

## 1. General Information

Unpaid Parental Leave is available for Bridge staff to look after a child or make arrangements for a child's welfare.

## 2. Rationale

An employee may wish to take unpaid parental leave in order to:

- Look after a child's welfare
- Spend more time with their children
- Look at new schools
- Spend more time with family, such as visiting Grandparents
- Settle a child into childcare/nursery

## 3. Criteria for Eligibility

To qualify for Parental Leave staff must, under the Parental Leave Regulations:

- Be a named parent on the birth certificate of a child who is under the age of eighteen and have one years' continuous service with the Bridge
- Be a legally adoptive parent of a child adopted on or after 15 December 1999, who is under the age of eighteen and have one years' continuous service with the Bridge
- Have acquired formal parental responsibility\* for a child who is under the age of eighteen, as defined by the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Scotland) Act 1995

## 4. Amount of Leave

A total of 18 weeks unpaid Parental Leave can be taken for each child up to the age of eighteen years. No more than 4 weeks parental leave can be taken each year and these must be taken in blocks of a week.

## 5. Definition of a Week's Leave

One week's parental leave is equal to the length of time that a member of staff is normally required to work in a Bridge working week. This means that a week's leave for a member of staff who works Monday to Friday, full time, is equal to five days, whilst a week's leave for a member of staff who works Monday and Tuesday only is equal to 2 days, or the number of hours usually worked. For example, a primary worker may work 15 hours a week, in which case these hours are taken as leave on the days usually worked.

## 6. Taken Leave

Staff may choose to take Parental Leave as follows:

- Parents can take the leave at any time up until the child's eighteenth birthday
- Leave is to be taken in blocks of one week upwards, up to a maximum of four weeks per year.
- As set out under the Parental Leave Regulations, parents of disabled children may take leave in blocks or multiples of one day.

## **7. Notice**

Staff are required to apply for Parental Leave at least 21 days before they wish to take it. However, the Bridge would request that members of staff kindly give as much notice as possible, particularly because term time is usually so busy.

A member of staff wishing to take Parental Leave immediately after the birth or adoption of a child is required to give 21 days' notice before the beginning of the expected week of childbirth and in the case of adoption, 21 days' notice of the expected week of placement.

## **8. Flexibility**

Where the work of the Bridge would be particularly disrupted if the leave were taken at the time requested, for example during a particularly busy week at schools, the period of leave may be postponed for up to 6 months from when it was originally due to start. In such cases, the Bridge will confirm the reasons for the postponement and new dates for the period of Parental Leave in writing to the member of staff, no later than the 7 days after they have first given notice to take the leave.

N.B. When a member of staff applies to take a period of Parental Leave immediately after a child is born or is placed with the family for adoption, the leave cannot be postponed.

## **9. Evidence**

Before leave is granted the member of staff requesting Parental Leave will be asked to provide evidence to confirm that the criteria under Section 3. above are met. Examples of documents appropriate for this purpose include the child's birth certificate, or, in adoption cases, papers confirming a child's adoption or the date of placement, or if leave is to be taken following the birth of a child, proof of the expected week of childbirth. Where the original documents are not available photocopies will be accepted.

## **10. Contractual Arrangements**

Staff will remain employed while on Parental Leave but will not be paid. Where a member of staff returns to work following Parental Leave, the period of absence due to Parental Leave will not affect the individual's recognised continuous service at the Bridge for employment rights purposes. Under the Parental Leave Regulations, staff returning to work after taking Parental Leave are entitled to return to the same job as they had before.

## **11. Records**

Records of Parental Leave for individual members of staff should be kept at the Bridge office. A copy of the written request for Parental Leave received by the office will be placed on the member of staff's personal file. The Bridge may make enquiries of a member of staff's previous employer as to how much Parental Leave they have already taken prior to employment by the Bridge.