

# Fostering Friendly Policy



**ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION**

Issued: xx    Review: xx

# Version Control

This document is intended for:

- Council staff only     School-based staff only     Council & School-based staff

Version	Key Changes	Approved By

This document may be reviewed and amended at any time and without consultation in response to legal requirements or in response to an organisational requirement and where the changes do not reflect a fundamental change or affect the spirit or intent of the document.

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# 1. Policy Statement

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The Council/School recognises and values the contribution of employees who foster to society and especially the lives of children in care. There is currently a child coming into care every 20 minutes in need of a fostering family, and we recognise the need to do more to help recruit new foster carers. We are committed to support any employee who is a foster carer, kinship carer or special guardian. All reference to foster carer within this policy, is inclusive of kinship carers and special guardians, except where there is specific reference to leave provisions for special guardians.

The Council/School wishes to support employees who are foster carers and to encourage those who may be considering foster care by providing time off where necessary and recognising that foster carers may need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child or young person. The Council/School is committed to being a 'Fostering Friendly Employer' to support more working people to become foster carers and to "bust the myth" that if you become a foster carer you cannot work.

# 2. Definitions

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## **Foster Carer**

A foster carer, sometimes referred to as a Foster Parent is a person, that provide a safe and nurturing home for a child when they can no longer live with their birth parents. They must be assessed and approved before the child comes to live with them.

## **Kinship Carer**

Kinship foster care is when a family member or friend becomes a child's official foster carer. They must be assessed and approved before the child comes to live with them.

## **Special Guardian**

A special guardianship order (SGO) is a legal order given by a family court. When an individual becomes a special guardian, the child will live with them permanently until they are 18 years old. Special guardians share parental responsibility with the child's parents but can make nearly all major decisions about the child without asking for their permission.

# 3. Scope

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This policy applies to Council and School based employees who:

- are applying to become foster carers
- are approved foster carers and have a child in placement (or have had a child in placement for 75% of the previous 12 months)

## 4. Policy Aims

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The aim of this policy is to recognise that employees who are foster carers are providing a valuable service to the community and Children Looked After, and to allow employees of the Council/School who foster the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of their job. The Council/School offer a number of flexible working arrangements and leave provisions which will apply to foster carers.

This policy sets out the additional paid time off that will be available for prospective and existing foster carers.

## 5. Responsibilities

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### **Managers/Headteachers**

- To be aware of the needs of foster carers and understand the conflicting demands.
- To be responsible for ensuring that staff are aware of the Foster Friendly Policy. Managers/headteachers should be flexible and assess all options to encourage and support staff.
- To be consistent in adhering to equal opportunities and be fair in their approach to requests whilst having the discretion within the parameters of the Policy to respond appropriately to individual circumstances.

### **Organisational Development**

- To advise managers/headteachers and employees on existing policies/procedures/working practices (e.g., Flexible Working Policy, Leave Policy) and changes to legislation.
- To provide continuing support to managers/headteachers and employees in the workplace
- To provide confidential advice, information and support to employees who have foster caring responsibilities.

### **Employees**

- To inform their manager/headteacher in writing that they are a foster carer and/or if there are any changes in their foster caring responsibilities. This is to ensure the manager/headteacher is able to continue to provide support.
- To provide reasonable notice of a request to accommodate foster caring leave, providing clear reasons for the request and how many days they are requesting.

## 6. Leave Arrangements

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Employees with foster caring responsibilities will be entitled to request time off. Employees are encouraged to discuss their individual circumstances with their manager/headteacher and are eligible for the leave and support arrangements as set out in this policy.

- Employees who are applying to become a foster carer are entitled to **up to 5 days (37 hours) paid leave, this entitlement will be pro-rata for part time employees.** This leave entitlement will be a one of entitlement for the purpose of applying to become a foster carer.
- Employees who are an approved foster carer are entitled to **up to 5 days (37 hours) paid leave during any 12-month period, this entitlement will be pro-rata for part time employees.**
- Employees who are applying to become a Special Guardian are entitled to **up to 5 days (37 hours) paid leave, this entitlement will be pro-rata for part time employees.** This leave entitlement will be a one of entitlement for the purpose of applying to become a Special Guardian.
- Employees who are an approved Special Guardian are entitled to **up to 2.5 days (18.5 hours) paid leave during any 12-month period, this entitlement will be pro-rata for part time employees.**

This leave may be granted in full or half days and where it can be accommodated, in the case of employees operating under the flexible working hours scheme, leave may be granted in hours. The leave can be used to attend meetings, for home visits, to undertake mandatory training, to meet the needs of a child, however this list is not exhaustive. Untaken leave will not be carried over.

In circumstances where an employee may need more than the maximum entitlement, the manager/headteacher and the employee should discuss other options available:

- annual leave
- flexi-leave
- unpaid leave
- carers leave, if applicable

Should a couple be applying to become foster carers/special guardians or are approved foster carers/special guardians and are both employed by the Council/School, these provisions will be shared. The employee(s) should disclose this to their manager/headteacher when an initial request is made, further advice can be sought from Organisational Development.

## 7. Requesting paid leave

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Employees wishing to take leave under this policy must produce written evidence to their manager/headteacher to show that they are approved foster carers or actively applying to become foster carers.

To request a period of paid leave the employee must complete a "[Request Form for Fostering Leave](#)" and submit this form to their manager/headteacher for authorisation in advance of the leave, stating the reason for the leave and the amount of leave requested.

Leave requests will be considered and granted at the discretion of the employee's manager/headteacher based on individual circumstances and the reasonableness of the request in line with the spirit of this Policy. Employees must give their manager/headteacher as much notice as possible when making a request for leave. Failure to provide sufficient notice could result in the leave not being approved.

Managers/headteachers should adopt a flexible and accommodating approach to requests for time off, leave and flexible working arrangements from foster carers and prospective foster carers in relation to the care of a looked after child or during their journey through the process to become a foster carer.

It is the manager's/headteacher's responsibility to ensure that the employee completes the request form (ensuring the employee does not exceed their annual entitlement to paid leave) and once completed by the manager/headteacher a copy of the form needs to be sent to Organisational Development.

### **Abuse of the Provisions**

Any abuse of the provisions of this policy will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's /School's Disciplinary Policy.

### **Equal Opportunities**

All foster carers in the workforce should be treated fairly and offered the level of support dependant on their situation and work commitments. They should be well informed of the policies in operation for supporting foster carers. These policies should be accessible to all foster carers inclusive of those covered by a protected characteristic.

Employees with foster caring responsibilities will have the same opportunities to get a job or stay in work with the Council/School regardless of their responsibilities outside of work.

# Request form for Foster Friendly Leave



## SECTION 1 – TO BE COMPLETED BY EMPLOYEE

Full Name:

Home Address:

Telephone Number: Home:  Work:

Designation:

Place Of Work:

Staff Number:

Reason for Leave:

Date(s) Leave Required:

Total Number of Days:

Employee's Signature:  Date:

## SECTION 2 – TO BE COMPLETED BY MANAGER/HEADTEACHER

Date Request Received:   Agreed  Declined

Total number of days used of annual **paid** entitlement:

Manager's/Headteacher's Signature:  Date:

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND RETURN TO [HRpayroll@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](mailto:HRpayroll@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)