

## **Special leave policy**

### **Introduction**

The Council fully supports the principle that employees should enjoy a suitable work-life balance and acknowledges that all individuals work best when they are able to achieve an appropriate balance between work and all other aspects of their lives. In striving to be an organisation that is committed to work-life balance, the Council: -

- recognises that effective practices to promote work-life balance will benefit both the organisation and its employees;
- highlights the employer's and the employee's joint responsibility to discuss and agree workable solutions and encourage a partnership between individuals, their colleagues and their line managers;
- will develop appropriate policies and practical responses that meet the specific needs of the organisation and its employees to ensure fairness and consistency and that employees are valued for their contribution to the service.

Depending on the circumstances, this Special Leave Policy, may also need to be read in conjunction with Time off for Dependents (Unpaid Carer Leave) and Parental Leave Policy. Both documents can be found in the Employment Handbook, Section 10.

### **Compassionate Leave**

#### **Who may grant compassionate leave?**

Group Managers may grant up to a maximum of 6 days compassionate leave with pay in any leave year. Managers on Band 13 or above may grant up to one day's compassionate leave with pay. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, employees will not be granted more than a total of 6 days compassionate leave in any leave year. Attending a funeral is included in the 6 days. If managers believe the circumstances to be exceptional, they should discuss this with Human Resources (HR), prior to reaching a decision.

Before granting compassionate leave the manager will consider the facts of the situation in order to make a decision on how much time off to approve which will vary according to the circumstances.

## When is it appropriate?

Compassionate leave is appropriate in situations of serious illness or death of an employee's close relative or partner. Additional unpaid compassionate leave may also be granted if this is considered necessary.

## Guidelines

Compassionate leave allows an employee not only to deal with urgent practical matters, but recognises also that the death or sudden serious illness of someone close can be traumatic both for the employee and for others who may need the employee's emotional support. However, paid compassionate leave is not intended to be a long-term arrangement.

A 'close relative' will normally be a partner, sibling, parent, or child. However, the death or illness of someone in the employee's extended family may also be grounds for compassionate leave in some circumstances e.g. an aunt or grandparent who has had significant involvement in the employee's life.

In the event of a death, compassionate leave will be appropriate to enable the employee to deal with matters such as: funeral arrangements; attending a funeral; probate or estate matters; other financial affairs; property and personal effects; organising care for dependants; registering the death; attending a hospital or hospice in the final stages of a terminal illness.

Managers should take the following into consideration when assessing the amount of leave to be granted – relationship to the employee, travelling distance, number of other family members who have responsibility for the terminally ill / deceased person and their estate.

Annual leave, unpaid leave, flexi leave and flexible working may also be appropriate and should be considered by the manager.

Compassionate leave is also appropriate for **sudden, serious** illness, usually (but not always) involving hospital treatment. Young children and aged parents may particularly need emotional support during hospitalisation. As well as for attending hospital during the most serious stages of the illness, compassionate leave will also cover practical matters such as arranging emergency care for other dependants.

Managers must recognise that compassionate leave may be requested with very little notice. They will need to obtain as much information as possible while remaining sympathetic and as non-intrusive as possible to enable them to decide the period of

leave suitable. Managers may wish to discuss the situation with HR before reaching a decision.

## **Elections**

Employees who volunteer and are authorised to assist with Local, European and Parliamentary Elections will have any related absence from work treated as if they had worked their normal hours. This includes time off for any training required.

## **Auxiliary Forces Training/Reserve Forces Call-up**

An Assistant Director may approve paid special leave to staff attending auxiliary forces training.

## **Employees representing their Country**

An Assistant Director may authorise up to four weeks paid leave in a year for staff selected to represent their country.

## **Jury Service**

An employee required to carry out jury service must apply for loss of earnings from the Court. The employee must obtain a form from the Court for Payroll to complete to detail the employee's loss of earnings. The employee must then return the form to the Court as evidence of what will be deducted from his/her pay. When the employee receives payment from the court, he/she must then notify Payroll of the amount received. Payroll will then deduct this amount from the employee's pay. The Court will also pay other expenses incurred (i.e. travelling and subsistence) and Payroll **do not** need to be informed of these.

## **Serving as a Magistrate or Special Constable**

An employee must gain approval from his/her manager prior to accepting an appointment as a Magistrate or Special Constable. The manager will make every effort to support the employee's request; however, he/she will also need to consider the impact on the service, particularly if there is more than one person carrying out these duties.

An employee approved to serve as a Magistrate or as a Special Constable will be granted up to 13 days per year as special leave. The employee is required to use annual leave/flexi-time/time off in lieu in order to match the total amount of special leave granted by the Council. For example, if the employee is required to serve for 12 days

per year, he/she will be given 6 days special leave and required to take annual leave/flexi-leave for the remaining 6 days.

### **Serving on Public Bodies and Undertaking Public Duties**

Paid leave will be given for serving on public bodies or undertaking public duties. There is no definition of what constitutes a public body or a public duty and your manager will consult with HR before giving you a decision on how much paid leave (if any) to grant.

### **Study Leave**

**Day release courses** - at the discretion of the manager, employees studying for qualifications (including National Vocational Qualifications) may be granted up to 5 days study leave per year. This will include time off to take examinations.

**Distance learning/correspondence courses** - At the discretion of the manager, employees studying for qualifications may be granted up to 10 days study leave per year. This will include time off to take examinations.

### **Attending internal job interviews**

An employee, who is called to attend an internal interview, must discuss this with his/her line manager. The employee will be given paid leave to attend the interview.

Special leave will not be granted for attending any external interviews except in the following circumstances:

- **Attending interviews whilst at risk of being made redundant**

In line with the Council's Redundancy and Redeployment policy and procedure, employees at risk of redundancy, are entitled to reasonable paid time off during working hours to look for work or to arrange training. Employees must give reasonable notice of time off to their manager.

### **Employees experiencing difficulties in attending work**

See Guidelines for employees experiencing difficulties in attending work.

### **Maternity Support**

Please refer to the Maternity Leave policy for further information on Maternity Support. Maternity Support applies if you don't qualify for Parental Leave.

The (expectant) mother can nominate a carer to provide primary support at or around the time of the birth. The nominated carer will normally be the father of the child (children) but can be anyone as long as they are nominated by the mother. If the carer is the father of the child, he will be entitled to Paternity Leave not Maternity Support leave.

Managers, who are authorised by their Assistant Director, may approve up to 5 days paid Maternity Support leave to a nominated carer, subject to that carer providing:

- (a) a copy of the expectant mother's MAT B1 form, and
- (b) written confirmation from the expectant mother that the employee is the nominated carer.