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**Federation/FSU Special Leave**

**Policy**

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**Federation/FSU Special Leave**

**Policy & Procedure**

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# **Introduction and Purpose**

Federations / Federation Support Unit (FSU) recognise that there will be occasions when staff will require leave for personal or family reasons. Federations/FSU recognise the requirement for fairness and consistency when considering requests for special leave and the purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for staff and managers in dealing with these requests and for decision making.

The objective of special leave is to help employees balance the demands of personal, public and work responsibilities including at times of urgent or unforeseen need, through the provision of paid or unpaid leave according to circumstances.

Any long-term arrangements for time off will need to be dealt with under the Flexible Working Policy.

The advantages for staff and employers of allowing reasonable paid time off include:

* improved staff retention, loyalty and morale
* reduction in stress caused by conflict between work and personal commitments
* demonstration that Federations/FSU are fair employers
* reduction in staff taking sick leave in an emergency.

# **2. Scope**

The scope of this policy as outlined in sections 5-13 includes:

* Short-term leave for unplanned emergency breakdown in caring arrangements- See **Carers leave**
* Short-term leave for employees who suffer the death of a relative or partner- **See Bereavement Leave**
* Doctors, Dentists and Hospital appointments- **See Time off for medical appointments**
* Time off for Attendance at funerals (not covered by bereavement leave)- **See Funeral Leave**
* Time off to care for someone for whom you have direct live-in caring responsibilities who is suffering from a serious illness or condition -**See Compassionate Leave**
* Unpaid leave with a maximum of 4 weeks’ leave in any year to look after a child you have responsibility for**- See Parental Leave**
* Time off for public service & duties, and membership of the armed forces – **See Public Services and the Armed Forces Leave**
* Requests for leave that sit outside the above definitions may be considered- **See Unpaid and Exceptional Leave.**
* **Time off for Federation/FSU job interviews- See Attendance at job interviews.**

**Please see Appendix 2 for an Easy Reference -Summary of Special Leave**

The following will not be included in the scope of this policy:

* Maternity, Paternity, Shared Parental Leave and Adoption Leave (please see separate policies and procedures).
* Pre-planned appointments for children and other relatives (covered by annual leave or TOIL subject to normal request and approval process)

# **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

# **3.1 Leads/ Line Managers**

Managers are responsible for

* Communicating the Special Leave Policy to staff
* Considering each request on an individual basis as per the policy guidance.
* Ensuring the Special Leave Application Form is correct and placed on the individual’s personnel file and uploaded to Cascade.
* Ensuring compliance with this policy, providing fairness and consistency when making decisions.

# **3.2 Employee**

Employees are responsible for:

* Making contact with their line manager as soon as possible in the case of requests for immediate leave.
* Notifying the host practice within the first 30 minutes of their usual scheduled start time by phone if they have been granted special leave and will not be attending work. In exceptional circumstances as agreed the Line manager may contact the practice.
* Applying for Special Leave via the Cascade HR system and providing any documentary evidence when requested to assist their manager in making a speedy and informed decision.
* Making applications with honesty and integrity to respect the spirit in which this policy was developed.
* Keeping in touch with their line manager throughout a period of leave as appropriate and agreed.

# **3.3 Human Resources (HR)**

HR has a responsibility for:

* Providing support and guidance for managers and staff in relation to this policy.
* Undertaking reviews and monitoring the policy.

# **4. Eligibility**

The leave outlined in this policy is available to all full time and part time employees from day one of their employment except for parental leave which in line with statutory requirements is open only to staff who have completed one year of service.

# **5. Carer’s Leave**

Carer’s Leave is short-term leave, with pay, to facilitate employees who have caring responsibilities to manage emergency, unplanned, short-term problems. The needscovered include:

* Illness of a child, close relative or partner (immediate family or \*dependant).
* Breakdown of normal care arrangements wherein no or very short notice has been given.

\*A dependant is defined as a spouse, civil partner, child or parent, or a person who lives with the employee but not as a lodger. A dependant could also be someone else who reasonably relies on the employee for care, e.g., an elderly neighbour.

Carers’ Leave is not appropriate when people have been given notice that their current, normal caring arrangements are going to be interrupted.

It is also not suitable for those carers who wish to accompany children or adults to hospital appointments which have been planned or to be with them after planned (elective) operations. Annual leave should be used for these events.

Entitlement is up to a maximum of 3 days in any rolling 12-month period, over a maximum of 3 episodes. No single episode can exceed three days.

The definition of the rolling period is the 12-month period counted back from the day an employee requests carers leave. E.g., Request for carers leave made on 1 November 2021, the rolling period is 1 November 2020 to 1 November 2021.

Staff wishing to take Carer’s Leave should ensure that both their immediate line manager is advised promptly of any difficulties they are experiencing in their care arrangements and that they wish to make application to take time off as Carers leave. The period of leave must be agreed at the initial stages with the manager at the time of the first notification of the difficulty.

*Please Note: Carers’ leave will not be available retrospectively in any circumstances.*

# **6. Bereavement Leave**

Bereavement leave is available to those employees who experience the death of a relative or partner. Whilst it is difficult to assess how the death of someone close to us will affect each of us, this policy is to help ensure that employees are treated with sympathy and consistency at difficult times. The table below sets out a list of the **maximum** number of days available to staff:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP** | **MAXIMUM NUMBER OF DAYS** |
| Spouse | Six |
| Partner | Six |
| Child | Six |
| Parent/Guardian | Six |
| Direct Live-in Caring Responsibilities | Three |
| Sibling | Three |
| Grandparent/Grandchild | One |
| Uncle/Aunt | One |
| Cousin | One |
| Nephew/Niece | One |
| Father/Mother/Brother/Sister/Son/  Daughter/Sister/Brother-in law of  Spouse/Partner | Two |

An employee who intends to make use of Bereavement Leave should ensure that their manager is advised of the situation as soon as is practicable.

# **7. Time off for Medical Appointments**

The Federation/FSU recognises that employees will need to make occasional visits to a dentist, GP or other health professional or may be required to attend a hospital or clinic for investigation and/or treatment. Wherever it is possible to do so, employees (both full and part time) must endeavour to arrange such appointments at a time that they are not scheduled to work or, if this is not possible, as near to the beginning or end of the working period as possible so as to minimise the absence from work and disruption to the service. All appointments should be booked through Cascade.

Employees should not be refused permission to attend a pre-arranged appointment if reasonable notice has been given. The manager must keep a record of any such appointments and may ask to see documentary confirmation of the appointment where this is available.

Where employees need to attend routine appointments (with GPs, Dentists, blood tests or hospital) during work time, up to a maximum of 2 hours may be paid. Any time in excess of 2 hours, they will be required to make up the time taken at the earliest opportunity. Employees must discuss and agree with their manager how this will be achieved. The following are options that can be agreed:

* Arriving earlier or leaving later the day of the appointment
* A temporary increase in hours over a short period
* Unpaid leave
* Annual leave
* Time in lieu
* Any other arrangement agreed with the manager.

Where a medical appointment involves treatment, which results in an employee being unfit for work afterwards, the period of absence will be recorded as sick as per the Federation Absence & Sickness Management Policy & Procedure.

Where a medical appointment involves treatment, which results in an employee being unfit for work afterwards, the period of absence will be recorded as sick as per section 4.1. of the sickness absence policy. Where such appointments form part of an ongoing treatment programme for a serious health condition or are related to a disability or long-term health condition, or are for a work-related disease or injury, the manager must discuss such appointments with the employee to plan any necessary support to be offered. Reasonable time off to attend such appointments as part of their programme of care and support will be given full consideration.

# **8. Compassionate Leave**

Compassionate Leave may be available to those staff who have, for example, a spouse, partner, child, parent/guardian, or someone for whom they have direct live-in caring responsibilities who is suffering from an illness or condition which has been diagnosed as either critical, in the short term, or terminal. Compassionate Leave is designed to enable staff to cope with unplanned and unforeseen demands on the individual and entitlement will range from one half day to up to 18 days per year. Staff wishing to be granted Compassionate Leave should ensure that their manager is advised promptly of any domestic difficulties he/she is experiencing. (See form attached as Appendix 1).

The period of leave should be agreed with the manager at the time of the first request for leave if possible.

Managers should look at each individual case and take account of all prevailing circumstances, e.g., prognosis of illness, other family support, emotional condition of member of staff, changes which could be made to current working arrangements etc. and make a judgement as to what will best meet the needs of both the organisation and member of staff. Each situation will be considered, and both manager and member of staff should attempt to reach agreement. This should ensure that the needs of the individual are treated sympathetically and that the business/operational requirements of the Federation are considered to manage and minimise any potential impact.

# **9.Parental Leave**

Employees who have, or expect to have, responsibility for a child and who have completed one year’s service are entitled to 18 weeks’ unpaid parental leave for each child under the age of 18. This right applies to both parents individually and it cannot be transferred between parents. Parents of an adopted child are entitled to 18 weeks’ unpaid parental leave until the child’s 18th birthday.

* The leave must be used to care for a child.
* Employees can take a maximum of 4 weeks’ leave in any year in respect of any individual child unless you agree otherwise. Periods of leave are to be taken in blocks of a week’s leave or a multiple of a week’s leave unless the child is disabled, in which case it may be taken as individual days.
* The right applies to a single child. Therefore, if an employee has twins, they are entitled to 36 weeks’ parental leave.
* An employee must give the employer at least 21 days’ notice before a period of parental leave begins, of both the start and end dates of the leave period they intend to take. Applications for Parental leave should be made by the employee completing and passing to their Lead/line manager **the Application Form for Parental Leave see Appendix 3.**

If there are good business reasons (i.e., if it would cause significant disruption to service provision, the Federation/FSU can postpone the leave for up to 6 months after the beginning of the leave period the employee originally requested.

An example of a reason for postponement may be if leave was requested during a period when the employee’s absence would unduly impact on service provision. Leave cannot be postponed so that it ends after a child’s 18th birthday. Leave cannot be postponed where the employee wants to take it immediately after their child is born or placed with them for adoption.

The employment contract continues during any period of parental leave unless it is terminated by the employer or employee. The employee is entitled to return to the same job after an isolated period of four weeks of parental leave or parental leave for four weeks or less which was the last of two or more consecutive periods of statutory leave and which did not include any period of additional maternity leave or additional adoption leave.

Where an employee takes parental leave of more than four weeks, or parental leave of four weeks or less that was immediately preceded by a period of statutory leave which included additional maternity leave or additional adoption leave, they have the right to return to the same job OR, if not

reasonably practicable for the employer, another job which is both suitable and appropriate for the employee in the circumstances.

An employee continues to benefit from their terms and conditions of employment (except pay) during parental leave.

Although similarly titled, Parental Leave is not the same as Shared Parental Leave. See Federation/FSU Shared Parental Leave Policy & Procedure.

**10. Public Services and the Armed Forces Leave**

Reasonable leave with pay may be granted in the following circumstances upon receipt of advice from Human Resources: -

* Training with reserve and cadet forces, other voluntary organisations, RNLI, Mountain Rescue Service.
* Magistrate duties (Justice of the Peace) - up to 10 days special leave on the understanding that any fees or payments will be paid to the Federation. No travel expenses subsistence allowance will be paid by the Federation;
* Membership of Board of Governors, Government funded organisations, Police Authority or District Policing Partnerships, Health Authority or Trust: up to 10 days paid leave in any year subject to the exigencies of the service, subject to an understanding that the employee will pass any fees or payments (minus tax) received for the attendance to the Federation. Further leave may be granted subject to the needs of the service by the Federation Chair;
* Attendance at court as medical/dental witnesses are governed by the relevant team and conditions of service;
* Jury Service: employees who are called for jury service will be granted leave with pay on the basis that they are required to pass any court fees, apart from travelling expenses, to the employer;
* Court witness – an employee who attends court as a witness with the consent of the Federation or on foot of a subpoena or witness summons or other legal obligation, will be granted leave with pay on the basis that the employee is required to pass any court fees, apart from travelling expenses, to the Federation. It should be noted that an employee will not be entitled to time off for attendance at court if such appearance is personally instigated.
* Parliamentary assembly candidate: employees who serve as a member of the NI Assembly can avail of a Career Break or a reduction of 20% of normal working hours;
* Employees who are officially standing as a candidate at an Assembly/Council/Parliamentary Election will be granted up to four weeks special leave without pay to facilitate their candidature.

In all instances, applications for special paid leave should be made in writing in the format set out in Appendix 1 to your line manager/Lead in advance of the leave requested.

# **11. Unpaid Leave**

If an employee requests and is approved for leave outside of the above provisions and annual leave, it will be unpaid. The deduction in pay will occur in the month that the leave is taken. Employees should provide their manager with as much notice as possible if the wish to avail of this option. Requests will be approved based on the needs of the Federation against the needs of the employee. It should be noted that employees who avail of unpaid leave will result in a proportionate reduction in their annual leave entitlement.

# **12. Attendance at job interviews**

Staff applying for jobs in one of the G.P. Federations will be granted time off with pay to attend for interview subject to the exigencies of the service. The duration of time allowed for this should not exceed a normal half day.

# **13. Misuse of this policy**

This policy is intended to provide support and leave for staff to assist them to balance the demands of home and work-life at times of urgent and/or unforeseen circumstances. Any employee found to have provided false or inaccurate information in an application for Special Leave or any misuse of this policy may lead to action taken under the Federation/FSU’s Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

# **Appendix 1 -Special Leave Request Form**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Special Leave Request Form** | |
| **Employee Name:** | |
| **Job Title:** | **Federation/FSU:** |
| **Type of leave requested:** | |
| **Details/Reason for request:** | |
|  | |
| **Amount of leave requested:** | **1st Day of leave:** |
| **Last day of leave:** | **Date of return to work (if different):** |
| **Number of days of special leave already taken in this annual leave year and purpose:** | |

**Print name and sign:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Employee: | Date: |
| Manager: | Date: |

**Please return the completed form to your HR team for processing.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Received by HR: | Date: |

# **APPENDIX 2: Easy Reference -Summary of Special Leave**

The amounts of leave as specified below provide a guide only. Please see the Special Leave Policy for further details including definition of relationship type. All special leave is granted at the Manager’s discretion, subject to the needs of the service.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **TYPE OF LEAVE PROVISION** | **LEAVE THAT MAY BE GRANTED BY A MANAGER** |
| **Carers Leave** | Entitlement is up to a maximum of 3 days in any rolling 12-month period, over a maximum of 3 episodes. No single episode can exceed three days. |
| **Doctors, Dental, Hospital Appointments** | Up to a maximum of two hours may be granted at the manager’s discretion. |
| **Bereavement Leave** | Involving a: spouse, partner, child, parent/guardian up to six paid days.  Involving sibling, direct live-in caring responsibilities **up to three paid days**.  Involving father/mother/brother/sister/son/  daughter /Sister/Brother-in-Law of spouse/partner **up to two paid days**.  Involving: grandparents, niece/nephew, aunt/uncle or cousin **up to one paid day**. |
| **Funerals** | Involving a close friend or relationship not covered under bereavement leave, staff can request up to **2.5 hours for a local funeral**.  Staff may be given no more than **4 hours off for non-local funeral attendance** and can take further time off through annual leave or time in lieu or other arrangement as agreed with line manager. |
| **Parental Leave** | For each child: 18 weeks (unpaid) up to their 18th birthday.  A maximum of **4 weeks’ parental leave in a year** can be taken in respect of any individual child.  Staff must have 1 year’s continuous service to  apply for this leave. |
| **Compassionate Leave** | May be available to those staff who have, for example, a spouse, partner, child, parent/guardian, or someone for whom they have direct live-in caring responsibilities who is suffering from an illness or condition which has been diagnosed as either critical, in the short term, or terminal.  Will range from **one half day to up to 18 days per year.** |
| **Public Service Duties** | Dependant on the Public Service Duty being carried out – application to be made in writing in advance of the leave requested. |
| **Attendance at Job Interviews** | For a vacancy within a Federation/FSU, you may be granted paid time off **not to exceed a normal half day.** |

# 

# **APPENDIX 3 - APPLICATION FORM FOR PARENTAL LEAVE**

An application for Parental Leave should be made to your line manager/Lead at

least 21 days in advance of the start of the leave. Please complete this form and pass to your Lead/line Manager.

**Full Name:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Job Title**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I wish to apply for a period of unpaid Parental Leave from:

**(Dates)** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, a total of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ weeks.

I confirm that this period of Parental Leave will be used to look after or make

arrangements for the welfare of a child to whom, as set out under the Parental

Leave Regulations and at the time the leave will be taken, one of the following

applies (please tick as applicable):

* I am named as a parent on his/her birth certificate, and s/he is under the age of 18🞏
* or I have adopted him/her, and s/he is under the age of 18, 🞏
* or I have acquired formal parental responsibility for him/her, and s/he is under the age of 18. 🞏

I attach a copy of evidence\* that I am entitled to take Parental Leave for this child. (\*For example, a copy of his/her birth certificate, papers confirming his/her adoption or date of placement, or proof of the expected week of childbirth.)

I am aware that this period of Parental Leave will be unpaid and that appropriate

adjustments will be made to my salary to reflect this. **Yes** 🞏 **No** 🞏

**Please sign below to confirm the details above.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**For completion by the applicant’s manager**

I have discussed the above application with this employee and approve this period

of unpaid Parental Leave. (Please add any comments overleaf).

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_