



# **SPECIAL/COMPASSIONATE/BEREAVEMENT LEAVE POLICY**

**DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION: Full Council 18 July 2023**

**Signed: Mayor**

**Date**

**Date of review**

# **SPECIAL/COMPASSIONATE/BEREAVEMENT LEAVE POLICY**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Downham Market Town Council (the Council) has a Special/Compassionate/Bereavement Leave Policy which gives the Town Clerk, &/or Chair and Vice Chair of Human Resources discretion to grant employees leave on compassionate grounds for a range of circumstances. There is no statutory entitlement to paid time off in these circumstances, so the Council's policy goes beyond what is required, in the interests of staff well being.

## **2. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE**

- 2.1 The purpose of compassionate leave is to help employees come to terms with a bereavement, or provide emergency care for a dependent where regular arrangements have broken down. It may also be used to come to terms with a domestic catastrophe, or the injury or critical illness of an immediate family member.
- 2.2 The Council recognises that, while dealing with any bereavement is difficult, the death of a child is among the most devastating events that an employee can ever face. This policy sets out the Council's commitment to supporting bereaved parents through their grief by ensuring they can take parental bereavement leave.
- 2.2 The Town Clerk, &/or Chair and Vice Chair of Human Resources (HR) have delegated authority to grant compassionate leave. They will be responsible for ensuring consistency within their service. The Town Clerk should contact HR for support and advice on the application of this policy if needed.
- 2.3 The HR Committee may grant additional paid or unpaid leave in exceptional circumstances. The reason for the decision must be recorded.
- 2.4 It is recognised that it may not always be possible to complete the Special/Compassionate Leave Request Form prior to needing to take the leave. In these circumstances it should be completed on return to work.
- 2.5 The Town Clerk, &/or Chair and Vice Chair of HR should take account of the individual circumstances and practicalities which include those arising from faith and cultural observances and practices.

### 3. **DEFINITIONS**

- 3.1 **Immediate family member:** the employee's spouse, civil partner, partner, parent, child, sibling or grandparent.
- 3.2 **Dependant:** the employee's spouse, civil partner, child, parent and any person who lives in the same house (other than as a lodger, tenant, boarder or employee) or someone who would reasonably rely on the employee for assistance or arrangements for care in the event of illness or injury.
- 3.3 **Child:** son, or daughter or ward, including step, adoptive or foster children.
- 3.4 **Close relative who is not a dependant:** includes for example parent-in-law.
- 3.5 The time granted will be pro-rata of the employee's weekly contractual hours (i.e. 39 hours for full-time employees or the pro-rata equivalent for part-time employees).
- 3.6 A year for the purpose of this policy is 1 April to 31 March.
- 3.7 Unpaid leave does not constitute a break in service.

### 4. **COMPASSIONATE LEAVE - BEREAVEMENT**

- 4.1 In the event of the death of an immediate family member, dependant or close relative, an employee can request up to five days paid leave.
- 4.2 The Town Clerk, &/or Chair and Vice Chair of HR, will take account of the individual circumstances, relationship with the deceased, domestic responsibilities and travel requirements when deciding how many days to grant. Additional paid leave may be granted at the discretion of the Town Clerk, &/or Chair and Vice Chair of HR, for example if the employee is responsible for making funeral arrangements. The reason for the decision must be recorded.
- 4.3 Funeral attendance will be approved for an immediate family member, a dependant, a child and close relative who is not a dependant.
- 4.4 If the employee is unfortunate to have a further bereavement, a further request for up to five days paid leave can be made for each bereavement.

### 5. **COMPASSIONATE LEAVE - PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT**

- 5.1 A new right for bereaved parents came into effect from April 2020 which allows parents of a child under the age of 18 who has died to take two weeks' paid leave. This includes parents who suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

- 5.2 The Council recognises the need to provide bereaved parents with as much support as possible and will continue to pay normal pay during the two weeks' leave (this is not in addition to normal bereavement leave - see Section 4 above).
- 5.3 It will be available to the birth parents of those with parental responsibility for the child and can be taken within 56 weeks of the child's death, in a block of two weeks, or two blocks of one week. The leave cannot be taken as individual days.
- 5.4 If employees wish to take parental bereavement leave within the first 56 days after a bereavement they can take the leave straight away and do not have to provide any notice. Employees should let the Town Clerk/Chair of HR know as soon as they can. If the leave is to be taken in two separate blocks, employees should give at least one weeks' notice of their intention to take the second week's leave. Additional paid leave may be granted at the discretion of the HR Committee. The reason for the decision must be recorded.

## 6. LEAVE TO CARE FOR DEPENDENT WHO IS UNEXPECTEDLY SICK

It is not the intention of this procedure to grant leave under this heading for routine doctor's appointments, clinic appointments or routine childhood vaccinations or illnesses e.g. chickenpox - these should be accommodated by the taking of lieu, annual leave or unpaid leave. This section of the policy is, for example, intended to assist parents whose children are unexpectedly admitted to hospital.

- 6.1 The Town Clerk, &/or Chair and Vice Chair of HR is authorised to grant up to five days paid leave on full pay, or half pay, following examination of the circumstances.
- 6.2 A doctor's note outlining the circumstances will be required. Consideration may need to be given to the use of any outstanding annual leave entitlement.

## 7. URGENT FAMILY LEAVE

- 7.1 This is a provision allowing employees to take reasonable time off work (unpaid) to deal with certain unexpected or sudden emergencies and to make necessary longer-term arrangements relating to a **dependant** of the employer.
- 7.2 Unpaid time off work will be granted to help the employee cope with the initial crisis and to make longer term care arrangements.
- 7.3 This provision is for unforeseen matters. If an employee knows in advance that they require time off, they should ask for annual leave in the normal way. It cannot be used to provide ongoing regular care for a dependant.
- 7.4 In circumstances of *an emergency related to school*, the employee should make every reasonable effort to make alternative arrangements. If that is not possible and leave is requested, the employee may be required to provide evidence.

**8. SPECIAL LEAVE - DOMESTIC CATASTROPHE**

- 8.1 Special leave may also be requested to come to terms with a domestic catastrophe. This could include a house fire or serious flood at the employee's home. The availability of other members of the family to contribute to relieving the effects of a domestic catastrophe will be taken into account. Usually, a period of one-three days (pro-rata for part-time staff) would be appropriate in such circumstances.

The Council reserves the right to ask for documentary evidence to support a request for leave under this Policy. An employee falsely claiming an entitlement to leave will be subject to the Council's disciplinary procedure, which may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

**End**

**SPECIAL/COMPASSIONATE LEAVE REQUEST FORM**  
**"Confidential"**

This form should be completed by the requesting employee and forwarded to the Town Clerk &/or Chair and Vice Chair of Human Resources.

Name: .....

Dates Leave Requested: From ..... To .....

Number of Days or Hours requested .....

Number of Days or Hours to be paid and/or unpaid: Paid: ..... Unpaid: .....

Reason for Leave (*tick as appropriate*)

Bereavement Leave	
Parental Bereavement Leave	
Care for Unexpectedly Sick Dependant	
Urgent Family Leave	
Domestic Catastrophe	

Leave Granted? Yes No (*circle as appropriate*)

Number of Days or Hours granted: Paid ..... Unpaid .....

Town Clerk, &/or Chair and Vice Chair of Human Resources with delegated authority brief comments on reason for decision:

.....  
 .....

Name of Town Clerk, &/or Chair and Vice Chair of Human Resources with delegated authority.

Please Print .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Second Signature ..... Date .....