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Unpaid Parental Leave Policy

Introduction

This Policy is one of a suite of Policies concerning family responsibilities. Other Policies comprise Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Adoption Leave and Unpaid Time Off for Emergency Care of a Dependent.

The Employment Relations Act 1999 contains provision for **unpaid** parental leave. This was introduced by Regulation on 15 December 1999 and seeks to implement the EU Directive on Parental Leave and leave for Family Emergencies.

Policy

Unpaid Parental Leave (up to a total of 13 weeks, or pro rata for staff working less than full-time and up to 18 weeks for a disabled child) is leave taken to look after a child or to make arrangements for the good of the child, eg. connected with health or settling in a child at a play group.

Who has the right to parental leave?

An employee who has at least one year's continuous service and:

- is the parent (named in the Birth Certificate) or who has acquired formal parental responsibility for a child who is under 8 years old, or
- has adopted a child under the age of 18 (this right lasts for 8 years from the date on which the child is placed for adoption or until the child's 18th birthday), or
- is the parent of a child with a disability under the age of 21 (this right lasts until the child's 21st birthday). A disabled child is a child for whom Disability Living Allowance is awarded.

Key elements of the Policy:

A qualifying employee is entitled to 13 weeks **unpaid** leave for each child (18 weeks **unpaid** leave for each disabled child).

Leave may be taken in blocks of 1 week and up to 4 weeks per year. Requests for leave of single days will be considered subject to approval of the Line Manager (approval is guaranteed if the leave is to care for a child with a disability).

Employees have the right to return to their jobs, or if this is not possible, jobs of equivalent status, terms and conditions.

Employees who have taken parental leave will not be disadvantaged with regard to terms and conditions such as continuity of service, increments, promotion rights, notice of termination or redundancy selection. With regard to annual leave entitlement, they will retain their annual leave entitlement according to grade and length of service but actual leave will be based on the amount of paid service accrued during the leave year.

Notice

To enable cover to be arranged the employee should give at least 4 weeks' notice. ELHAP would seek to reach agreement with the employee on the request for leave as soon as possible but account must be taken of the needs of the service.

Procedure

An employee wishing to apply for parental leave should write to their Line Manager within the agreed notice periods.

The Line Manager will confirm in writing the agreed time and dates to the employee and send a copy of this to the ELHAP Administrator.

The ELHAP Administrator will inform Payroll in order that the necessary pay adjustments can be made.

Link to Policy on Compassionate Leave

The Policy on Compassionate Leave allows up to 5 days' paid leave to be granted in the event of the death or sudden serious illness or accident of immediate close relatives (please refer to the ELHAP Compassionate Leave Policy).

**Implemented by the ELHAP Board of Trustees
3rd October 2005**

