



SPECIAL LEAVE POLICY

Revised: July/ 2012

1. Introduction

Departmental Circulars and legislation requirements, such as Industrial Relations (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, govern the granting of special leave for various purposes and the BSO shall make available special leave arrangements, with pay, to staff required to be absent from duty for various purposes including essential civic and public duties.

2. Purpose

The BSO recognises the requirement for fairness and consistency when considering requests for special leave and the purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for staff and managers in dealing with these requests and for decision making.

3. Eligibility

Reasonable leave with pay shall be made available in the following circumstances upon receipt of advice from HR:-

- Absence from duty following confirmed contact with a notifiable disease;
- Training with reserve and cadet forces,; other voluntary organisations, RNLI, Mountain Rescue Service;
- Attendance at meetings of the Patient and Client Council - up to 3 days paid leave. Further paid/unpaid leave may be granted at the discretion of the HSCB;
- Magisterial duties - up to 10 days special leave on the understanding that any fees or payments will be paid to the BSO. No travel expenses subsistence allowance will be paid by the BSO;
- Engagement in trade union activities which will be in accordance with a facilities agreement;
- Membership of Board of Governors, Government funded organisations or District Policing Partnerships: up to 10 days paid leave in any year subject to the exigencies of the service, subject to an understanding that the employee will pass any fees or payments (minus tax) received for the

- attendance to the BSO. Further leave may be granted subject to the needs of the service by the Chief Executive/Director;
- Attendance at court as medical/dental witnesses are governed by the relevant team and conditions of service;
 - Marriage Leave / Civil Partnerships: 3 days special leave with pay for marriage;
 - Jury Service: employees who are called for jury service will be granted leave with pay on the basis that they are required to pass any court fees, apart from travelling expenses, to the BSO;
 - Court witness – an employee who attends court as a witness with the consent of the BSO or on foot of a subpoena or witness summons or other legal obligation, will be granted leave with pay on the basis that the employee is required to pass any court fees, apart from travelling expenses, to the BSO. It should be noted that an employee will not be entitled to time off for attendance at court if such appearance is personally instigated.
 - parliamentary assembly candidate;
 - employees who serve as a member of the NI Assembly can avail of a Career Break or a reduction of 20% of normal working hours;
 - Employees who is officially standing as a candidate at an Assembly/Council/Parliamentary Election will be granted up to four weeks special leave without pay to facilitate their candidature.

In all instances, applications for special paid leave should be made in writing in the format set out in Appendix 1 to your Director in advance of the leave requested.

4. Compassionate Leave

Compassionate Leave is available to those staff who have, for example, a spouse, partner, child, parent/guardian, or someone for whom they have direct live-in caring responsibilities who is suffering from an illness or condition which

has been diagnosed as either critical, in the short term, or terminal.

Compassionate Leave is designed to enable staff to cope with unplanned and unforeseen demands on the individual and entitlement will range from one half day to up to 18 days per year. Staff wishing to be granted Compassionate Leave should ensure that their manager is advised promptly of any domestic difficulties he/she is experiencing. (See form attached as Appendix 1).

The period of leave should be agreed with the manager or Director at the time of the first request for leave if possible.

Senior managers should look at each individual case and take account of all prevailing circumstances, eg prognosis of illness, other family support, emotional condition of member of staff, changes which could be made to current working arrangements etc, and make a judgement as to what will best meet the needs of both the organisation and member of staff. Each situation will be considered, and both manager and member of staff should attempt to reach agreement. This should ensure that the needs of the individual are treated sympathetically and that the business/operational requirements of the directorate/section are not compromised or disadvantaged.

5. Bereavement Leave

Bereavement Leave is available to those staff who suffer the death of a relative or partner. Whilst it is difficult to assess how the death of someone close to us will affect each of us, this policy is to help ensure that staff are treated with sympathy and consistency at difficult times. The table below sets out a list of the **maximum** number of days available to staff:

| NATURE OF RELATIONSHIP | MAXIMUM NUMBER OF DAYS |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Spouse | Six |
| Partner | Six |
| Child | Six |
| Parent/Guardian | Six |
| Direct Live-in Caring Responsibilities | Three |

| | |
|---|-------|
| Sibling | Three |
| Grandparent/Grandchild | One |
| Uncle/Aunt | One |
| Cousin | One |
| Nephew/Niece | One |
| Father/Mother/Brother/Sister/Son/ Daughter of Spouse/Partner | Two |

An employee who intends to make use of Bereavement Leave should ensure that their Manager or Director is advised of the situation as soon as is practicable.

6. Leave for attendance at funerals

In the event of the death of a close friend or a particular relationship not covered under Bereavement leave, staff may be given time off work to attend funerals, subject to the needs of the service. This time should not exceed 2.5 hours away from the office for local funerals. Where funerals require a substantial part of that time being taken up with travelling, staff will need to discuss this with their manager and agree a reasonable time allocation. Staff may be given no more than 4 hours off for non-local funeral attendance and can take further time off through flexi-time or annual leave arrangements.

In the event of the death of a colleague or member of a colleague's immediate family, managers will ensure that there is sufficient departmental representation at the funeral and the time available as per the entitlement outlined above. Colleagues may insert commiserations on a personal basis into local newspapers, however, not normally on behalf of the BSO or Directorate.

7. Carer's Leave

Carer's Leave is short-term leave, with pay, to facilitate staff who have caring responsibilities to manage emergency, unplanned, short-term problems. The needs covered include:

- Illness of a child, close relative or partner (immediate family or dependants);
- Breakdown of normal care arrangements wherein no or very short notice has been given;

Carers' Leave is not appropriate when people have been given notice that their current, normal caring arrangements are going to be interrupted. It is also not suitable for those carers who wish to accompany children or adults to hospital appointments which have been planned or to be with them after planned (elective) operations and annual leave should be used for these events.

Entitlement is up to a maximum of 12 days per annum, however, no single episode should exceed three days. Staff wishing to take Carer's Leave should ensure that both their immediate line manager and Director are advised promptly of any difficulties they are experiencing in their care arrangements and that they wish to make application to take time off under this particular policy. The period of leave must be agreed at the initial stages with the manager and Director at the time of the first notification of the difficulty.

Please Note: Carers' leave will not be available retrospectively in any circumstances.

8. Exceptional Leave

Exceptional leave for any other circumstances not covered in any of the above types of leave may be granted (with or without pay) at the discretion of the Director who will liaise with the Human Resources Directorate.

9. Unpaid Leave

It should be noted that staff who avail of unpaid leave will result in a proportionate reduction in their annual leave entitlement.

10. Attendance at job interviews

Staff applying for jobs within the Health and Social Care NI will be granted time off with pay to attend for interview subject to the exigencies of the service.

11. Review Date

This policy will be reviewed in 2014.

This policy has been screened for equality implications as required by Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. Equality Commission guidance states that the purpose of screening is to identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to these.

Appendix I

APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL LEAVE

Name: _____

Directorate: _____ **Grade:** _____

| <u>CODE</u> | <u>TYPE OF LEAVE</u> | <u>DATES</u> | | <u>NO OF DAYS</u> |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------|-----------|-------------------|
| | | <u>FROM</u> | <u>TO</u> | |
| U24 | Carer | | | |
| U14 | Compassionate | | | |
| C01 | Exam | | | |
| U25 | Paternity | | | |
| B01 | Bereavement | | | |
| U18 | Marriage | | | |
| U30 | Other | | | |

Reason for Leave:

Signature: _____ **Dated:** _____

Approved by: _____ **Designation:** _____

Dated: _____

Comments:

**COMPLETED FORMS MUST BE FORWARDED TO HUMAN RESOURCES
IN BSO**

DIRECTORATE FOR RECORDING

Recorded on HRMS

Signed: _____

Dated: _____