

Great Tey Parish Council

Compassionate Leave Policy

This policy sets out the Parish Council's approach to providing bereavement leave, acknowledging the emotional and practical difficulties employees face when dealing with the death of a loved one. The policy is based on principles of compassion, flexibility, and confidentiality while also balancing the needs of the business. Below is an elaboration on this policy, including references to legislation where applicable:

Sympathy and Compassion in Bereavement:

The policy underscores the employer's commitment to showing sympathy, compassion, and understanding when an employee experiences a bereavement. It reflects the importance of emotional support in such situations and how that support can contribute to the employee's well-being, especially during a period of personal loss. The goal is to ensure that employees feel supported by the Parish Council, which can help them manage grief and reintegrate into the workplace smoothly.

Procedure for Requesting Bereavement Leave:

The policy requires employees to formally notify the Personnel Committee of bereavement leave, by sending an email at the earliest opportunity, after discussing their needs with a member of the Personnel Committee or the Parish Chair. This process helps ensure proper documentation and enables the Personnel Committee to plan for the employee's absence. Prompt and clear communication helps minimise disruption to business operations while ensuring the employee can take time off without any undue administrative stress.

The Personnel Committee and or the Parish Chair are the key points of contact in this process, and the policy recommends employees engage in open discussions about their needs as early as possible. While bereavement often occurs unexpectedly, the policy asks that employees notify their Personnel Committee/Parish Chair at the earliest opportunity to facilitate the approval of leave and any additional accommodations.

Entitlement to Bereavement Leave:

Under this policy, employees are normally granted up to 5 days of unpaid leave following the death of an immediate relative, defined as close family members such as a spouse, parent, stepparent, grandparent, sibling, child, or in-laws (mother-in-law, father-in-law). This unpaid leave allows employees time to manage practical arrangements (e.g., funerals) and process their grief without the added pressure of work commitments.

If additional time off is needed beyond the five days, the policy encourages employees to discuss this with their Personnel Committee/Parish Chair. The leave beyond the initial period is granted at the Personnel Committee/Parish Chair's discretion, based on factors like the employee's relationship with the deceased, the funeral arrangements, and other personal circumstances. This flexibility allows for a tailored approach, recognising that the impact of bereavement varies depending on the employee's emotional needs and cultural practices.

Legislation on Bereavement Leave:

In many jurisdictions, there is no specific statutory requirement for bereavement leave. However, countries like the UK have some protections under employment law:

1. UK Employment Law:
 - Under the Employment Rights Act 1996, employees are entitled to take "reasonable time off for dependants" in emergency situations, including bereavement, to make arrangements or attend a funeral.

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- The Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay Act 2018 grants up to two weeks of paid leave for parents who have lost a child under the age of 18, or in cases of stillbirth. This leave can be taken as two consecutive weeks or in blocks over 56 weeks following the death.

While this organisation's policy does not explicitly provide paid leave, employers may align with national legislation or offer additional paid time off depending on company resources and culture.

Compassionate Leave for Non-Immediate Relatives:

The policy also allows for reasonable unpaid compassionate leave in situations involving the death of non-immediate relatives or friends. This reflects the organisation's flexibility in considering different relationships and the employee's need to participate in significant cultural or familial rituals such as funerals.

The Personnel Committee/Parish Chair will consider factors such as the relationship with the deceased and the timing/location of the funeral when approving additional leave. This ensures fairness and consistency while recognising the unique nature of each bereavement.

Confidentiality:

A critical element of this policy is the commitment to handling all requests for compassionate leave on a confidential basis. The private nature of grief, combined with the personal circumstances surrounding a death, requires sensitivity in handling requests. Employees should feel secure that details about their loss will not be shared beyond those necessary to process the request.

Implementation and Cultural Sensitivity:

The policy demonstrates cultural sensitivity by offering flexibility in how much time can be taken off, which acknowledges that mourning practices differ significantly across cultures and religions. For example, some cultures observe extended mourning periods, while others might require employees to travel long distances to attend funerals or other ceremonies.

Conclusion:

In summary, this policy balances the need for compassionate support with the operational needs of the business. It provides a clear procedure for requesting leave, ensures a reasonable allowance of unpaid time off, and upholds confidentiality. The policy aligns with relevant legislation in some jurisdictions and encourages flexibility in granting leave for non-immediate family members, ensuring the policy remains inclusive and supportive.

Notes:

1. There is no entitlement to paid time off for compassionate leave. The Council may decide on how much time they wish to offer and whether they agree for the time to be paid or unpaid.
2. If the time off is due to a dependent then the Dependent Leave policy should be considered.
3. Where the Council has only one employee, the policy could refer the Clerk to an appropriate Councillor in the first instance.

Important notice:

This is an example of an employment policy designed for a small council adhering to statutory minimum requirements and does not constitute legal advice. As with all policies it should be consistent with your terms and conditions of employment.

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