

Foster Care Leave Policy

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Author(s) Human Resources

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Foster Care Leave Policy

1 Purpose and Scope of Policy

This policy sets out the University's support for our staff who are undertaking the care of a child/children under a foster-care arrangement with a local authority.

It is recognised that, in such cases, employees have specific obligations towards the child/children in accordance with their arrangement with the local authority and that, in some cases, the child/children may require a high level of care.

This policy is intended to form part of the University's overall 'family-friendly' approach, and balances the organisational needs of the University and the needs of the employee to meet their foster care obligations.

2 Eligibility Criteria

This procedure applies to all employees with at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with the University who have entered into a new formal fostering arrangement for one or more children for 6 months or more with a relevant local authority or other recognised agency ("Foster Carer").

3 Notification

Employees who are intending to foster a child/children should give their line manager no less than four weeks' notice of their intention. This is to ensure that:

- the line manager can provide any support and encouragement required; and
- if any leave to care for the child/children is requested, their line manager has sufficient notice to make any necessary arrangements for staff cover.

4 Entitlement and Process

4.1 Time off to care for new foster children

Eligible staff will be entitled to a continuous period of one normal working week's paid leave per eligible fostering arrangement in order to care for the child/children ("Foster Care Leave").

. That care may include:

- making the necessary arrangements to receive the child/children being fostered;
- helping the child/children to settle into their new environment and family home;
- attending training courses;
- attending meetings with professionals; and / or
- attending appointments with the child/children.

Foster Care Leave will not normally be available in relation to the short or long-term care of a child/children who are family members. However, at the University's discretion, Foster Care Leave may be available in relation to the long-term (normally 6 months or more) care of a child/children who are family members, where they would otherwise have to be fostered or go into local authority care.

If a member of staff requires Foster Care Leave, they should notify their line manager in writing, at least four weeks in advance or at the earliest opportunity and provide relevant documentation in evidence of the arrangement. HR will provide the individual with written confirmation of the leave arrangements.

4.2 Time off for healthcare meetings with doctors or professional fosters

Foster Carers can request unpaid time off to attend healthcare meetings with doctors or professionals, to support the person they care for. However, subject to agreement with the Head of Department/School or their designated nominee, it may be acceptable for the Foster Carer to make up the time off rather than taking unpaid leave or using annual leave.

Where unpaid leave is being taken this should be notified to Human Resources, who will in turn advise the Payroll/Pensions section of the Finance Office.

5 Other Support Provisions

There are a range of potential support options for Foster Carers contained within other University policies: -

5.1 Time off for dependants

Foster Carers are entitled to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off to assist or to make care arrangements for dependants under the University's '[Special Leave Policy](#)' (time off for dependants).

The employee must inform their line manager of the reason for their absence and how long they expect to be absent as soon as is reasonably practicable.

An employee may use this right to take time off where there is an unexpected disruption to his or her care arrangements. However, this right cannot be used as a means of the employee seeking time off to attend to care of the foster child/children because care has not been arranged in advance.

5.2 Parental leave

All employees who have parental responsibility for children are entitled to take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave for each individual child before that child reaches the age of 18.

However, the statutory right to parental leave is available only to Foster Carers when they have parental responsibility for the child/children concerned. It is normally the case that Foster Carers will not have parental responsibility, since this will usually be with the local authority if the child/children has been placed under an interim or full care order.

Foster Carers who wish to take parental leave may be asked to supply evidence of parental responsibility.

5.3 Formal Changes to Working Hours

Foster Carers employed by the University for 26 weeks or more can request temporary or permanent changes to their working patterns to suit their individual needs that relate to foster caring.

Applications for leave and amended working patterns noted above will be considered in accordance with the terms of the [Flexible Working Policy](#). Whilst every effort will be made to accommodate Foster Carer needs, this will be the subject of discussion and cannot be guaranteed

6 Foster to Adopt

If an employee is a local authority foster parent who has been approved as a prospective adopter, and a child is placed with them in a "foster to adopt" situation, he/she will be entitled to adoption leave and pay.

Please refer to the University's [Adoption Leave & Pay Policy](#) for further information.

7 Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed as required. Any feedback on the Policy content should be directed in the first instance to [Human Resources](#), who will consider this as part of the review.