

North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership

Carers and Parents Policy (2025-2026)

1. Introduction

The North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership (NWCDTP) recognises that some doctoral researchers will have caring and parenting responsibilities and may face obstacles in terms of access, time, resources, and/or progressing their PhD studies. We understand that these responsibilities are unique to each person(s) and that each researcher will have individual needs, circumstances, and requirements for support. This policy provides advice and guidance for:

- Doctoral researchers within the NWCDTP who, at any point during their PhD programme, are responsible for providing emotional, practical, or any other kind of day-to-day support to partners, children, and other family members, friends, neighbours, or others who are unable to manage alone.
- Doctoral researchers who become pregnant and require parental leave, as well as partners who are entitled to other forms of parental leave, such as paternity leave.
- Supervisory staff and/or those who have a role in advising and supporting doctoral researchers who already are or who anticipate having carer responsibilities, as well as researchers who may continue to be affected after caring responsibilities have ceased.

The policy covers any current or prospective doctoral researcher who has sole or shared responsibility for a child, or looks after a partner, relative, friend, or neighbour due to illness, a disability or mental health condition(s), or addiction. We recognise that the need for care can often

be short or long term, and that the responsibility for emotional or practical support may occur at any point and may not be predictable or have a set timescale.

2. Policy Statement

The NWCDTP believes that caregiving responsibilities should not prevent doctoral researchers from succeeding in their studies. Through our foundational values of respect, integrity, creativity, and collaboration, we enrich the many contributions made to our culture and society by doctoral researchers across our member Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). We are committed to providing support and flexibility to facilitate their success, ensuring that no one is disadvantaged whilst safeguarding academic standards.

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to **all doctoral researchers supported by the NWCDTP**.

The scope of this policy focuses primarily on the responsibility of parenting and caregiving and the impact of this responsibility on academic study and success. It does not focus on any caring responsibilities as part of a voluntary placement or where payment is already received.

Out-of-pocket parenting and caregiving costs beyond those required to meet the normal contracted requirements of the PhD programme (for example, childcare that is required during evenings/weekends or to cover a researcher's time at a conference or work placement, travel, training, and other events) may be requested. Costs associated with flexible working patterns or for extended periods of fieldwork may not be sought. As with other expenses, the researcher will need to show documentary evidence before expenses can be processed.

There is no qualifying period for parenting and caregiving support. We will ensure that our training provisions and opportunities continue to provide protection from discrimination for parents and those with caregiving responsibilities. The degree of flexibility that may be offered will be affected by each doctoral researcher's individual HEI; however, all will follow the general approach set out in this document.

4. Terminology

Carer: 'A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support' ([Carers Trust](#)). As of 2025, there is estimated to be at least 376,000 young adult carers living in the UK ([Carers Trust](#)). The person who is cared for may have more than one condition. Some carers care for shorter periods or are life-long carers. Carers do not need to be living with the person who is cared for in order to be considered a 'carer'. Anybody can become a carer at any time and sometimes for more than one person.

Parent: A parent, 'in relation to a child, includes any person who has parental responsibility for a child' ([Manchester City Council](#)).

5. Support for Carers and Parents

A range of University policies can be used to help students and staff who need support with parenting and caregiving responsibilities either on a short- or long-term basis. We would ask doctoral researchers to consult with their own HEI in the first instance about what support may be available. A list of further support and useful contacts can be found at the end of this document.

Help with Caregiving and Parenting Expenses

The NWCDTP can provide a small budget to fund out-of-pocket expenses incurred by attending programmes offered by the NWCDTP (for example, conferences, training, or placements) that impact usual parenting and caregiving responsibilities. The key aspect is that there is a payment to a registered third party. Please note that we will not be able to make the specific care arrangement for you. Applications will be accepted throughout the year. Payment will be made by way of an expense claim form with receipts attached.

For compulsory activities run by the NWCDTP, such as required employability placements or whole-cohort training events, full additional costs will be covered. For optional activities run by the NWCDTP, where these are run and therefore fully funded by the NWCDTP, the contribution method is appropriate up to a defined limit (approximately £100). For activities that are not organised by the NWCDTP, no contribution will be made.

6. Family Leave Entitlement and Support

- Maternity pay is available support a funded student during their maternity leave or interruption of study to care for a child (up to 52 weeks). As of 2025, it is no longer a requirement that the baby is born during a student's funded period. You just need to commence your maternity leave during the funded period, and maternity leave can begin up to 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth.
- Partner's or Paternity Leave (2 weeks) no longer must be taken immediately after the birth – it can be taken at any point in the first year.
- A Neonatal Care Leave policy is in place, in addition to maternity leave, which allows you one week's additional leave per week the baby is in neonatal care for up to 12 weeks.
- Individual risk assessments will be conducted for students who inform the NWCDTP that they are pregnant, breastfeeding, or have given birth in the last 6 months. If this applies to you, please email nwcdtp@manchester.ac.uk.

7. Additional Support

In addition to childcare or caregiving costs (to support a researcher's ability to attend a conference, training event, or research placement), the NWCDTP also commits to offering the following:

- A 1-2-1 consultation with any NWCDTP-registered researcher who is a parent or caregiver at the start of their PhD journey to better understand your individual needs and challenges, ensuring that we can provide the appropriate support throughout your programme. If this applies to you, please email nwcdtp@manchester.ac.uk
- Initiatives for students that focus on raising awareness of the barriers to study that parenting and/or caregiving can present. This includes workshops and other themed events; ringfenced Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) funding for one Fellowship in 2025-2026 that explores these barriers in more depth and improves current resources for researchers; and an ongoing collaboration with the Parents, Carers, and Guardians Network (University of Manchester) to create better support networks and promote a sense of community

8. How to Apply

Please send an email request using your academic email address with either 'CARER APPLICATION' or 'PARENT APPLICATION' in the subject header to nwcdtp@manchester.ac.uk. We do not have a set deadline, and so you can submit your application to us any time.

In order to apply, we will require the following information:

- Details of the support you require (such as maternity or partner/paternity leave)
- Details of the event(s) you wish to attend: what, where, when, and why
- Details of additional parenting and/or caregiving costs associated with attending the event(s)

Costs will be reimbursed following the event.

Please note that for compulsory activities run by the NWCDTP, such as the conference, residential, and NWCDTP-organised training, you can claim directly to the DTP by completing a [PR7](#) form (please do not forget to attach receipts) without having to complete an application prior to the event. Please ensure you send the completed form to nwcdtp@manchester.ac.uk

9. Confidentiality

The NWCDTP will protect all personal information and treat it in the strictest confidence. Information will only be shared if a person consents to disclosure or there is a statutory or other legal requirement.

Principles of Confidentiality



- Justify the purpose(s) for asking for and using confidential information
- We will not use confidential information unless it is absolutely necessary
- We will use minimum necessary personal identifiable information
- Access to confidential information should be on a strict need-to-know basis to those with a legitimate interest
- Everyone with access to confidential information should be aware of their responsibilities
- We will comply with the law

10. Further Support and Useful Information

General: Carers

- [Carers UK](#)
- [Carers](#)
- [Carers Trust](#)
- [Citizens Advice](#)
- [The Carers Federation](#)
- [Manchester Carers Centre](#)
- [The National Network for the Education of Care Leavers \(NNECL\) Student Voice Network](#)

General: Parents

- [Care for the Family](#)
- [Family Lives](#)
- [National Childbirth Trust \(NCT\)](#)
- [Single Parent Action Network](#)
- [Only Mums](#)
- [Only Dads](#)

- [Action for Children](#)
- [Adoption UK](#)
- [The Fostering Network](#)
- [Happy Steps](#)

Institutional Support: Carers

- [University of Manchester](#)
- [Manchester Metropolitan University](#)
- [Royal Northern College of Music](#)
- [University of Salford](#)
- [Lancaster University](#)
- [University of Liverpool](#)
- [Keele University](#)

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