

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **FOSTER CARERS SUPPORT LEAVE SCHEME – to be referenced in Leave Policy**

#### **Purpose**

Slough Borough Council values the contribution to the community made by foster parents and the commitment of employees who provide foster care for children.

Children come into care for a variety of reasons e.g. due to a parent's illness or as a result of a crisis within the child's family but many do so because they have suffered from neglect or some form of abuse.

The Council believes that it is in the best interests of these children to place them in a caring and supportive family environment with foster carers rather than accommodating them in residential care. It also believes that, wherever possible, these children should be fostered locally so that they can maintain contact with their family and friends and their schooling is not disrupted.

In view of this situation, the Council wishes to actively encourage and support those of its employees who may wish to become foster carers as well those who are already approved foster carers.

In some instances people find it difficult to become or remain foster carers because of problems over release from their employment.

The aim of this scheme is to enable these employees to better balance their work commitments with their foster caring responsibilities by maximising the flexibility available to them.

#### **Scope**

This scheme applies to all Council employees except those directly employed by schools.

#### **Qualifying Criteria**

The provisions of this scheme will apply to Council employees who are either applying to become a foster carer or are already an approved foster carer.

## Types of Fostering

The provisions of this scheme will apply to all types of fostering ranging from short breaks for week-end respite care through short-term, task-focussed fostering to long-term and permanent fostering arrangements.

## Expectations of Managers and Employees

The Council recognises that foster carers will often have needs for additional time off work as an integral part of successful fostering.

Managers are, therefore, required to be sympathetic to the needs of foster carers. This means being receptive to requests for flexible working arrangements and accommodating these where there is no major detrimental effect on the service (see also the [Council's Flexible Working Policy and Smart Working Policy](#)). It also means being sympathetic to any request for time off work at short notice to deal with unplanned emergency situations affecting the foster child(ren) in the employee's care.

For their part, employees are expected to minimise their requests for leave under this scheme. This means that employees should seek to arrange meetings, home visits, training sessions etc, in their own time i.e. outside their normal working hours or on non-working days.

Where this is not possible then the employee should make a request for leave as far in advance as possible in order to enable cover arrangements to be made.

Where it is envisaged that work difficulties may arise, advice should be sought their line manager. Where necessary the Council will consider giving additional support to the line manager.

## Evidence of Entitlement

Employees wishing to take leave under this Policy must produce written evidence to their manager to show that they are actively applying to become a foster carer or that they are already an established foster carer.

## Leave Provisions

### Leave for prospective foster carers

An employee who is applying to become an approved foster carer may be granted up to a maximum of 2 days leave with pay (pro rata for part-time employees) to attend any meetings, home visits, mandatory training etc. as part of the preparation and assessment process.

Where a couple are applying to become foster carers, and both are employees of the Council, the leave entitlement will apply to each partner.

Employees who are applying to become approved adopters with the Council will also be entitled to the leave provisions specified above.

### Leave for approved foster carers

Employees who are approved foster carers may be granted up to a maximum of 2 days paid leave (pro rata for part-time employees) in any leave year to enable them to attend the required training courses, review meetings etc. in connection with the child(ren)'s placement.

Where a couple are approved foster carers, and both are employees of the Council, the leave entitlement will apply to each partner.

The entitlement to leave is the same irrespective of whether more than one child is being fostered.

Leave in excess of this entitlement will be at the discretion of the employee's manager having regard to the circumstances of the particular case and the requirement to deliver an efficient and effective service. Such leave will be unpaid.

### Leave for approved foster carers - emergency situations

Where an approved foster carer is required to deal with an emergency situation in connection with the foster child(ren), the Council's Leave Policy, Emergency Leave will apply.

## Cessation of Entitlement to Leave

Entitlement to leave under this Policy will cease immediately in the following circumstances:

- The employee's application to become a foster carer is rejected;
- The employee's "approved" status as a foster carer is withdrawn for whatever reason;
- The employee ceases to act as a foster carer either on a temporary or permanent basis for whatever reason;
- The foster child(ren)'s placement with the employee ends for whatever reason.

## Recording

Employees must request approval for foster carers' leave on Agresso, the Councils employee self service system.