

Fostering Friendly Guidance

2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Guidance sets out our organisation's support for employees who are undertaking the care of a child/children under a foster-care/kinship care arrangement with a local authority or an independent fostering provider.
- 1.2 We recognise and value the contribution that foster carers make to the lives of children and young people in care.
- 1.3 We understand that foster carers will need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order that they can meet the needs of their fostered child or young person.
- 1.4 We are committed to support any employee who is a foster carer. We will do this, wherever possible, by creating a fostering friendly organisation that offers flexible working arrangements which respond to the needs of all employees who are foster carers.

2. Guidance aims

- 2.1 This Guidance aims to offer our employees the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of their job. Our agile working guidance and parental policies all apply to foster carers.

3. Eligibility

3.1 This Guidance applies to all West Suffolk Council employees, who are:-

- applying to become a foster carer/kinship carer or,
- an approved foster carer/kinship carer and have a child in placement (or have had a child in placement for 75 per cent of the previous 12 months),
- and who have evidence of the above processes

4. Time off entitlement

Existing foster carers

- 4.1 Employees that are already foster carers will be entitled to five days paid leave each year (pro-rata for part time employees), in addition to their annual leave, for caring responsibilities. This will only be available to the primary carer within the couple.
- 4.2 Where a couple are applying to become approved foster carers and both are employed by West Suffolk Council, both individuals will be entitled to receive a maximum of five days paid leave (pro-rata for part time employees) to attend mandatory training.
- 4.3 If at the end of a year any leave entitlement remains unused, it cannot be carried over into the subsequent year.

Employees applying to become foster carers

- 4.4 In addition to the above five days, to assist employees during their application to become approved foster carers, a maximum of five days paid leave (pro-rata for part time employees) will be available to allow the employee to participate in mandatory training, initial home visits and to attend the required fostering panels.
- 4.5 Should training be completed in less than five days (overall), any outstanding balance of the five days' leave may still be used to undertake caring responsibilities in the first year.
- 4.6 These additional five days will only be available to facilitate attendance at initial training sessions and care in the first year and will not be an annual entitlement.

5. Procedure for requesting time off

- 5.1 If you intend to foster a child/children, you should give your line manager no less than four weeks' notice of your intention to train as a foster carer. This is to ensure that your line manager and colleagues can provide you with support and encouragement. This also ensures that, should you wish to request any special leave to care for the

child/children, your line manager has sufficient notice to make any necessary arrangements for staff cover.

- 5.2 The request for time off should outline the reason and the amount of leave required.
- 5.3 Where more than the maximum entitlement of paid leave is requested (as outlined above), the line manager and the employee should discuss other means available such as annual leave, time off in lieu, parental leave.
- 5.4 Wherever possible, requests to take any other foster carers leave should be submitted at least five working days prior to the placement of a child.
- 5.5 The line manager will approve the leave on a discretionary basis considering individual circumstances of each case and operational requirements of the business. The leave will be considered and approved on a pro rata basis for part time employees.

6. Additional support

- 6.1 The council recognises that there may be occasions where a carer will need to take additional leave to facilitate a successful placement. In these circumstances, in addition to the foster carer's leave entitlement, the following options are also available:
 - Annual leave
 - Flexible working arrangements
 - Unpaid leave
 - Extended leave

7. Cessation of leave entitlement

- 7.1 An employee's entitlement to foster carers leave will cease in the following circumstances:
 - An employee's application to become a foster carer is rejected.
 - The employee's status as an approved foster carer is removed for any reason.
 - The employee ceases to act as a foster carer.

8. Useful information

- 8.1 Further information about the fostering service, including details about how to apply to become a foster carer can be found below:
<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/fostering-and-adoption/fostering>

9. Enquiries and change control

- 9.1 All enquiries relating to this document should be directed to HR.
- 9.2 This Guidance will be subject to review which will be initiated by HR in consultation our recognised trade union.
- 9.3 Suggestions for any changes to this document should also be forwarded to HR.

10. Revisions

Date of review or revision	Reason	Author
May 2023	Guidance created	Wendy Canham