

## **Foster Carers Leave**

### **1. Introduction**

Sandwell Council recognises and values the contribution that foster carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care. The Council understands 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.

Sandwell Council is committed to supporting any employee who is already a foster carer and to encourage those who may be considering foster care to take that step.

We will do this, wherever possible, by creating a fostering friendly organisation that offers flexible working arrangements which respond to the needs of foster carers.

The process of seeking approval to become foster carers is a lengthy one and places a number of reasonable but demanding expectations upon prospective carers, particularly in relation to the training, assessment and the approval process.

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

### **2. Aim**

Foster Carer's Leave is intended to assist foster carers to combine work and their caring responsibilities. To be successful, it must be operated in a spirit of give and take and with an acceptance of the principle that the efficient functioning of the Council's Service Areas, and the interest of the public are paramount.

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

### **3. Eligibility**

This policy applies to employees who:

- are applying to become foster carers\*
- are approved foster carers\* and have a child in placement.

\*The term foster carer extends to kinship carers, connected carers, special guardianship order carers and foster to adopt carers, as appropriate.

There is no qualifying period.

#### **4. Time off**

Sandwell Council values and will support foster carers by giving paid time off in any 12-month period as follows:

- assessment and initial training prior to approval as a foster carer - up to four days
- attendance at panel for approval – one day
- child review meetings, foster carer review meetings and training – up to five days.

In addition, the Council recognises that foster carers need to be able to respond flexibly to the needs of the children in their care and that by enabling them to work flexibly will help them to balance their work and caring responsibilities.

Therefore, foster carers will have the same access to our [flexible working scheme](#), [carers leave scheme](#), and [emergency leave scheme](#) as parents, and by recognising fostered children as [dependants](#), we will assist foster carers in providing a stable and secure home for the children they care for.

#### **5. Procedure for requesting time off**

To apply for Foster Carers Leave, complete application form: [HR74.1](#)

The employee's line manager will approve the leave on a discretionary basis, considering individual circumstances of each case and the operational requirements of the Council.

Leave will be considered and approved on a pro rata basis.

Where more than the maximum entitlement of Foster Carers Leave paid leave is requested (as outlined above), the line manager and the employee should discuss other means available, for example - [annual leave](#), [time off in lieu](#), [flexi leave](#), [unpaid leave](#), [carers leave](#) etc.

Foster Carers Leave should be managed locally.