



POLICY ON SPECIAL AND CARER LEAVE FOR DOMESTIC, PERSONAL AND FAMILY REASONS

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Signature

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**NHS GRAMPIAN
POLICY ON SPECIAL AND CARER LEAVE FOR DOMESTIC, PERSONAL
AND FAMILY REASONS**

This policy is also available in large print and on computer disk. Other formats can be supplied on request.

Please call the Corporate Communications Team on 01224 554400 for a copy.

NHS GRAMPIAN POLICY ON SPECIAL AND CARER LEAVE FOR DOMESTIC, PERSONAL AND FAMILY REASONS

1 INTRODUCTION

NHS Grampian recognises that many staff combine the demands of work requirements with domestic responsibilities. While each member of staff is responsible for ensuring that they have appropriate care mechanisms in place to meet their personal responsibilities, NHS Grampian endeavours to assist in circumstances where these arrangements have unavoidably broken down, or where additional pressures, outwith the norm, arise and for which time off work may be required.

All requests from staff must be dealt with on a strictly confidential basis and no undue pressure will be exerted on staff to divulge details which might breach their personal privacy.

2 POLICY RATIONALE

The purpose of this policy is to allow for a compassionate response to:

- (a) the sudden and immediate need for a member of staff to provide care to a family member, dependent, close friend or colleague
- (b) a family member, dependent, close friend or colleague of the employee suffers ill health or
- (c) a family member, dependent, close friend or colleague of the employee suffers a bereavement

This could be where the normal arrangements break down without notice, or where an urgent and unforeseen situation arises.

Examples of this include:

- a family member, dependent, close friend or colleague of the employee falling ill, being involved in an accident, or being assaulted, including instances where the victim is distressed rather than being physically injured
- the need to make longer term care arrangements for a family member, dependent, close friend or colleague, who is ill or injured
- to deal with the death of a family member, dependent, close friend or colleague e.g. to make funeral arrangements, or to attend a funeral

- to deal with an unexpected disruption, or breakdown, in care arrangements for a family member, dependent, close friend or colleague e.g. when a child-minder or nurse fails to turn up
- to deal with an incident involving the employee's child during school hours e.g. if the child has been involved in a fight, or is being suspended from school.

NHS Grampian also recognises that the needs of staff who care for a family member, dependent or close friend who is elderly, disabled, or suffer ill health, is particularly important in the NHS because people working in healthcare are often expected to do more than other family members when it comes to caring for a relative.

The provisions of this policy are applicable to all staff, irrespective of length of service, hours of work, or grade and no employee will suffer any detriment as a result of making application for time off under these provisions.

3 TIME OFF

The provisions for time off are as follows:

(i) **Serious illness/Bereavement Leave**

Up to one working weeks paid leave in the event of the serious illness, acute need or death of a family member, dependent, close friend or colleague. This can be extended by up to a further working week and it will be at the discretion of the manager whether this is paid or unpaid.

(ii) **Domestic Emergencies**

Up to one working week can be allocated as paid leave to deal with urgent and predominately unforeseen circumstances to which sick leave, annual leave, or any other form of specified Leave is not applicable. This can be extended by up to a working further week and it will be at the discretion of the manager, taking into account the circumstances of the specific case, whether this is paid or unpaid.

(iii) **Carer Leave – Short & Long Term**

This provision is primarily for those who are required to provide care for a dependant.

Additionally, Carer Leave may be used for time off required for Fostering – see section 2, Fostering, of the NHS Grampian **Adoption and Fostering Policy**.

- **Short Term Carer Leave** allows for up to one working weeks paid leave, which can be extended by up to a further working week of paid or unpaid leave, to deal with urgent unforeseen care needs. Thereafter and depending on the specific circumstances, a manager may agree a period of annual leave, or unpaid leave.
- **Long Term Carer Leave** allows for the possibility of altering contractual work patterns to enable the employee's family life and work requirements to be balanced for an appropriate period.

Changes in work patterns for medical and dental staff in training should be agreed with the involvement of the Regional Adviser/Post Graduate Dean. Changes in work patterns for medical and dental career grade staff should be achieved through the job planning process.

Note 1: Depending on the circumstances, leave for serious illness/breavement, domestic emergencies and short term caring need not be taken in one block. In exceptional circumstances, the amounts of paid leave shown above may be extended by the manager following consultation with an appropriate member of the HR Team".

Note2: The references above to a "working week" mean the number of hours that an individual member of staff is contracted to work. For example, the working week of a member of staff contracted to work 37½ hours per week, is 37½ hours, while the working week for a member of staff contracted to work 20 hours per week, is 20 hours.

4 RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

No request for leave under this policy will be unreasonably withheld. Should a disagreement arise, the individual has the right to raise a formal grievance. It may be preferable in such circumstances, however, for the manager to seek advice on resolving the matter from an appropriate member of the HR Team and a Lead Staff Side Representative.

**THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS DEAL WITH THE PROCEDURE
RELEVANT TO THE APPLICATION OF SPECIAL AND CARERS' LEAVE FOR
DOMESTIC, PERSONAL AND FAMILY REASONS.**

5 SERIOUS ILLNESS/BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

5.1 Definition

To provide reasonable support to members of staff at times of distress due to the unforeseen serious illness, or the death, of a family member, dependent, close friend or colleague.

5.2 Entitlement

Managers have the discretion to award paid leave of up to one working week in each occurrence of serious difficulty. In particularly distressing circumstances, the Manager, in discussion with an appropriate member of the HR Team, may extend this by up to a further week of paid or unpaid leave.

5.3 Duration Criteria

In considering the amount of leave, the Manager should take into account the specific circumstances e.g. the relationship between the member of staff and the person in question, whether the member of staff has a responsibility for the estate of the deceased, the availability of other relatives or friends and the distance to be travelled in dealing with such matters.

5.4 Consistency

Managers should endeavour to be fair, consistent and sympathetic in their application of this policy.

5.5 Notification

Members of staff must make their Manager aware of the potential need for leave at the earliest opportunity and should keep in regular contact throughout that period.

5.6 Record Keeping

Leave should be recorded on the appropriate record card for future reference and to enable monitoring of its fair application throughout NHS Grampian. It must also be notified to Payroll Department to ensure appropriate payment and recording.

6 DOMESTIC EMERGENCIES

6.1 Definition

Leave under this heading can be defined as arrangements granted when members of staff need to be absent from work under circumstances not covered by sick leave, annual leave, bereavement leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, adoption and fostering leave, or flexible working arrangements.

This Leave is provided as a short-term solution to help members of staff to balance the demands of their work and home responsibilities.

6.2 Entitlement

- Up to one working week can be allocated as paid leave by the Manager, taking into consideration the amount of the time reasonably required to attend to the situation which has arisen.
- In cases of exceptional difficulty, the Manager can extend this period for up to a further working week and, in discussion with an appropriate member of the HR Team, has the discretion to determine whether this should be on a paid or unpaid basis. It may, however, be considered appropriate for the member of staff to utilise annual leave under circumstances where the situation, while still important, has ceased to be an emergency.
- In exceptional circumstances, a member of staff may be faced with long-term difficulties and the Manager, in discussion with an appropriate member of the HR Team, should consider other options to assist in the situation. This may include a reduction in hours, an alteration to the employee's shift pattern, a move to another post etc.
- There should be no requirement for the approved number of days to be taken in one block.

6.3 Notification

Members of staff must make their Manager aware of their potential need for Leave at the earliest opportunity and should keep in regular contact throughout this period.

6.4 Record Keeping

Leave must be recorded in the appropriate record card for future reference and to enable monitoring of its fair application throughout NHS Grampian. It must also be notified to Payroll Department to ensure appropriate payment and recording.

7 CARER LEAVE

7.1 Definition

Where members of staff are responsible for caring for a family member, dependent, close friend, work and home life can cause conflicting pressures. Carer leave is designed to encourage managers to adopt flexible working practices at times when employees need assistance to balance their caring responsibilities with their work commitments.

As recorded in 3 (iii) Short Term Carer Leave allows for up to one working weeks paid leave, which can be extended by up to a further working week of paid or unpaid leave, to deal with urgent unforeseen care needs. Thereafter and depending on the specific circumstances, a manager may agree a period of annual leave, or unpaid leave.

7.2 Local arrangements

The needs of staff who care for family members, dependents, or close friends, can often be very simple e.g. knowing that they will be able to leave work on time each day, or being able to make a telephone call home during the day to check that all is well. Alternatively, a variation in the working pattern, such as altered shifts, or earlier/later starting and stopping times, may provide an adequate solution

Needs such as these may be relatively easy to satisfy and it is expected that the individual's manager will provide sympathetic support and strive to reach a mutually acceptable solution to the employee's requirements.

7.3 Short periods of time off

There may be circumstances when an employee needs a short period of time off e.g. to deal with an emergency situation, to attend hospital etc. In these circumstances, one of the arrangements shown in Section 3 can be utilised to allow the employee time off.

7.4 Long term arrangements

There may, however, be times when the caring demands on the employee are such that s/he is forced to consider more extreme measures, such as a long term reduction in working hours, in order to meet their caring commitments.

While each case must, quite obviously, be judged on its individual merits, NHS Grampian is committed to ensuring that where the reason for an employee requesting a reduction in contracted hours is for the provision of care, his/her case will be considered sympathetically and will not be unreasonably denied.

Employees with caring responsibilities, who recognise the need to alter their contracted working hours on a long term basis, should discuss the matter with their manager in the first instance. It may be considered appropriate for a member of the HR Team to be involved in these discussions.

Where the manager feels unable, because of the needs of the service, to accede to the employee's request, the employee should contact an appropriate member of the HR Team in order to investigate other alternatives e.g. secondment, redeployment etc. Under circumstances where it is agreed that redeployment is an option, the employee concerned will be entitled to the full range of provisions available under NHS Grampian's Redeployment Policy.

7.5 Other assistance

Employees with caring responsibilities are encouraged to take advantage of other facilities which already exist within NHS Grampian and which may provide them with support or access to coping mechanisms e.g. stress management initiatives, the Occupational Health Service who can arrange access to counselling etc.