Contents

[Equality Statement 2](#_Toc115258762)

[1 Introduction 2](#_Toc115258763)

[2 Support from the Council 2](#_Toc115258764)

[3 Eligibility 3](#_Toc115258765)

[4 Time off 3](#_Toc115258766)

[4.1 Employees in their first year of foster caring 3](#_Toc115258767)

[4.2 Employees who have been foster carers for 1 year or more 3](#_Toc115258768)

[5 Procedure for requesting time off 4](#_Toc115258769)

[5.1 Employee 4](#_Toc115258770)

[5.2 Line manager 4](#_Toc115258771)

[7 Policy Feedback 4](#_Toc115258772)

[8 History of Policy Changes 4](#_Toc115258773)

Scope

This policy applies to all Council employees other than those in our Schools, who have local arrangements.

# Equality Statement

This policy applies equally to all Council employees regardless of their age, disability, sex, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership. Care will be taken to ensure that no traditionally excluded groups are adversely impacted in implementing this policy. Monitoring will take place to ensure compliance and fairness.

# Introduction

Torbay 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.

Torbay Council is committed to support any employee who is being assessed or who is a foster carer or an approved kinship 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 foster carers or approved kinship carer employees, as well as those being assessed as approved foster carers.

The process of seeking approval to become a foster carer places a number of reasonable but demanding expectations upon prospective carers, particularly in relation to the training, assessment and approval process, as well as meetings which the employee will be required to attend.

Wherever possible we will extend the terms of this policy to prospective foster or kinship carers who have begun the formal process of seeking approval and registration as carers.

# 2 Support from the Council

Torbay Council offers employees the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of their job. There are a number of supportive policies which all apply to foster carers and approved kinship carers who are also employees of Torbay Council, these include:

* Annual Leave Purchase Scheme
* Career Break Policy
* Flexitime and Hours of Work Scheme
* Flexible Retirement Policy
* Parental Leave (within Leave Arrangements Policy)
* Time off to Care for Dependents within the Leave Arrangements Policy
* Ways of Working Policy

These policies can be found on [MyView](https://myview.torbay.gov.uk/dashboard/dashboard-ui/index.html#/index/main).

This policy sets out the additional time off that we will offer prospective and existing foster carers and kinship carers.

# 3 Eligibility

This policy applies to all Council employees who:

* are applying to become foster carers
* are approved foster carers and have a child in placement (or have had a child in placement for 75% of the previous 12 months) or are an approved kinship carer
* and have three months or more employment service with Torbay Council.

# 4 Time off

Foster carers and approved kinship carers may request paid time off to support them in their role as foster carers. The amount of leave varies depending on whether the employee is a new or established foster carer.

The employee’s line manager will approve the leave on a case by case, discretionary basis taking into account individual circumstances of each case and operational requirements of the service.

Where the child/young person’s placement is long-term placement, foster or kinship carers may refer to other policies available on [MyView](https://myview.torbay.gov.uk/dashboard/dashboard-ui/index.html#/index/main) for further support.

## 4.1 Employees in their first year of foster caring

Employees who are in their first year of becoming a foster carer may request a total of 66.6 hours paid leave per year, the equivalent of 9 days, pro rata if the employee works part time. This leave may be taken as follows:

* Up to 22.2 hours for assessment and initial training prior to approval as a foster carer.
* Up to 7.4 hours for attendance at panel for approval.
* Up to 37 hours to attend child review meetings, the annual foster carer review meeting and related training.

## 4.2 Employees who have been foster carers for 1 year or more

Once an employee has completed and passed the initial training and assessment process, they may request a total of 37 hours of paid leave per year, the equivalent of 5 days, pro rata if the employee works part time. This leave may be used to attend child review meetings, the annual foster carer review meeting and related training.

**The leave is attached to the foster carer and not the number of children in their care so the above is the maximum amount of leave that may be claimed.**

# 5 Procedure for requesting time off

## 5.1 Employee

The employee should make their request for leave in writing to their line manager, at the earliest opportunity. The request should outline the reason for leave and the amount required.

## 5.2 Line manager

The line manager will consider the request, taking into account the individual circumstances of each case and the operational requirements of the service. Leave will be approved wherever possible, however in circumstances where this would cause excessive pressure to the service or colleagues, the request may be declined.

Where more than the maximum entitlement of fostering friendly paid leave is requested (as outlined above), the line manager and employee should discuss other means available such as annual leave or time off in lieu (if applicable).

6 Useful Contacts

Torbay Council

Website: <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/children-and-families/fostering/>

The Fostering Network

Website: <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/>

# 7 Policy Feedback

Should you have any comments regarding this policy, please address them to the HR Policy Feedback mailbox – HRpolicy@torbay.gov.uk

# 8 History of Policy Changes

This policy was first agreed in DATE.

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| Date | Page | Details of Change | Agreed by: |
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