

4.6 Compassionate Leave

Context

An employee may request compassionate leave in the event of an unplanned major life event that requires the employee's absence from work.

Events which may warrant compassionate leave include, but are not limited to:

- breakdown of care for a family member
- the diagnosis of or final stages of care for a serious (life threatening) illness or death of a family member
- funeral, cremation or burial of a family member
- the employee falling victim to a serious crime
- fire/flood/burglary at the employee's home
- road traffic collisions or other distressing accidents/incidents involving the employee
- a breakdown of the employee's personal or domestic arrangements (separation, divorce, eviction, removal of children etc)

This policy enables employees to request a reasonable period of paid and/or unpaid time off work in such circumstances. It is at the manager's discretion whether to grant compassionate leave, and the amount of compassionate leave that may be appropriate in the circumstances.

Conditions of Granting Compassionate Leave

All requests for compassionate leave will be managed sensitively and fairly, giving consideration to the cultural and religious needs of individual employees.

The employee's manager will consider each request in line with this policy. The request may be supported in part or in full, or it may be more appropriate for the employee to take time off by other means, such as annual leave or parental leave.

Alternatively or in addition, managers may wish to consider allowing the employee a period of remote or flexible working.

In exceptional circumstances, line managers may consider granting paid time off in addition to the allowances outlined in this policy. This should only be in cases where there is a strong case, which has welfare implications for the individual. To ensure fairness and consistency of application of this approach, line managers should put their cases forward to the Town Clerk and Staffing Committee, who will jointly consider requests for additional allocations of paid time off, to ensure consistency of approach.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all Town Council staff.

All employees, irrespective of length of service, are entitled to request a reasonable amount of paid and/or unpaid time off work on compassionate grounds to deal with an unplanned major life event.

Principles

An employee's manager may grant up to a maximum of 5 days of paid compassionate leave to an individual employee in a rolling 12-month period (pro-rata for part-time and job-share employees). Where deemed necessary and appropriate, further unpaid leave may be granted to an employee subject to the needs of the service.

Alternatively, employees may opt to use their annual leave, flexi-leave (where appropriate) or buy additional leave; or the manager may offer a period of remote or flexible working.

The amount of compassionate leave required for each life event will be determined by the specific situation and any cultural or religious requirements. Managers may take into account the employee's responsibility for making practical arrangements, such as securing a burgled property, arranging a funeral or acting as executor of a will.

Primary carers of disabled people are protected by the Equality Act and this will be taken into consideration when granting compassionate leave.

A family member for the purposes of this policy is defined as the partner, child, step child, adopted child, parent, grandparent, grandchild or sibling of an employee.

Managers have discretion to grant compassionate leave in respect of the death of other relatives where the relative lived with the employee, where the employee is the sole surviving relative, or where the employee is responsible for making the funeral arrangements and/or managing the estate of the deceased.

Additionally the Staffing Committee have discretion to grant an extended period of paid and/or unpaid compassionate leave in the unfortunate circumstance of the multiple deaths of family members or when an employee has to manage the final stages of the terminal condition of a family member.

Where compassionate leave cannot be granted under this policy in part or full the manager should suggest alternative options such as annual unpaid leave, flexi-leave, buying additional leave, or where the job permits, a period of remote or flexible working.

Procedure

Where an employee requires compassionate leave under this policy they should notify their manager at the earliest opportunity and request compassionate leave in writing.

Where a request for paid compassionate leave is refused in part or full, the reasons for this will be notified to the employee by their manager and recorded. In these circumstances the manager should discuss with the employee the alternative options for covering any time taken off work in advance of the request.

The manager should agree with the employee how they wish to cover their absence, for example, using annual leave, flexible working, and/or unpaid leave. This should be recorded retrospectively where it has not been possible to agree it in advance.

Where an individual employee does not agree with the manager's decision about granting paid time off; or where they feel they have been treated unfairly, they have the right to raise the matter with Staffing Committee. Staffing Committee review the case and will make a decision about granting time off. This decision will be final.

Town Clerk and Managers' Responsibilities

Managers must be sensitive, consistent and fair when considering requests for compassionate leave and note that requests must be submitted for recording on the employee's absence record.

Managers must not support more than 5 days of paid compassionate leave in any rolling 12 month period for an individual employee (pro-rata for part-time and job-share employees) unless this has been authorised by Staffing Committee within the discretions referred to in this policy.

The amount of time that can be granted for each event is at the manager's discretion. As a guideline, managers would normally be expected to grant a maximum of 1 day of paid compassionate leave for: funerals, cremations and burials; dealing with a fire/flood/burglary; or following a road traffic collision, distressing accident or serious crime. A greater amount of paid leave, not exceeding the limits stated in above, may be appropriate in the case of serious illness or death of a family member, or a breakdown of the employee's personal or domestic arrangements.

It is the manager's responsibility to check the information supplied by the employee on the request for compassionate leave. The manager must check the information is accurate before agreeing.

Unpaid Compassionate Leave

Any unpaid element of compassionate leave will be deducted from the employee's next pay period unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed with the employee. The employee will be asked to sign their consent to the salary adjustment to pay for it.