



**Cherwell**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

# Compassionate Leave Policy

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

<b>Organisation(s)</b>	Cherwell District Council (CDC)
<b>Policy title</b>	Compassionate Leave Policy
<b>Owner</b>	Human Resources
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## DOCUMENT APPROVALS

This document requires the following committee approvals:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting pending approval</b>
Personnel Committee	4 March 2026

## DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION

This document will be distributed to all employees of Cherwell District

## DATE FOR REVIEW

No later than 5 March 2029 but sooner if impacted by legislative changes.

## REVISION HISTORY

<b>Version</b>	<b>Revision date</b>	<b>Summary of revision</b>
2.0	04/03/2026	Three year scheduled review.

**This policy covers:**

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## **1. Who the scheme applies to**

- 1.1 Cherwell District Council's compassionate leave scheme applies to employees only. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers or interns.
- 1.2 This policy does not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and the Council may amend it at any time.

## **2. Compassionate leave**

- 2.1 The Council recognise that adopting a compassionate leave policy supports employees who are going through bereavement and grief following the death of a close family member. The Council is sympathetic to any employee when they lose a close member of their family and are committed to treating the individual with sensitivity and compassion.
- 2.2 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that compassionate leave is granted in a fair and equitable manner whilst, at the same time, recognising that compassionate leave arrangements need to be flexible in individual circumstances. The aim is to set down clear guidance in the use of and application of compassionate leave.  
The compassionate leave policy should not be confused with the statutory right to time off for dependants which is covered in the family friendly policy.
- 2.3 In circumstances where an employee is required to care for a critically or terminally ill family member the councils will be as flexible as possible. Examples of this may include granting short notice annual leave or flexi time, allowing the employee to work from home or authorising a period of unpaid leave.

## **3 Entitlement**

- 3.1 Employees are entitled to request compassionate leave regardless of their length of service.
- 3.2 Up to ten days paid compassionate leave will usually be granted in the event of the death of an employee's:
  - Spouse or partner
  - Child (under the age of 18)\*
  - Daughter / Son (including step-children)\*
  - Parent (including step-parent)
  - Parent-in law
  - Sibling (including step-sibling)
  - Grandparent
  - Grandchild

\*Please see Parental Bereavement Leave at point 6 (below)

This list is not exhaustive and will be reviewed in individual circumstances where Senior Management has discretion, in consultation with the HR Business Partner.

- 3.3 An employee must request compassionate leave as soon as is practicably possible given the circumstances of the situation; this may, however, be after the employee has returned to work.
- 3.4 Where a manager approves compassionate leave (up to ten days), the employee should record this on the HR/Payroll system as paid leave.
- 3.5 Managers must consider requests sympathetically, reasonably, confidentially, and in consultation with HR Business Partner, and should approve leave promptly. If ten days is insufficient, other options such as annual leave, flexitime, parental leave, or time off for dependants should be considered.
- 3.6 Further compassionate leave may be granted at the discretion of a member of Senior Management.

## **4 Refusing a request**

- 4.1 A manager will not unreasonably refuse a request for compassionate leave. If the manager feels they are unable to grant a request, they must seek guidance from their HR Business Partner.

## **5 Ongoing support**

- 5.1 Managers are encouraged to discuss on-going additional support whilst the employee is taking compassionate leave and upon their return to work. Such consideration could include short-term flexibility in working arrangements and a referral to Occupational Health for counselling or other well-being advice.
- 5.2 It is important for managers to remember those special or significant days such as the inquest, anniversary of the death or the birthday of the person who has died can also be particularly difficult times for employees.
- 5.3 Grief does not have predicted stages and phases. Everyone reacts differently to bereavement, and this should be understood and respected by both managers and colleagues.

## **6. Parental Bereavement Leave**

- 6.1 The Parental Bereavement Leave Regulations 2020, introduce statutory parental bereavement leave and pay for parents in respect of the unfortunate death of a child.
- 6.2 The primary beneficiaries of statutory parental leave are employees who are the parents of a deceased child under the age of 18 years. This includes adoptive parents, foster parents and guardians, and intended parents under a surrogacy agreement as well as more informal groups such as close relatives or family friends who have taken responsibility for the child's care in the absence of parents for a continuous period or at least 4 weeks before the death.

## **7. Eligibility for Leave**

- 7.1 Parental bereavement leave is a day-one right, meaning employees do not need any minimum service to qualify. It applies to parents and anyone who had been living with the child for at least four weeks and had day-to-day caring

responsibility before the child's death. Parents who experience a stillbirth at 24 weeks or more are also entitled to this leave.

## **8. Taking Parental Bereavement leave**

- 8.1 Parental bereavement leave can be taken at any time within 56 weeks of a child's death, giving parents the flexibility to take time when they need it most.
- 8.2 The statutory entitlement is two weeks of leave, which must be taken in full weeks rather than individual days. Parents may choose to take this as:
  - One block of two weeks, or
  - Two separate one-week blocks, taken at different times.
- 8.3 There is no requirement for the weeks to be consecutive, allowing parents to use the leave when it best supports their wellbeing.
- 8.4 If more than one child sadly dies, parents are entitled to two weeks of parental bereavement leave for each child.
- 8.5 For parents already on maternity leave, parental bereavement leave can be added to the end of their maternity leave, taken as one continuous period, ensuring they are fully supported during an incredibly difficult time.

## **9. Notification**

- 9.1 When an employee needs to take parental bereavement leave, they must let their HR Department or the line manager know when they wish to take this leave and provide the following information:
  - The date of the child's death
  - Their relationship to the child, confirming entitlement to parental bereavement leave
  - When they would like their leave to begin
  - Whether they plan to take one week or two weeks of leave

It is understood that this is a deeply sensitive time, and no further information will be requested. Employees are encouraged to share these details in the way that feels most comfortable for them.

## **10. Length of Notice requirements**

- 10.1 If the employee is taking leave within 56 days of the child's death then they are able to take the leave straightaway without having to give a period of notice.
- 10.2 If they wish to cancel a week of leave during this period, they only need to let us know by the time they would have started work on the first day of that week. If the employee is taking leave more than 56 days after the child's death, then at least one week's notice of their intention to take parental bereavement leave is required.
- 10.3 To cancel a planned week of leave in this situation, the employee should let their line manager know at least one week before that week is due to begin.

10.4 An employee may not cancel any week of parental bereavement leave which has already commenced.

## **11. Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay**

11.1 To be eligible for statutory parental bereavement pay, employees who are on parental bereavement leave are required to have:

- At least 26 weeks' continuous employment with their employer ending with the week before the week in which their child dies and still be employed by that employer on the day on which their child dies; and
- Normal weekly earnings in the eight weeks up to the week before the child's death that are no less than the lower earnings limit for national insurance contribution purposes.