

Strategic HR Forum – Discussion paper

JSCC September 2018 – Family Friendly Legislation

Most people in one form or another need to balance domestic responsibilities with work.

Carers

Responsible for

- A child under 18.
- An older child with a disability
- A partner, relative or someone who lives at the same address as the employee.
- Caring for terminally ill
- Caring responsibility for elderly parents or relatives.

Flexible Working

- part time,
- job share,
- home-working,
- flexi-time,
- flexible retirement

For working Mums and Dads

- Maternity,
- Paternity
- Adoption
- Shared parental leave
- Free childcare places are now replacing the salary sacrifice childcare voucher scheme.

For all staff

We have a policy that allows an employee the right to request flexible working, this can be a request for a temporary or permanent change to working arrangements. The most common form of request we get is for reducing hours from full to part time most frequently after maternity leave.

We also have a range of other policies to deal with more short term emergencies.

Special Leave Policy

With the benefit of annual leave and flexi-leave the requirement for special leave should be limited, however it enables individuals to apply for leave in some emergency situations for example a period of up to 6 months of unpaid leave for nursing a dependant or relative. We recently avoided the resignation of a valued member of staff who was prepared to resign to support an elderly parent recover from a major operation. Instead a period of unpaid leave was given and the employee has since returned to work.

Time off for Dependants Policy

A Dependant is a wife, husband, partner, child, parent or someone who lives in the same household as the employee, but is not a boarder, lodger or tenant. It is a policy that allows emergency time off for any person who reasonably relies on the employee for assistance in an emergency, or to make arrangements for the provision of care. This policy is designed for short term periods of unpaid leave.

Home-working Policy

If the job is suitable for adhoc or partial home working we can support temporary situations with home-working. We recently had a case where we allowed a member of staff to increase their level of home-working to spend more time with a terminally ill parent. This was greatly appreciated by the member staff and allowed the Council to continue to benefit from the individual's skills and experience. Home-working allows many employees to effectively balance long term caring responsibilities with working.

As well as flexible working policies we also have a range of additional support mechanisms for employees, this includes:-

Occupational Health - Staff can be referred if their caring responsibilities are affecting their own health and wellbeing and line managers are advised on any reasonable adjustments that may support the employee.

Employee Assistance Programme - This is an external confidential advisory service contracted by NHDC. The current provider is PPC and they offer a range of advice e.g. financial, health, bereavement, and can also provide counselling where deemed appropriate.

Well@work Site on Intranet – This web page provides information on health and fitness initiatives, as well as guidance for employees and managers dealing with serious personal or family health issues e.g. cancer.

Other Considerations

How does family friendly supporting staff caring benefit NHDC?

The Council invests heavily in training staff to meet the requirements of their role. Through supporting continued working it retains skills and knowledge, which would otherwise be lost if the carer felt the only option would be to resign. It also increases loyalty and commitment to the organisation.

Future Developments of Family Friendly Legislation

Grandparental Leave

The extension of shared parental leave provisions to grandparents is under consideration by the government.

Parental bereavement leave

A bill giving most parents of children who die before their 18th birthdays to at least two weeks' paid bereavement leave is currently making its way through Parliament.

Carers' leave

The Conservative party manifesto for the 2017 general election contained a proposal to give workers a statutory right to take a year's unpaid leave and the right to return to work afterwards for the purpose of caring for a relative.

Fathers' rights

The Women and Equalities Committee of the House of Commons has recommended a fairly radical improvement of paternity rights as they do not believe existing law reflects social changes that are occurring in this area of UK life. The proposals include paternity becoming a protected characteristic in the same way as pregnancy and maternity, statutory paternity pay being increased to the higher level of SMP, the right to 12 weeks paid paternity leave and paid time off to attend ante-natal care appointments