
Time off for Dependants and Carers Leave Policy

Document Control

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Owning Service	Human Resources		

Approvals (if required)

Date Employment Committee gave authorisation for changes (where necessary)

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Changes made by
1.1	February 2024	Include new Carer's leave Act legislation. Changes to more inclusive terminology and check against current legislation. Change of title and addition of Carer's	Pauline Meredith/Melissa berry
1.0	April 2018	Policy updated	

**BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH COUNCIL
TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANTS AND CARERS LEAVE POLICY**

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BRACKNELL FOREST BOROUGH COUNCIL

TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANTS AND CARER'S LEAVE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Bracknell Forest Council expects all its employees to work in accordance with its code of conduct, policies and procedures at all times. The Time Off for Defendants and Carer's Leave policy ensures that all such requests are treated fairly and equitably. An employee is entitled to take reasonable unpaid time off during normal working hours as follows:

- to provide immediate assistance to a dependant in an emergency
- to make arrangements for the provision of care for a dependant who is unexpectedly taken ill or is injured
- because of unexpected disruption or termination of care arrangements for a dependant (e.g., childminder fails to turn up)
- To accompany a dependant to a medical appointment

As there are two statutory rights covered in this policy each will be outlined separately.

2. EQUALITY

At Bracknell Forest Council we are committed to encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. We want everyone that works for us to feel that their individuality is respected, and their unique contributions are valued.

The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The Council - in providing goods and/or services and/or facilities - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

3. PURPOSE

This policy provides guidance to managers and employees on unpaid time off for dependants and carer's leave both a day one right. Carer's Leave has been incorporated into the policy to reflect the Carers Leave Regulations 2024.

4. PRINCIPLES

Whilst this policy outlines the process for unpaid leave, in some cases, it may not be possible to amend working hours or arrange for long term absences from work during which the employee's job is kept open for them. In such cases, the employee may need to consider how best to balance work commitments and dependants which may result in a resignation if they cannot return to work.

If the person is not a Dependant, there is no statutory right to time off. However, Directors/Assistant Directors can, depending on the individual circumstances, authorise unpaid time off at their discretion, if alternatives to Time off for Dependants/Carer's leave are not available.

Unauthorised absence from work may need to be dealt with under another relevant policy or guidance such as:

- Managing Attendance
- Performance Improvement/Capability
- Disciplinary Procedure.

5. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees of Bracknell Forest Council, except for:

- School based staff (see separate School Policy).
- For individuals undertaking casual work.

6. ELIGIBILITY

Time off for Dependants and Carer's leave is a statutory day one right and is in addition to other types of family friendly leave.

As Time off for Dependants leave is intended for unexpected problems or emergencies, it does not apply when the employee knows about the situation beforehand (for example, if you wish to accompany a dependant to a pre-scheduled hospital appointment).

The Carer's Leave Regulations 2024 are intended to provide up to one week of unpaid carer's leave in a 12 week period.

6.1 TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANTS

The purpose of Time off for Dependants is to provide an immediate, limited period of unpaid time off, for employees to deal with unexpected problems or emergencies involving a dependant or to make necessary arrangements for longer term care for dependants.

What is a "Dependant" – Time off for dependants

A Dependant under the Time off for Dependants element of the policy is defined as one who depends on another person for support, aid etc. This may be:

- Their spouse, or partner
- their child
- their parent
- a person who lives in the same household who is not a lodger, tenant or boarder
- a person who reasonably relies on the employee for assistance in an emergency, or to make arrangements for the provision of care in such a situation.

Arranging time off – Time off for dependants

The employee must inform their manager, as soon as reasonably practicable, of the reason for absence and how long they expect to be absent from work. If their manager is not available, then they should inform another relevant manager or supervisor within the department when the emergency arises.

The nature of this type of time off is that it is triggered by an emergency or the need of a dependant, and it may not be possible to let the manager know the full circumstances before leaving the workplace. For example, it may be a complex situation to explain, or the manager may not be immediately available to speak to, at a time when the employee's presence elsewhere may be urgently required. However, if on return from such time off the manager feels that the circumstances were not reasonable or did not fall within the range of circumstances where time off is permitted, then the matter may be investigated under the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

absence should be recorded on iWorks@BFC using the Unpaid Leave – Carer's Leave category.

6.2 CARER'S LEAVE

The purpose of Carer's leave is to provide up to one week's leave in a 12 month period. For employees who work part time, a week is defined as the hours of the normal working week.

What is a "Dependant" – Carer's Leave?

A Dependant under the Carer's Leave element of the policy is defined as:

- A dependant with a long-term care need

Arranging time off – Carer's Leave

Unlike the Time off for Dependants leave, Carer's leave can be requested and booked in advance, in half or full days. Days do not need to be booked consecutively.

Employees must give notice, in writing, of their intention to take Carer's Leave – giving at least twice the amount of notice than the period of leave requested. Or if longer, three days' notice.

The Council may postpone (delay) leave only for a significant business reason. If postponement is necessary, the manager must give notice of postponement before the leave was due to begin and give the reasons for postponement. The manager must then allow for the leave to be taken within a month of the start-date of the leave originally requested. Rescheduling the leave should be done in consultation with the employee.

As there is a limit to the statutory time off, absence should be recorded on iWorks@BFC using the Unpaid Leave – Carer's Leave category.

The table below shows the difference in the leave arrangements:

Time off for Dependants	Carer's Leave
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Unpaid time off for an employee if they need to help a dependant when there's an unexpected problem or emergency.	Up to one week unpaid leave to assist a dependant with a long-term care need and those who need to provide, or arrange care
Not booked in advance and used in emergency situations	Can be booked in days or half days – can be consecutive or non-consecutive
Reasonable time off to be determined by the Manager	Up to one week. Pro-rata for part time staff
	Leave can be postponed if it would cause undue disruption and rescheduled within a month of the originally requested start date
Record as Unpaid leave – Time off for Dependants	Record as Unpaid leave – Carer's leave

7. OTHER TIME OFF

Emergencies involving dependants are likely to be sudden and unexpected, and often of short duration (e.g., one or two days). If the situation develops into one which requires the employee's absence from work longer term, for example to provide ongoing care, then the absence must be dealt with through the alternatives outlined in section 9.0 below. Managers should note that an absence of more than three calendar days' duration is unlikely to remain classified as a "dependant's emergency", and they will need to reassess the situation in discussion with the employee to determine how the continuing absence may be treated.

8. ALTERNATIVES TO "TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANTS/CARER'S LEAVE" INCLUDE

- using paid annual leave entitlement/flexitime where applicable
- seeking the Director's authority for an unpaid leave of absence for up to three months
- seeking the Executive Director's, in conjunction with the AD: HR's authority for unpaid leave or sabbatical for a period of three to twelve months
- paid compassionate leave in accordance with the Council's policy.
- request flexible working arrangements using the Right to Request Flexible Working procedure.

9. RECORDING TIME OFF

Managers should update iWork's with these absences so that the extent and frequency of the absences can be clearly recorded and to ensure accurate adjustment to pay.

The following reasons should be used:

Unpaid Leave – Time off for Dependants
Unpaid Leave – Carer's Leave

These short intervals of time off do not constitute a break in pensionable service.

10. CONCLUSION

Whilst this policy attempts to provide a comprehensive framework for time off for dependants and carer's leave, there may be issues or unforeseen circumstances which require further clarification. If this is the case, please contact HR for further advice.