



**FOSTER CARER SCHEME**

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REFERENCE

## 1.0 Introduction

The following sets out the Council's policy on Foster Caring. The Council is committed to being a 'Fostering Friendly Employer' through supporting employees who are prospective or existing foster carers.

## 2.0 Scope

There are currently 64,000 children in care in the UK. The highest proportion, 78%, of those children and young people are in foster care and with a child coming in to care every 20 minutes in need of a fostering family the Council recognise the need to do more to help recruit new foster carers.

The demographic profile of foster carers, many of whom are approaching retirement age, places further pressure on future foster carer numbers. 94% of foster carers nationally are aged 40 and over and 65% are aged 50 and over.

To address the national challenges around fostering, and to try and encourage more working people to become foster carers, the Government has called on employers to become "fostering friendly".

Part of the national push to encourage more people to become foster carers, has been to "bust the myth" that you are not allowed to work if you become a foster carer.

The Council wishes to support those employees who are already foster carers and to encourage those who may be considering foster care to take that step as by doing so, they will be providing positive working role models and widening the pool of available foster carers. In this way, more children in care can be matched with the very best foster carer for them.

The Council recognise that having the support of the organisation, may make the vital difference in the decision of an employee to become a foster carer.

## 2.1 Eligibility

The provisions of this policy apply to all employees that meet all the following criteria:

- Have at least 12 weeks' service at Broxtowe Borough Council
- Are currently applying to become a foster carer
- Are approved foster carers and have a child in placement (or have had a child in placement for 75% of the previous 12 months)

### **3.0 Foster carer-specific leave**

The following key principles apply:

- Up to five days (pro-rata for part time employees) paid additional leave for employees who are going through the application process to become a foster carer, as part of the fostering assessment process.
- Up to five days (pro-rata for part time employees) paid additional leave each year for employees who are foster carers in order to attend training related to their position as foster carers and/or to attend meetings, panels, hearings or any other key events or activities in support of foster children and young people in their care. This can be taken as half days.
- The Council adopts a flexible and accommodating approach to requests for time off, leave and flexible working arrangements from foster carers and prospective foster carers in relation to their care of a looked after child or during their journey through the process to become foster carers, in line with the Agile Working Guidance, Flexible working and Flexi-time policies.
- Further support to cover any extra training which may be needed or to cover unforeseen emergencies related to their fostering role remains at their Head of Service discretion. This may include utilisation of the Council's Emergency Time Off for Dependents scheme.

These principles align with best practice for employers promoted by the Fostering Network.

### **3.1 Existing policies of support for Foster Carers**

The Council offers employees the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of the employee's job. There are a number of supportive policies which all apply to foster carers, these include:

- Holiday Purchase Scheme
- Career Break Policy
- Flexible Working Requests
- Flexible Retirement Policy
- Parental Leave Scheme
- Emergency Time Off for Dependents

This Policy sets out the additional time off that the Council will offer prospective and existing foster carers

## **4.0 Procedures**

Requests for paid leave will be managed similarly to the Council's existing special leave policies and procedures. The foster carer should fill in form FOS1 and submit to their Head of Service, giving double the notice of the time requested off. (e.g. where five days have been requested, 10 days' notice should be given as a minimum).

The Head of Service will consider the request and give reasons if they are unable to approve the request.

The form will be retained on the employee's Personnel record and Human Resources will monitor the number of days requested and the reasons for the request.

Proof of attendance to foster related events is not required at submission, but the employee's Line Manager or Head of Service can request this information.

Any abuse of the procedures within this Policy will be dealt with through the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.