
Fostering Friendly Policy

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Tameside recognises and values the contribution that foster carers and kinship carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care. A key part of our corporate plan is to develop resilient families and supportive networks for children, specifically by increasing levels of fostering and adoption. We understand that foster carers/kinship carers who do other work in addition to fostering need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of children in their care.
- 1.2. We are committed to support any staff member who is a foster carer or an approved kinship carer (kinship care is where children who are not able to live with their parents are placed with family members or friends).
- 1.3. We will do this, wherever possible, by creating a fostering friendly organisation that offers flexible working arrangements which respond to the needs of all foster carers or approved kinship carer employees.
- 1.4. The process of seeking approval to become a foster carer is a lengthy one and places a number of reasonable but demanding expectations upon prospective carers, particularly in relation to the training, assessment and approval process.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1. This policy applies to existing foster or kinship carers, and those who have begun the formal process of seeking approval and registration as foster or kinship carers.
- 2.2. Please note, where an employee has been awarded a Special Guardianship Order, they will not be covered in the scope of this policy.
- 2.3. The policy applies to all employees with no minimum level of continuous service required.
- 2.4. The policy applies to all foster carers or kinship carers regardless of local authority registration. This includes foster carers who are registered with independent fostering agencies.
- 2.5. The policy applies to employees in schools and those directly employed by Tameside Council.

3. AIM

- 3.1. Tameside Council offers employees the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of their job. We encourage managers to support employees to manage caring commitments alongside their role and to utilise formal and informal flexible working arrangements to support employees who are foster carers or kinship carers.
- 3.2. In addition to this, this policy sets out the additional time off that we will offer prospective and existing foster carers and kinship carers.

4. TIME OFF

- 4.0. The policy provides paid time off up to a maximum of 10 days per employee per 12 month period for the following reasons (10 days will be pro rata for part time employees):
 - Assessment and initial training prior to approval as a foster carer
 - Attendance at panel for approval

APPENDIX 1

- Child review meetings
- Annual foster carer review meeting
- Mandatory or specialised training
- Meetings with the child's school
- Contact review meetings
- Support group meetings

- 4.1 The 12 month period is a rolling 12 months which will start when required for each foster/kinship carer. This will be dependent on when the employee starts the formal journey of becoming a foster/kinship carer.
- 4.2 The time off provided in this policy is separate to annual leave entitlement.
- 4.3 We recognise that the number of meetings and requirements for training will vary dependent on the number of placements, placement duration, and the needs of the child. The policy provides flexibility for this within a 10 day maximum per 12 month period. This allowance can be used as hours, half days, or full days, depending on the requirement of the training/meeting.
- 4.4 Requests for time off should be submitted in a reasonable timeframe and managers are responsible for approving foster friendly leave taking into account the employee's individual circumstances and the operational requirements of the business.
- 4.5 Where a child is placed with a foster carer on an emergency basis, time off may be required at short notice and this should be discussed and agreed with the relevant manager.
- 4.6 The amounts of leave indicated are maximum durations and may not always be needed. It is expected that employees are flexible to the needs of the business. For example, attendance at training sessions that are scheduled in the evenings rather than sessions that clash with working hours.

5. Process for requesting time off

- 5.1. Requests for leave should be directed to line managers and should outline the reason and the amount of leave required. Appointment letters should be provided where requested.
- 5.2. In situations where more time off is required than this policy provides, managers will take a supportive approach and consideration will be given to alternative means available, which might include use of annual leave, flex leave, or unpaid leave.
- 5.3. Time off will be recorded by line managers as part of the monthly absence return for HR or under the **other absence** category on the iTrent system where managers are set up for self service. Under the **other absence** category choose **paid absence** and **fostering leave** from the drop down list.