

Appendix B

Foster carers

Harlow 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 to meet the needs of their fostered child.

Harlow Council is committed to support any employee who is being assessed or who is a foster 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

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 carers who have begun the formal process of seeking approval and registration as carers.

Support available from the Council:-

Employees can work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of their job. There are several supportive policies which apply to foster carers, these include:

- flexible working
- emergency time off for dependents
- parental leave policies
- day one right (request for flexible working from first day of employment)

We may offer additional time off to prospective and existing foster carers 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)

Additional time off applies to all employees, including those on temporary and fixed-term contracts. It does not apply to agency workers or contractors.

Leave entitlement

Employees may be granted up to two days with pay when they apply to become an approved foster carer. For part-time employees, the leave will be pro-rata. The employee can only take this in the year they are applying to foster to enable them to attend:

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- meetings
- home visits
- mandatory training

Employees can take the leave as half days when appropriate.

Where a couple whom both work for the Council are applying to become foster carers, the leave entitlement applies to each partner.

In addition, employees may take five additional days paid leave per year to employees who are active foster carers for us. For part-time employees, the additional days will be pro-rata. This leave is for attending meetings, training or to meet the needs of a child. Employees can take the leave as half days where appropriate.

Employees wishing to take leave under this policy must produce written evidence to their manager. The evidence must show that they are approved foster carers or actively applying to become foster carers.

The employee's line manager will approve the leave on a discretionary basis. The manager will consider the request, taking into account operational requirements of the service. Leave will be approved where possible, however, in circumstances where this would cause excessive pressure to the service/colleagues, the request would be declined. .

Where the maximum entitlement for fostering paid leave has been requested, the line manager and employee should discuss other means available such as annual leave or time off in lieu (if applicable)

Foster Carer's Leave requested should be made via an Authorised Absence form and when approved the absence should be recorded on iTrent as 'Other Absence Details' by the Line Manager.