities can be a tricky business. Fortunately, UCL's flexible working policy allows me to adjust my work time around family commitments. This means I can take a couple of hours out of my working day to see a school concert or accompany my daughter to the dentist and make up the time during evenings or weekends when my partner Nicola can look after the kids. Moreover, the general positive and supportive attitude towards members of staff with dependents that permeates my department means that I don't feel guilty watching my 9 year old murder *Greased Lightening* at her school's X Factor concert while my colleagues are hard at work.



Dr Jayne Kavanagh
Principal Clinical Teaching Fellow, UCL Medical School

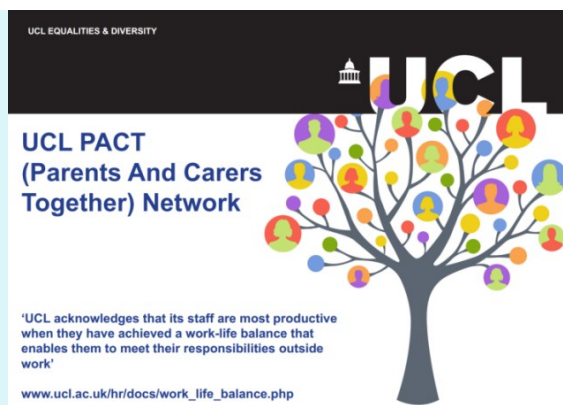
UCL Parents and Carers Together Network (PACT):

PACT is a peer support group for all UCL staff balancing caring responsibilities with work. PACT aims to:

- Address issues commonly faced by parents and carers
- Provide a supportive environment for discussion, networking and informal advice.
- Raise awareness of UCL policies that support parents and carers

The group holds monthly sessions and topics have included effective time management, caring for elderly relatives and flexible working, along with Christmas and summer social events. There is also an online Moodle forum so tips and strategies can be exchanged virtually.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/gender/pact.php>



Madiha Sajid: Co-Chair of the PACT Network

"I work in the Epidemiology Department at UCL. I co-ordinate teaching and research activities for the MSc Health Psychology. I have a 9 year old daughter who is a keen piano player and an enthusiastic swimmer. Juggling between a full time job and childcare means that I welcome all the support that I can get from within and outside UCL. This is why we have decided to set up a forum for all staff members at UCL who have caring responsibilities so that we can come together and support each other."



Jawwad Darr: Co-Chair of the PACT Network

"I am a Professor of Materials Chemistry at UCL Chemistry Department. As well as being a full time academic with a research group of over 16 people, I try to balance my time for my family and volunteering work. Like many people, I have a daily struggle to achieve a sensible work-life balance and so am looking forward to working with PACT to help promote good working practises and knowledge transfer at UCL in support of those who have parental and caring responsibilities."

Case Study 3 - Remote Working

I joined UCL in Aug 2007 working full time for the Life Sciences Faculty Office. I had my daughter Jasmine in Dec 2010 and returned to work full time when she was 11 months. Like any first time mum I wanted to be around her and spend a lot of time with her but I couldn't afford to give up work.

UCL is one of the best employers you can work for. I am allowed the flexibility to work from home when needed which works so well, actually enabling me to concentrate better on the complicated work tasks which a normal working day in the office wouldn't. Our IT systems which enable me to work remotely are fantastic to help balance work and domestic responsibilities. My line manger and the colleagues in the office have been very supportive, throughout my pregnancy and now in my parenting days. It creates a positive working environment and I so look forward to continue working full time when I have a second one!



Supneet Bajwa
Faculty Admissions Officer, Life Sciences

Case Study 4 - Caring for older relatives

My father died quite suddenly in October 2012. He had been caring for my mother Maisie who is relatively fit, despite being 93. Maisie has been able to stay in her own flat, in Cheltenham, with carers visiting daily, but is lonely and needs help with banking, shopping and so on. I was very grateful when my line manager John Tooke agreed that I could work my contracted hours Monday to Thursday to devote Fridays to visiting my mother and sometimes catching up on my own domestic chores.

Professor Mary Collins
Division of Infection and Immunity



UCL's Services

- UCL Day Nursery – UCL has a day nursery which can accommodate up to 62 children between the ages of 3 months and 5 years http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/support/wellbeing/day_nursery
- Employee Assistance Programme – an external employee support service that is free to UCL staff, which gives advice and counselling on a number of issues, including wellbeing and workplace issues http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/occ_health/services/emp_assistance_program.php
- Remote working – UCL has a remote access VPN service to enable staff to connect in UCL's IT systems from off-site locations. Access to VPN is restricted so staff will need their manager's permission to use the service <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/isd/services/get-connected/remote-working/vpn>
- In addition, desktop@UCL Anywhere allows you to access your applications, files and desktop from your own computer or device <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/isd/services/desktops/>
- Childcare vouchers – UCL operates a salary sacrifice childcare voucher scheme to make the cost of childcare more affordable http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/childcare_voucher_scheme.php
- Specialist human resources advice – for advice on individual workplace issues staff can contact the HR Consultant for their area <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/consultancy/index.php>
- Equalities and Diversity Team – for advice on diversity-related matters, such as gender equality issues, contact equalities@ucl.ac.uk

What managers can do to support staff with dependents

- Where possible or practicable, be flexible – a flexible approach to staff is generally a more inclusive one, as it is more likely to meet the different needs of a team. Flexibility around working hours is a critical issue for working parents, especially during school holidays.
- Measure staff performance by means of objectives, rather than time at work – it is not only good management practice to measure staff by what they achieve, rather than the hours they spend at work, but it is also of particular benefit for those who are unable or unwilling to regularly work long hours.
- Avoid organising meetings and events outside core hours – routine team, departmental or faculty meetings should be avoided outside UCL's 'core hours' of 10-12 and 2-4pm.

9 Supporting working parents and carers: guidance for managers

- Accept that staff will have fluctuating time and energy levels at different stages in their careers – be mindful of the impact of people's lives outside work, where you are aware of this, and look to make realistic demands of them.
- Don't assume they are less interested in their work. Just because, for example, a woman has recently returned from maternity leave and is excited about her family it doesn't mean that she is any less interested in her work or ambitious about her career prospects. Managers should ensure that staff with dependents keep working on interesting and challenging projects and are provided with the same mentoring and career development opportunities.
- Make explicit efforts to include them in social and team building activities – evening social events in the pub aren't suitable for everyone so make sure your team, division or department has a good mixture of social activities outside and during normal working hours. Some departments have annual social events, such as picnics, to which family members are invited to attend.



Case Study 5 - Core work in core hours

I've been a parent at UCL since my daughter was born extremely prematurely at 25 weeks in 2002. UCL was immediately generous in arranging extended sick and compassionate leave to enable me to attend my critically ill daughter's bedside for the first three months of her life. After discharge from hospital she has grown to a healthy ten year old, joined by my now seven year old son. Throughout that time UCL has proven a flexible and supportive employer. My co-parenting has been facilitated by the scheduling of all meetings, including senior management at Faculty and School level, within core working hours. Innovative IT platforms allow effective on and off-site working while permitting the flexibility I need in my shared parenting role. The shared positive gender equality culture in my Institute facilitates those occasions when I need to be absent to care for my children and creates a positive atmosphere towards parenting that both supports my own needs and enables me to facilitate the needs of others.

Professor Geraint Rees
Dean of Life Sciences

Case Study 6 - Dual academic career parents

I have been working in academia for well over 20 years, having had different positions at several European universities. At one of them I met my husband and now we both work at UCL. Working as a university lecturer is a tough job full of real responsibilities and very high expectations. Research is genuinely a continuous process occupying your mind far beyond "nine-to-five". However; it is portable - you can take it with you whilst waiting for your child to finish his tennis practice for example. It can also sometimes be paused whilst you go and pick up your child from school.

Our son is 7 years old. Somebody has to take him to school in the morning and pick him up from after-school club before it closes at 6pm. On days when we are both at UCL, my husband and I do "shifts". The one who picks him up from the after-school club leaves home very early in the morning in order to be back by 6pm, whilst the one who is taking him to school comes back late, but preferably in time for family dinner at 7pm. Early morning is time for homework, whilst 7-9pm is family time after which at least one of us is back at the computer working. We are lucky to be able to organise our shifts as my husband's teaching is in the morning, whilst mine is in the afternoon.

Juggling demanding careers with parenthood simply must be possible regardless of how difficult it is. Being able to work flexible hours and from home, and most importantly being valued by our results and not hours spent in the office, is what makes it possible for us.

Dr Ljiljana Marjanovic-Halburd
Senior Lecturer, The Bartlett School of Graduate Studies
& Professor Rod Halburd, Mathematics



Case Study 7 - Part-time working

I joined UCL as a Research Assistant in 1991. I gained an MRC Fellowship in the same year that I became pregnant with my first child. With the support of my Head of Department I negotiated a return to work part-time (0.6FTE). I was able to balance my part-time working hours with continuing to build my research profile. One important aspect of this was departmental support of flexible working hours to accommodate travel to national and international conferences.

Whilst on extended maternity leave with my second child in 1999 I applied for a lectureship with full transparency of my intention to continue to work part-time. I was the only female candidate, and the only applicant wishing to work part-time. I was awarded the lectureship, taking up the post on continued part-time (0.6FTE) status. Course organisers and the Head of Department facilitated the necessary adjustments to the teaching timetable to accommodate a staggered return to work.

I was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 2005 and after discussion with the Head of Department and head of my research group I increased my hours to 0.8FTE. I continued to build a successful multidisciplinary research team investigating acute brain injury in adults, neurodevelopment in young infants and neurological consequences of cardiothoracic procedures. With departmental support, the help of a timely Female Promotion workshop, and the encouragement of senior female academics across the faculty, I was promoted to Professor in 2008. I continue to work part-time (0.8FTE), being absent from college on Fridays, but adopting a flexible working pattern as required.



Professor Clare Elwell
Department of Medical Physics and
Bioengineering

External Organisations

- Netmums is the UK's fastest growing online parenting organisation <http://www.netmums.com/>
- Mumsnet www.mumsnet.com offers parents a place to swap ideas and advice.
- Dad info <http://www.dad.info/> news, information and blogs
- <http://www.childcare.co.uk/> is an award winning online social networking platform for parents, childcare providers and private tutors with over 1,000,000 members
- www.carersuk.org provide information and advice about caring alongside practical and emotional support for carers
- ACAS leaflet: 'The right to apply for flexible working' - a short guide for employers, working parents and carers
<http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=803>
- Family and Childcare Trust aims to make the UK a better place for families, through research, campaigning and information provision, and working with government, employers and parents to reduce pressures on family life <http://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/>



Equalities and Diversity
University College London
Gower Street
WC1E 6BT

www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities

Updated June 2015