



*Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute
Valuation Joint Board*

BEREAVEMENT LEAVE SCHEME

March 2019

DUNBARTONSHIRE AND ARGYLL & BUTE VALUATION JOINT BOARD

Quick Reference - Associated Documents and Version Control

Title	Bereavement Leave Scheme
Lead Officer	David Thomson
Updates	1.2
Supersedes Version	Version 1.0 February 2017
Driver for change	Terms updated to allow for attendance at funerals which has been transposed from special leave Scheme.
Review Date	The scheme will be reviewed in line with any related new or amendments to legislation as required.

Version Control

Version	Originator	Summary of Changes	Date
0.1d	David Thomson	New Draft Policy	December 2016
0.2d	David Thomson	Management Team Approval	January 2017
0.3d	David Thomson	Created stand-alone Policy	07 February 2017
1.0	David Thomson	Joint Board Approval	24 February 2017
1.1	David Thomson	Update to take account of Special Leave changes	February 2019
1.2	David Thomson	Joint Board Approval	March 2019

BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

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1. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Dunbartonshire and Argyll & Bute Valuation Joint Board (“The Joint Board”) recognises the sensitive and often very distressing nature of bereavement. This scheme is designed to provide guidance and a compassionate response to employees at this time of bereavement.
- 1.2** The Joint Board recognises the implications of, and its responsibilities under, the Equality Act 2010 and this scheme enhances the support and assistance available to employees coping with bereavement.
- 1.3** The following leave provisions should provide our employees with coping strategies to help with bereavement. They aim to encourage managers and employees to have open and honest discussions and a flexible approach should be considered to support the employee to balance work and cope with their grief.
- 1.4** This scheme will complement the provisions of the special leave scheme.

2. KEY FACTS AND TERMS

Funeral Attendance and Associated Arrangements

- 2.1** An employee who is making arrangements for the funeral of a close relative or other dependant may be granted up to 5 days, pro-rata, paid leave. These days do not need to be taken consecutively, but can be over a 14 day period immediately following the bereavement.
- 2.2** Employees will be granted up to one day of paid leave to attend the funeral of a close relative.
- 2.3** For attendance at any other funeral, time off to attend the funeral service would be granted as unpaid leave up to a maximum of one half day in line with business needs
- 2.4** Applications for funeral attendance and associated arrangements should be made via the Special Leave request form.

Bereavement Leave

- 2.5** Bereavement leave is paid leave that allows an employee time off to deal with their personal distress when a close member of their family dies.
- 2.6** This scheme is aimed to support employees who experience the death of a close relative (normally husband/wife or partner, parents, step-parents, children, dependants or sibling).

2.7 Leave with pay, up to a maximum of two weeks (pro-rated for part time employees), will be granted where the death is of a close relative (see above). Where an employee is unable to return to work following a period of bereavement leave, they should discuss with their manager taking any further period of absence as annual leave, flexi leave or unpaid leave.

3. GUIDANCE ON THE RELATED PROCEDURE

3.1 If an employee wishes to request Bereavement Leave, they should speak to their line manager as soon as practicably possible to discuss their request. Bereavement leave will **normally** be granted.

3.2 Employees should request leave in advance of taking any days from their line manager and **after, or if they are likely to** exhaust the provisions of the Special Leave Scheme.

3.3 An employee with concerns about the grieving process impacting on their work performance should discuss this in confidence with their line manager, to ensure that any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary are discussed and put in place and that the employee is supported in their return to the full range of duties. The Joint Board may refer the employee to Occupational Health for guidance in some circumstances.

4. SUPPORTING BEREAVED EMPLOYEES

4.1 In the early days of an employee's bereavement, it is good practice for a manager to:

- Offer their condolences.
- Ensure the bereaved employee knows they are not expected to work on the day the death takes place and it is accepted that they may need some time off work.
- Begin a dialogue with the employee, asking how they would like to stay in contact. Is phone or email preferred? Are there particular times to avoid? Managers should take into account that in the first few days, the employee may not wish to speak to anyone.
- Ask how much information they wish their co-workers to have about the death. Remember that this information is private under data protection legislation, and stick strictly to the facts.
- Consider what action needs to be taken if the death is reported in the media, particularly if the press contact the workplace or approach co-workers for interview.
- Ask if the employee wishes to be contacted by colleagues.
- Be conscious of cultural diversity and the impact this may have on, for example, days taken to allow the employee to fulfil religious or cultural expectations such as mourning rituals.

- Be open to revising and reviewing the situation with the employee. Above all, keep the dialogue open.

4.2 A conversation about when the employee anticipates returning to work may not be appropriate in the first days of bereavement. However, it is important to start a dialogue which will allow an open discussion around how the employee is coping, the availability and terms of this Bereavement Leave Scheme, when they might be ready to return to work, and any adjustments that might help with this (e.g. a phased return).

4.3 The Joint Board recognises that returning to work **after** a period of bereavement is difficult. Employees may discuss with their line manager the following support services, which may be of some assistance (several are provided through our partnership with West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC)):

- Time for Talking Counselling Service
- Occupational Health
- Trades Union Representative
- WDC Human Resources
- MacMillan Cancer Support Team
- Money advice service
- WDC Employee Carers Support Network
- Carers of West Dunbartonshire
- Breathing Space
- CRUSE Bereavement Care Scotland

4.4 Special or significant days, such as the inquest, anniversary of the death, or the birthday of the person who died, can also be particularly difficult times for bereaved employees. Sensitivity around these times, particularly when considering requests for specific annual leave requests, will help employees to manage their grief.

4.5 Bereavement will frequently lead to changes in the personal and financial circumstances of the bereaved employee. An employee who loses their partner, for example, may become responsible for raising their children as a single parent. An employee whose sibling dies may take on caring responsibilities for an elderly parent. Any death which affects children or vulnerable adults may mean they need increased support from the people who care for them.

4.6 Managers should be mindful of the family unit of the bereaved employee, and appreciate that in many cases a flexible approach, such as offering flexible working, is most likely to support and retain the employee as they negotiate new or increased caring responsibilities.

4.7 For parents, the loss of a child will be devastating and managers should recognise that in this instance a longer term change in working hours may be required, for example, reduced hours or flexible working.

4.8 In instances where the employee may require advice or guidance on financial or benefit matters, a referral to welfare and money advice service, via WDC, may be appropriate with the permission of the employee. Alternatively the Citizens Advice Bureau may be able to help.

5. WHEN YOUR COLLEAGUE IS COPING WITH BEREAVEMENT

5.1 Bereavement can raise a wide range of practical, social, emotional and spiritual needs. Some people will benefit from peer support and others will prefer time alone.

5.2 Grief does not have predicted stages and phases. Everyone reacts differently to bereavement, and this should be understood and respected by both the employer and employees.

5.3 In some situations a death can have an impact on a number of employees or across the whole workforce, for example, where a co-worker has died. The principles of flexibility and empathy outlined above still very much apply but there may be an increased impact on the Joint Board and the way this is dealt with can have long lasting implications on the relations between the employer, the workforce and the wider community.

5.4 The employer should contact the family to offer condolences, and agree a point of contact for any questions they may have, for example, about pay or pension arrangements.

6. APPENDICES

6.1 Appendix 1 - ACAS Good Practice Guide to Managing Bereavement in the Workplace
Frequently asked questions

6.2 Appendix 2 - Contact Information



Appendix 1

ACAS Good Practice Guide to Managing Bereavement in the Workplace

Frequently asked questions

- Q. My employee has told me that their relative has been diagnosed with a life-limiting illness. What should I do?
- A. As with bereavement, everyone will respond differently to a diagnosis of a life-limiting illness (sometimes called a 'terminal' illness). The impact on the employee, and on their practical and financial concerns, can be similar to bereavement, and should not be underestimated. In addition to employees' right to 'reasonable' time off to deal with emergency situations, it is good practice for employers to open a dialogue and take a compassionate and flexible approach. This means holding regular reviews with the employee to check how they are coping, and facilitating time off when needed through flexible working, annual leave, disability leave or carers leave. Where the employee needs to take leave, they should be offered a choice between using annual leave and unpaid leave. Employees who take leave to care for someone who is dying are still likely to need support after the death.

For more information on this see Carers Leave Scheme, Cancer Support Policy or contact your Human Resources Team.

- Q. Should employees be given paid bereavement leave?
- A. It is good practice to offer employees some paid leave after a bereavement, this is set out within this scheme. The physical and emotional impact of grief may mean that some bereaved employees need additional time away from work to cope with their grief, make practical arrangements, or to support a bereaved child. In cases where the employee feels they need time away from work it is good practice to offer flexible or part time working, or a period of unpaid leave.
- Q. In the year after bereavement my employee has reached a trigger through the Attendance Management Policy. Should I use discretion?
- A. It is essential that each case be considered individually and any use of discretion should be discussed with the Assessor or Depute and WDC's HR&OD prior to making the decision.
- Q. Could it be considered discrimination if I don't allow a bereaved employee time off to attend a funeral?

A. Funeral requirements vary across cultures, and some communities may require that these are carried out promptly. Refusing to allow an employee to attend religious rites after a death could be considered indirect religious discrimination. It is good practise to accommodate requests to attend funeral rites wherever possible. For further advice contact your Human Resources team.

Q. One of my team has been bereaved. What should I say to the rest of the team?

A. Bereavement is a personal issue and employees have the right to keep this confidential under data protection legislation. Good practice would be to speak with your employee and ask them what they would like their colleagues to be told. If you can't contact the employee, then say as little as possible to the team. It may be appropriate to explain their absence by referring to 'personal reasons' or at most 'bereavement'. The employee can decide how much they want their colleagues to know at a later point.

If a bereaved employee is worried about how they will be treated by colleagues on their return to work, ask them what would help, and offer to share this with the wider team. For example, some employees may ask that no one mentions the bereavement, but instead keeps things focused on work matters. Others will appreciate gestures of empathy and support.

Q. If I give my employee time off for their bereavement, does it mean I'll have to give all my employees the same allowance?

A. It is good practice to follow the Joint Board's Bereavement Scheme which clearly outlines what all employees are entitled to. However, every instance of bereavement is different, and there may be exceptional circumstances in different cases. Each bereavement event should be considered on a case by case basis. If in doubt, speak to WDC's Human Resources.

Q. Where can I get advice or training about what to say, or arrange support for my employee?

A. Time for Talking offer a 24 hour helpline for advice, information and support for employees and their immediate family members. The telephone number is 0800 970 3980. You can also contact WDC's Human Resources Team on 01389 737373.

Appendix 2 Contact Information

- *Time for Talking Counselling Service*
0800 970 3980
24 dedicated helpline for employees and their families
For more information visit the WDC HR&OD knowledge portal on the intranet.
- *The Joint BoardMacMillan Carer Support services*
01389 608128.
For more information visit the WDC intranet.
- *MacMillan Breathing Space*
Telephone Breathing Space 0800 83 85 87
A first point of contact for anyone who is struggling to cope emotionally with cancer or just needs to talk about how they are feeling.
For more information visit the WDC intranet.
- *Money Advice and Welfare Advice Section*
Money advice and support can be obtained from the WDC's Money Advice and Welfare Advice section on 0800 980 9070.
For more information visit the WDC intranet.
- Citizens Advice Bureau
Provide independent advice.
For more information visit the WDC intranet or call Clydebank office on 0141 435 7590 or Alexandria office on 01389 752727.
- CRUSE Bereavement Care
Cruse Bereavement Care exists to promote the wellbeing of bereaved people and to enable anyone bereaved by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss. The organisation provides counselling and support. For more information visit the intranet or call 0845 600 2227.