

Foster Carer Leave Policy

Policy Purpose

Derby City Council recognises and values the contribution that foster carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care. We understand that foster carers who do other work in addition to fostering need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child. In recognition of this valuable contribution, foster carer leave is available for those colleagues that foster Children either for Derby City Council Fostering service, other Local Authorities or Independent Fostering Agencies.

This policy sets out the time off that we will offer prospective and existing foster carers (this includes family and friends foster carers).

Document Control

Implementation date	MONTH
Author	Jas Bhupal
Equality impact assessment date	November 2021
Revised/updated	MONTH YYYY and brief description of update
Version Control	1
Review required	3 years

1 Policy application

- 1.1 This policy applies to all Council employees.
- 1.2 Governing Bodies of Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools are strongly urged to adopt this policy for all employees within their delegated powers.
- 1.3 Permanent and temporary colleagues are entitled to Foster Carer leave. There is no minimum length of service requirement.
- 1.4 Foster Carer leave is available for those colleagues that foster children or are going through the assessment process to foster children, either for Derby City Council Fostering service, other Local Authorities or Independent Fostering Agencies.

2 Principles

- 2.1 Derby City Council is committed to support any colleague who is a foster carer. We will do this, wherever possible, by creating a fostering friendly organisation which responds to the needs of all foster carer colleagues. We will offer colleagues the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of their job.

3 Informing your manager

- 3.1 Colleagues becoming foster carers or who are already approved foster carers should inform their manager of the approval status. This is to ensure that your line manager and colleagues can provide you with support and encouragement. This also ensures your manager can consider any leave requests and make any necessary arrangements for staff cover.

4 Foster Carer Leave entitlement

- 4.1 If you are a foster carer, you may need to take time off work to help the child/children to settle into the new environment. You may also need time off to attend training courses, meetings with professionals or appointments with the child/children.
- 4.2 Derby City Council values and will support foster carers by giving paid time off for those colleagues that foster children. There are two different foster carer leave entitlement categories:
 - Assessment, initial training and attendance at the fostering panel prior to approval as foster carer
 - Leave for approved foster carers

Sections 4.3 to 4.4 detail the leave entitlements for each category

- 4.3 Assessment, initial training and attendance at the fostering panel prior to approval as foster carer entitlement:
- Colleagues who are going through the assessment process to become a foster carer, will be entitled to **up to four working days paid leave**, in any rolling twelve-month period, to take part in the assessment, initial training and attendance at the fostering panel prior to approval as a foster carer.
 - This entitlement is pro rata for part time colleagues.
 - The leave may be taken in whole or half working days or hours.
 - The leave must only be used in relation to applying to become a foster carer.
 - This entitlement cannot be carried forward to the following rolling twelve-month period or added to your foster carer allowance once you are an approved foster carer.
 - Colleagues who are being assessed as Special Guardians are also entitled to the four days paid leave, but are not entitled to the ongoing foster carer leave post Special Guardianship Order.
- 4.4 Leave for approved foster carers:
- Colleagues who are approved foster carers are entitled to a maximum of **five working days paid leave**, in any rolling twelve-month period, if the fostering placement requires this.
 - This entitlement is pro rata for part time colleagues.
 - The leave may be taken in whole or half working days or hours.
 - This entitlement cannot be carried forward to the following rolling twelve-month period.
 - Examples of Leave Requests for approved foster carers include:
 - Supervision meetings
 - Child meetings / appointments
 - Annual foster carer review meeting
 - Training
 - Emergency Placements
 - Settling in a new child
 - Attending support groups
 - Other appropriate reasons

5 How can leave be taken

- 5.1 The leave may be taken in whole or half working days or hours.
- 5.2 Colleagues working less than full time hours have a proportionate amount of foster carer leave entitlement.
- 5.3 There may be occasions when a colleague, who is an approved foster carer, is not fostering a child/children. In those circumstances, colleagues who are required to attend training or meetings can apply for foster carer leave.

6 Requesting Leave and authorisation

- 6.1 Colleagues should request foster carer leave as soon as they become aware that they require this by completing the foster carer leave application form and send it to their manager. The request for leave should outline the reason, and the amount of leave required. Other than in exceptional circumstances, this form should be completed before the leave is required.
- 6.2 Colleagues may be asked to produce written evidence for their manager showing that they are either an approved foster carer or actively applying to become a foster carer.
- 6.3 Whilst managers will consider the individual circumstances of each case and services requirements when considering the requests, managers are encouraged to agree to the request where possible.
- 6.4 Any requests that are approved should be recorded on the appropriate system.

7. Related policies and procedures are:

- Annual Leave
- Caring for Dependents Leave
- Parental Leave
- Right to Request Flexible Working
- Family Leave and Pay Policy

8. Support and guidance

A full description of the process including guidance, supportive information and documentation can be found on MiDerby.

Colleagues without access to this information can ask their manager for a printed copy.

9. Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders are summarised in Appendix 1 .

POLICY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS – DCC COLLEAGUES (NOT BASED IN A SCHOOL)

Chief Executive and Chief Officers Tiers 1 and 2	Head of Service Tier 3	Managers	Colleagues	Human Resources
Fairness and equality				
To ensure this policy is implemented in a fair, consistent and non-discriminatory manner.	To provide reasonable adjustments as required.	To provide reasonable adjustments as required.	To notify managers of reasonable adjustments required.	To ensure this policy is implemented in a fair, consistent and non-discriminatory manner.
	To consider all requests in a fair and consistent manner.	To consider all requests in a fair and consistent manner.		
General Operation of the Scheme				
Ensure managers carry out their responsibilities	Ensure managers carry out their responsibilities	Ensure colleagues are aware of where to access information on Foster Carer Leave.	To follow the guidelines set out in the policy and guidance	Provide advice and guidance to managers and colleagues

Chief Executive and Chief Officers Tiers 1 and 2	Head of Service Tier 3	Managers	Colleagues	Human Resources
Foster Carer Leave				
	Approve requests for time off taking into account the needs of the service	Approve requests for time off taking into account the needs of the service and record on the appropriate system. Discuss other options for taking leave where foster carer leave has been exhausted.	Discuss arrangements for leave with the line manager. Comply with the requirement of completing the Foster Carer Leave application form. Discuss other options for taking leave where foster carer leave has been exhausted.	Provide advice and guidance to managers and colleagues
Document Retention				
		To keep relevant records of the application for foster carer leave on the colleague's personal file.	To provide managers with relevant information and completed Foster Carer Leave Application Forms	