



## Parental Bereavement Leave Policy and Procedure

### Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

At WODC, we recognise that, while dealing with any bereavement is difficult, the death of a child is among the most devastating events that an employee can ever face.

This policy sets out our commitment to supporting bereaved parents through their grief by ensuring they can take parental bereavement leave.

The policy applies to employees who suffer the loss of a child under the age of 18. This includes parents who suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

We have a separate policy that highlights further steps we take to help bereaved employees.

### Who can take Parental Bereavement Leave?

Whatever your length of service, you can take this type of leave if you are the parent of the child who has passed away, or the partner of the child's parent. In general, you can take this type of leave if you have parental responsibility for the child. This includes adoptive parents.

If you have suffered a bereavement but are unsure if you are entitled to parental bereavement leave, please contact your line manager for clarification.

### What Leave a Bereaved Parent can take

You can take two weeks of parental bereavement leave. You can take the leave as:

- a single block of two weeks or
- two separate blocks of one week at different times.

You cannot take the leave as individual days.

You can take the leave at the time(s) you choose within the 56 weeks after your bereavement. You might choose, for example, to take it at a particularly difficult time such as your child's birthday.

If you have lost more than one child, you have a separate entitlement to bereavement leave for each child who has passed away.

## Notice to take Parental Bereavement Leave

If you need to take parental bereavement leave within the first 56 days after your bereavement, you can take the leave straight away. You do not have to provide any notice. Please let your line manager know no later than when you are due to start work on the first day on which you wish to take leave or, if that is not feasible, as soon as you can.

To take leave more than 56 days after your bereavement, please give your line manager at least one week's notice.

## Changing your Mind about taking Parental Bereavement Leave

You can cancel your planned leave and take it at a different time (within the 56 weeks after your bereavement). Where your planned leave was due to begin during the first 56 days after your bereavement, please let your line manager know you no longer wish to take it before your normal start time on the first day of the planned leave.

Where your leave was due to begin more than 56 days after your bereavement, please let your line manager know at least one week in advance that you wish to cancel it.

You cannot cancel any week of parental bereavement leave that has already begun.

## Pay During Parental Bereavement Leave

Parental bereavement pay will be paid at the statutory minimum rate

To receive statutory parental bereavement pay, you must have:

- at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us by the week before the one in which your child passed away (and still be employed by us on the date of the bereavement); and
- normal weekly earnings in the eight weeks up to the week before your bereavement of at least the lower earnings limit for national insurance contribution purposes.

If you are unsure if you are entitled to statutory parental bereavement pay, please contact your HR Business Partner who will be able to advise you.

If you qualify for statutory parental bereavement pay, you will be paid during your leave at the rate set by the Government, or at 90% of your average weekly earnings where this figure is lower. If you are not eligible, your leave will be unpaid.

You need to give us notice of the weeks for which you wish to claim statutory parental bereavement pay, via a form that [your line manager/the HR department] will ask you to sign.

You must normally sign and return the form to your line manager within 28 days of the first day for which you are claiming. However, if that is not possible, please sign and return the form as soon as you can.

All benefits will remain in place.

## Rights during Parental Bereavement Leave

During your leave, all the terms and conditions of your contract except normal pay as set out above will continue.

This means that all other benefits will remain in place. For example, holiday entitlement continues to accrue. Pension contributions will continue to be paid.

Your HR department will notify you of any paperwork that needs to be completed to ensure payments are made in accordance with this policy.

## Returning to Work after Parental Bereavement Leave

When you return to work after some time on parental bereavement leave, you generally have the right to return to the same job.

However, a slightly different rule applies if you return from time on bereavement leave that follows on immediately from some maternity, adoption, paternity leave or shared parental leave (taken in relation to the child who has passed away), and your total time on leave is more than 26 weeks.

In these circumstances, you have the right to return to the same job, unless this is not reasonably practical - in which case you have the right to return to a suitable and appropriate job on the same terms and conditions.

This rule also applies if your leave includes more than four weeks of ordinary parental leave (taken in relation to any child), regardless of the total length of the leave.

If you are taking parental bereavement leave, but are unsure where you stand on your return, please contact your line manager for clarification.

## External Support

External sources of help and support for bereaved employees include:

- [Cruse Bereavement Care](#) / [Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland](#), which offers support to bereaved people, for example via a telephone helpline
- [Child Bereavement UK](#), which offers support to families when a child passes away, for example via a telephone helpline
- [Marie Curie](#), which supports families living with a terminal illness.

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