



SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CARERS POLICY

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy

Title:	Supporting Parents and Carers
Owner:	Human Resources

History

Version	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Future Review Date
1.0		New Policy	April 2026

Committee Approval

Version	Committee	Committee Date
1.0	Council Executive	28 April 2026

1. SUPPORTING PARENTS AND CARERS

- 1.1 The council recognises that an increasing number of employees have caring responsibilities, which place daily demands on their time, energy and resources. This policy has been developed to support employees to manage the demands of caring responsibilities while continuing in employment, ensuring that the skills and experience of our valued employees is retained.
- 1.2 Providing appropriate leave provisions, often going beyond the statutory minimum, is a key way of assisting employees to combine their caring responsibilities with their employment and supporting the council's commitment to equality of opportunity in employment. It is an overriding principle however that, in considering applications for leave under this policy, the need to maintain high levels of service delivery is given priority.
- 1.3 This policy covers a range of leave provisions. Information on the following provisions is contained in specific user packs:
- Maternity Leave
 - Adoption Leave
 - Surrogacy Leave
 - Neonatal Care Leave
 - Shared Parental Leave
 - Paternity Leave
 - Maternity/Adoption Support Leave
- 1.4 Information on the following provisions is contained below:
- Leave for the Planned Healthcare of a Young Child
 - Dependants Leave
 - Long Term Dependents Leave
 - Parental Leave
 - Parental Bereavement Leave
 - Fostering
- 1.5 All leave provisions contained within this policy apply to same sex couples (or same-gender or non-heterosexual couples) and are applied on a pro-rata basis for part-time employees.

2. LEAVE FOR PLANNED HEALTH CARE OF A YOUNG CHILD

2.1 An employee with parental responsibility for a child under the age of 5, is entitled in the first five years of the child's life to up to five working days paid leave and five working days unpaid leave in order to accompany the child to:

- post-natal child care clinic(s);
- visit a medical practitioner for the purposes of preventative medicine (e.g. inoculations etc).

2.2 Requests must be accompanied by evidence of the child's appointment.

2.3 Only one parent may request leave in respect of each appointment for the planned health care of a young child.

3. DEPENDANTS LEAVE

3.1 The line manager/Head Teacher has discretion to grant an employee up to five working days paid dependants leave, and thereafter, up to ten working days unpaid leave in any 12 month period. Dependants leave can be requested in the following circumstances:

- Caring for Ill Dependants - where a dependant is ill and relies on the care of an employee; or
- Carers Leave - where an employee who is an unpaid Carer needs to take time to manage their caring responsibilities.
- Breakdown in Childcare - where a dependent child is not ill but normal care arrangements have unforeseeably broken down and there are no other immediate care options available.

Caring for Ill Dependants

3.2 In this context a dependant is an adult or child who due to illness is dependent on the day-to-day care of an employee at the time of the application for dependants leave. 'Dependant' in this context therefore may include an individual who is not otherwise dependant on the care of an employee, but becomes temporarily dependant on the care of an employee for a limited period due to illness.

3.3 Where an ill dependant is an adult and is admitted to hospital, it will normally be viewed that responsibility for the day to day care of that person has transferred to the hospital, and therefore dependants leave would not be appropriate. In exceptional circumstances however, the Depute Chief Executive may at their discretion grant paid or unpaid leave in such circumstances in line Special Leave Guidance.

3.4 Where the ill dependant is a child aged 16 or under (18 in the case of a disabled child) and is admitted to hospital, it is reasonable to conclude that the child is dependent on the care of an accompanying parent or carer. Similarly, if a child requires to attend a hospital appointment or a series of hospital appointments they would be considered dependent on the care of an accompanying parent or carer.

Carers Leave

- 3.5 A Carer is defined as someone who provides unpaid care and support to a dependant who is affected by frailty, long-term illness or disability and could not manage without this help. A dependant in this context could be a spouse, partner, civil-partner, parent, grandparent, child or anyone who is dependent on the employee for ongoing day to day care. The dependant does not have to be a family member.
- 3.6 Carers Leave may be requested for example to:
- make alternative arrangements when normal care is temporarily disrupted or breaks down completely;
 - deal with emergencies;
 - accompany a dependant to a medical or other necessary appointment;
 - facilitate respite.
- 3.7 To be eligible for Carers leave, an employee must have registered their status as an unpaid carer with the council. You can do this by following the steps on the [Supporting Carers](#) intranet page.

Breakdown in Childcare

- 3.8 Where normal care arrangements for a dependant child have unforeseeably broken down, and there are no other immediate care options available, a line manager/Head Teacher may, at their discretion, award up to one day paid leave so the employee can make alternative childcare arrangements. In circumstances where the entitlement to up to 5 days paid dependants leave has already been exhausted or where any additional leave is required, it must be taken as annual leave/flexi/TOIL or unpaid leave as appropriate.

Requesting Leave

- 3.9 Requests for dependants leave under these provisions must be made as early as possible on the first day of absence and should indicate:
- The employee's relationship to the dependant;
 - Why the leave is required, e.g. nature of the dependant's illness;
 - The expected duration of the employee's absence;
 - If possible, whether the period of absence is likely to last longer than five working days.
- 3.10 Where an absence is likely to last longer than one day, the employee must agree with their line manager/Head Teacher how often they will make contact to update.
- 3.11 If the period of absence exceeds the maximum of 15 working days available for dependants leave, employees may apply for leave under the arrangements for long term carers leave as specified in section 4 below.

4. LONG TERM DEPENDANTS LEAVE

- 4.1 Long term dependants leave, up to a maximum of 12 weeks unpaid leave in any 12 month period, can be requested in blocks of no less than one week. Long term dependants leave may assist an employee to manage the responsibility to care for a seriously ill dependant or other responsibilities as a Carer when the provisions of dependants leave outlined in Section 3 above have been exhausted.
- 4.2 A period of long term dependants leave can be deducted from the employee's salary immediately, or the employee can opt to have deductions spread over an extended period up to a maximum of 12 months.
- 4.3 Long term dependants leave is subject to approval by the Service Manager. Employees must give a minimum of 2 weeks' notice to take long term dependants leave, however applications may be considered at shorter notice in exceptional circumstances.

Flexible Working

- 4.4 Flexible working arrangements may also provide support to employees to assist them in managing their caring responsibilities and may prevent or limit the need for long term dependants leave. All employees have the right to request flexible working and can make a request by completing a [Flexible Working Application Form](#) Flexible working arrangements may include:
- A reduction in working hours
 - A change to times of work
 - A change in work base
 - Term time working
 - Additional (purchased) annual leave
- 4.5 Flexible working arrangements are normally considered to be permanent, but may be applied on a temporary basis in order to support employees to manage caring responsibilities.
- 4.6 Flexibility in the working day will also allow employees to work flexibly around caring responsibilities where the requirement for time away from the workplace is less than half a day. This may allow carers to administer medication or attend medical appointments with dependants and arrange to make up any lost working time as agreed with their line manager.

5. PARENTAL LEAVE

- 5.1 Parents of a child under 18 years of age are entitled to up to 18 weeks unpaid parental leave per child.
- 5.2 Parental leave is limited to 4 weeks in any 12 month period and must be taken in blocks of no less than one week. An employee can take parental leave in blocks of days or hours if they are entitled to Disability Living Allowance, or Personal Independence Payment for their child.
- 5.3 The Service Manager has discretion to grant more than 4 weeks parental leave in one leave year subject to the overall maximum entitlement not being exceeded.

- 5.4 Parental Leave can be postponed for a maximum period of 6 months where the employee's absence during the period requested would adversely affect the efficient functioning of the service, except where:
- the leave is requested immediately after the birth or adoption of a child; or
 - postponing would result in an employee no longer qualifying for parental leave.

6. PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

- 6.1 In addition to bereavement leave (up to one week paid leave), an additional 2 weeks paid parental bereavement leave will be granted to a parent or parents (if both parents are employed by the council) where their child (up to age 18) dies, including pregnancy loss and still birth at any stage of pregnancy.
- 6.2 Parental Bereavement Leave must be taken as a single block of 2 weeks, or 2 separate blocks of 1 week at any time up to 56 weeks from the date of the death of the child.
- 6.3 Parental Bereavement Pay will be equal to normal pay.
- 6.4 Where more than one child dies, the parent will be entitled to leave and pay in respect of each child.
- 6.5 Notice to take leave will not be required when the leave is taken immediately after the death of the child. Leave taken at a later date will require 2 weeks' notice.

7. FOSTERING

- 7.1 Foster parents can access the provisions of this policy in relation to children placed in their care.
- 7.2 However, it is acknowledged that prospective foster parents may require time away from work to attend meetings with the local authority, to meet with the prospective foster child or to facilitate a settling in period. In such circumstances, the Service Manager may at their discretion grant paid leave within the limits of up to 5 days dependants leave in a 12 month period, taking account of any dependants leave already granted.

9. REQUESTING LEAVE

- 9.1 Relevant forms for the purpose of requesting the various types of leave provided under the Supporting Parents and Carers Policy can be found on [Mytoolkit](#).