

# Family Time Policy

Effective from October 2021

Newcastle University recognises that families come in all shapes and sizes and that parenting responsibilities impact on all aspects of an individual's life. We know that colleagues of all genders and sexualities can have parenting responsibilities and we aim to support our colleagues via a range of family-friendly policies which include:

- Maternity/Pregnancy Leave
- Adoption Leave
- Paternity/Partner Leave
- Shared Parental Leave

This Family Time policy covers a whole range of other situations to support you when trying to juggle your parenting responsibilities with work. If you need time off for another reason that isn't detailed in any of these policies then we would really encourage you to speak to your line manager about what support you need and they will do their best, wherever operationally possible, to help you.

At the same time, we encourage colleagues with families to be sensitive to all colleagues irrespective of their parenting status.

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## 1. Parental leave

Parental leave is unpaid time off for all colleagues who are parents. You can use this time off in many different situations related to your child, for example:

- To simply spend more time with your child
- To visit prospective schools
- When your child starts school
- To settle your child into new childcare arrangements
- To be with your child when they're in hospital

### How does it work?

- Each parent can take up to 18 weeks parental leave per child until their 18th birthday.
- If you have more than one child at a time you can have 18 weeks for each child.

- You can start taking parental leave as soon as your child is born, placed with you or when you get legal parental responsibility.
- You can take the time off in 1-week blocks of up to 4 weeks in a year for each child. If you choose to take time off that is less than your normal working week, your overall entitlement will still be reduced by 1 week.
- If your child has a disability; you can take time off in days instead of weeks, so you could use parental leave for regular hospital visits.

### **What do you need to do?**

Firstly, discuss your plans with your line manager; you do need to let them know what time off you'd like to take with 21 days' notice of the time off - you can do this through the [Parental Leave Request Form](#). Your line manager then needs to meet with you to discuss your request. If your request is approved, your local People Services team will confirm your leave dates in writing.

Your line manager will do everything they can to make sure you get the time off that you want. However, there may be times when your absence might be unduly disruptive. This might be because:

- A number of team members have already booked time off
- It is a business-critical period and we need as many people in work as possible

In this circumstance, your manager will notify you of their decision and propose a postponement of the leave for no longer than 6 months after the beginning of the original period requested. The same period of leave will not be postponed a second time.

## **2. Foster care leave**

Fostering is a huge responsibility and we value the contribution that foster carers make to society and especially to the lives of looked after children. At the same time, we appreciate that becoming a foster carer isn't a quick or simple process and that approved foster carers could have a number of on-going review meetings and refresher training sessions. You are therefore able to take up to 8 days (pro-rata) paid leave in any 12-month rolling period to attend meetings associated with your fostering responsibility. This time off can be used for:

- assessment and initial training prior to approval as a foster carer
- attendance at panel for approval
- child review meetings, annual foster carer review meeting and training

We would encourage you, where possible, to arrange this leave for a time that will have a minimum impact on operations at work and let your line manager know as soon as possible, ideally 4 weeks beforehand. You'll also need to show us the official documentation to confirm the arrangement. There is no form for you to fill in for foster care leave and your line manager will record the leave in the monthly absence record. Any information you give to your line manager will be kept confidential unless you give permission for it to be shared. You will be paid at basic pay, not including premium payments.

To mirror our Parental Leave entitlement (which offers unpaid time off to all who are parents either through birth, adoption or gaining formal parental responsibility), we also offer up to 4 weeks unpaid time off in any 12-month rolling period to settle your foster child into a new home life. Similar to the Parental Leave policy, you can take the time off in 1-week blocks and if you choose to take time off

that is less than your normal working week, your overall entitlement will still be reduced by 1 week. This entitlement remains the same even if you foster more than one child at the same time. Should you foster an additional child in a subsequent 12-month period you would be eligible to take this time again. This time off can be taken as long as you have given enough notice to your line manager and it is operationally viable to take the leave. Please note that if you adopt a child who you first fostered, the way we support you will be set out in the Parental Leave section of this policy.

This foster care leave is available to all colleagues and for both parents as long as you are:

- applying to become long term foster carers
- approved foster carers and have a child in placement (or have had a child in placement for 75% of the previous 12 months) or
- an approved [kinship carer](#)

If you have been approved for Fostering for Adoption, please see the Adoption policy for more details of the time off and pay you may be entitled to.

### **3. Fertility treatment/Assisted conception**

Newcastle University is aware that the number of people undergoing fertility treatment (increasingly known as assisted conception) is increasing each year<sup>1</sup>, and that, for many, this can be intrusive and deeply costly to one's physical, mental and financial wellbeing.

It is important, therefore, for colleagues to feel fully supported, and managers to recognise and meet their responsibilities in the provision of this support in a respectful and sensitive way. To do this, we allow paid time off for up to 10 appointments (pro-rata) in any 12-month rolling period to go through treatment. This may be full or part days as appropriate.

We recognise that fertility treatment can be a complex process and you may need time off at very short notice. However, where possible, we would ask that you request this time off as soon as your plans have been confirmed and, where you can, to arrange these appointments at a time that will have a minimum impact on operations at work.

There is no form for you to fill in to request this leave – an email to your line manager will suffice – and any information you give to your line manager will be kept confidential unless you give permission for it to be shared. If, for whatever reason, you are not comfortable speaking with your line manager, you may contact your local People Services Adviser in the first instance. Fertility treatment leave will be paid at basic pay, not including any premium payments.

You may find that you need to more time to physically recover from the treatment and we encourage you to speak with your GP in that instance and to obtain a fit note. Rest assured this sickness absence will not count towards your sickness triggers, nor will it be shared in any reference we provide to potential future employers.

We know that this can be a stressful time for the whole family so if your partner is going through fertility treatment, you can also take paid time off for up to 10 appointments (pro-rata) in any 12-month rolling period to support your partner. This may be full or part days as appropriate. There is no

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<sup>1</sup> In 2017, more than 54,000 people in the UK underwent around 75,000 assisted conception treatments in the UK (<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/about-us/news-and-press-releases/2019-news-and-press-releases/ivf-more-popular-successful-and-safer-than-ever-but-reasons-for-treatment-are-changing/>)

form for you to fill in to request this leave – an email to your line manager will suffice – and any information you give to your line manager will be kept confidential unless you give permission for it to be shared.

This time off is available to all colleagues.

## **4. Family emergencies**

Sometimes we have family emergencies that mean we just need some time away from work to deal with them immediately e.g. your child needs to be taken to the doctor or hospital and there is no one else available to help. You could agree with your line manager to take this time as holiday, time-owing or by rearranging your hours.

If these aren't an option, you will be able to take up to 2 days (in any 12-month rolling period) paid time off as 'Care for dependents' and/or up to 2 days (in any 12-month rolling period) paid time off as 'Emergency leave'. In some cases, your line manager may request appropriate documentation before the leave is approved. Please refer to our [Special Leave Policy](#) for details.

## **5. Time for school**

Most of us remember our first day of primary school as a momentous occasion and we'd all love to be there to see our own children make that leap. To make sure you don't miss this milestone, we'd like to offer you a couple of hours off to take your child in on their first day and help them settle. You can either rearrange your hours or, if this doesn't fit for your work area, take some unpaid time off. We think two hours is probably a good amount of time. This will depend on when you start work, what time school starts and how far away work is from school, but you can discuss all these details with your line manager and come up with something to suit you both. This time off is for children starting fulltime school for the first time and not nursery or pre-school.

Discretion may be used for other situations e.g., a young child starting at a new school following a move to a new area. If you intend to take this time off, please ask your line manager as far in advance as you can so they can support you. We'll do everything that we can to make sure everyone who wants this time gets it but if you don't give much notice, we might not be able to accommodate your time off. Equally, we do need to be able to operate so, if there are too many requests, your line manager may not be able to accommodate everyone. Requests will only be turned down in really exceptional circumstances.

Time for School is available for either or both parent(s) and is available for all colleagues.

## **6. Time for grandparents**

Having a new grandchild is a very exciting time. We understand that you may want to help your own son or daughter get through those first few tiring weeks or maybe when your grandchild is a few months old and their parent(s) may need some initial support with childcare.

You can take up to 1 week (pro-rata) unpaid leave when there is a new addition, to support your family. Where there are multiple births or adoptions in the same 12-month period you will be able to take a total of 1 week leave. This time should be taken within the first year from your grandchild's birth or following their adoption and must be taken as a 1-week block. Please discuss your plans with your line manager, ideally 8 weeks beforehand. The more notice you can give, the easier it will be for them to agree your leave, as long as it is operationally viable. You will need to complete a [Grandparents leave request form](#) and once approved, you will receive a letter from People Services confirming your leave dates.

Time for grandparents is available to all colleagues.

## 7. Parental bereavement leave

We want to support colleagues through the grief and loss of a child by ensuring that they can take the time off they need. You may also find it helpful to access our confidential counselling service via the [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#). EAP is free and easy to access and is available online or on the telephone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Regardless of your length of service, we offer 2 weeks of paid leave to colleagues with parental responsibility who have suffered the loss of a child after 24 weeks of pregnancy and before 18 years of age. Please refer to our [Special Leave Policy](#) for details.

## 8. Associated documents

- [Parental Leave Request Form](#)
- [Grandparents Leave Request Form](#)
- [Special Leave Policy](#)
- [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#)
- [SANDS](#) offers support if your baby dies during pregnancy or after birth, and also run a helpline.
- [Care for the Family](#) offers bereaved parent support to help you find hope, healing, peace, and a way forward.
- [If you care share](#) is a local charity, based in Chester Le Street, that supports family and friends who have been bereaved as a result of suicide.

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