

## RESEARCH COUNCIL GUIDANCE FOR SUPPORTING FOSTER CARERS

### Guidance

This document provides guidance for managers, employees and HR when dealing with queries relating to foster care.

### Content

#### Introduction

1. Principles
2. Notification requirements
3. Time off to care for new foster children
4. Time off for dependants
5. Parental leave
6. Flexible working
7. Foster to adopt
8. Review of Guidance
9. Amendment history

# RESEARCH COUNCIL FOSTER CARE GUIDANCE

## Introduction

The guidance sets out the Research Council approach to support employees who are foster carers. It should be read in conjunction with the following Research Council policies: Special Leave, Flexible Working, Annual leave and Maternity, Adoptive, Maternity Support (Paternity) and Parental Leave.

The TU Side have been consulted about the contents of this guidance.

The Guidance for staff who are foster carers applies to Research Council employees. This includes those employed on temporary or fixed term contracts but does not include visiting workers, students or those workers provided by a third party agency.

The UK Shared Business Services Ltd (UK SBS) provides HR Services across the Research Councils. However some employees are deployed at establishments/facilities/ships that do not access services from UK SBS. In these cases references to the UK SBS or System (Employee Self Service) will not apply and employees should refer to their Research Council HR team for assistance.

Whether a worker is deemed to be a worker or employee is not always clear under employment legislation. In cases where managers or employees have any doubt as to whether the Foster Care Guidance should apply, advice should be sought from the Research Council HR team.

## 1. Principles

- 1.1 The Research Council is committed to providing a fair, consistent and effective approach to support employees who are undertaking the care of a child/children under a foster-care arrangement with a local authority.
- 1.2 The Research Council supports granting carers a short period of special leave to enable them to take time off to attend training or meetings or for the purpose of settling the child into his or her new environment.
- 1.3 It is recognised that employees will have specific obligations towards the child/children in accordance with their arrangement with the local authority and that, in some cases, the child/children may require a high level of care.

## 2. Notification requirements

- 2.1 To ensure that line managers can provide necessary support, employees who are intending to foster a child/children are encouraged to notify their line manager.

### 3. Time off to care for new foster children

- 3.1 Employees who require time off to attend training or meetings, or to care for the child/children at the start of the foster-care arrangement may request special leave to do so. The request must be in writing and the employee must specify the period of time off that they are seeking for this purpose.
- 3.2 Up to four days paid special leave may be granted in a rolling year (irrespective of other special leave granted).

### 4. Time off for dependants

Foster carers may request time off to deal with family/domestic emergencies including family/domestic emergencies relating to the foster children in their care. Employees should refer to the Research Council Special leave Policy

### 5. Parental leave

- 5.1 The statutory right to parental leave is available only to carers who have parental responsibility for the children concerned. It is normally the case that foster carers will not have parental responsibility, since this will usually be with the local authority if the child has been placed under an interim or full care order. For details on Parental Leave please refer to the Research Council Maternity, Adoptive, Maternity Support and Parental Leave Policy.

Employees who are foster carers and wish to take parental leave **will** be asked to supply evidence of parental responsibility.

- 5.2 In cases where employees do not have parental responsibility for the child, they will not be entitled to parental leave. Instead, employees may request annual or special leave.

### 6. Flexible working

- 6.1 Employees may submit a request for a flexible working arrangement. This would need to be discussed between the line manager and employee to ascertain the needs of the individual and the workplace. Arrangements might include altering the hours worked on a temporary basis or part-time working. Employees should refer to the Research Council Flexible Working Policy.

### 7. Foster to adopt

- 7.1 If an employee is a local authority foster parent who is also approved as a prospective adopter and a child is placed with the employee in a "foster to adopt" situation, they will be entitled to adoption leave and pay. For details on Adoption Leave please refer to the Research Council Maternity, Adoptive, Maternity Support and Parental Leave Policy.

## RESEARCH COUNCIL FOSTER CARE GUIDANCE

### 8. Review of Guidance

- 8.1 This guidance will be regularly reviewed to incorporate any legislation changes. The TU may request that this guidance is reviewed.

### 9. Amendment history

| Version | Date           | Comments/Changes |
|---------|----------------|------------------|
| 1.0     | 1 October 2017 | New guidance     |
|         |                |                  |