



## **SPECIAL TYPES OF LEAVE POLICY**

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The Society recognises that employees will have important commitments in their lives outside of work. This will mean taking time away from work. These commitments may involve events associated with families, partners or those who have caring responsibilities. While it is expected that employees will use some of their annual leave to deal with certain types of personal situations, there are some occasions where unpaid leave may be taken, or offered. There may also be some situations where special paid leave is granted; the purpose of this Policy is to provide employees with information on these special types of leave.

### **Bereavement / Compassionate Leave**

The Society acknowledges the personal nature of bereavement and grief and is committed to supporting employees in practical and reasonable ways. We have an Employee Assistance Program, provided by the 'Retail Trust', which is free for you to use and offers confidential advice and support by professionals trained in emotional counselling. Further information can be found at [www.retailtrust.org.uk](http://www.retailtrust.org.uk) or call the free helpline on 0808 801 0808.

Bereavement leave allows an employee time off to deal with their personal distress and related practical arrangements when a member of their family or a close friend dies. The Society acknowledges that bereavement will impact on individuals differently and the guidelines below show the paid leave an employee is entitled to in different circumstances.

- There is a specific right to parental bereavement leave for parents or primary carers who lose a child under 18 years old or suffer a stillbirth from 24 weeks of pregnancy. This can include adoptive parents, fosterers, guardians or close relatives who have taken primary responsibility for the child's care. Employees will have the right to 2 weeks leave. In the event of the death of more than one child, the person is entitled to leave in respect of each child. This is a day-one right and, subject to meeting eligibility criteria (employed for 26 weeks), the employee will be entitled to receive either 90% of their average weekly earnings or the current statutory bereavement pay rate set by the government, whichever is lower. This leave must be taken before the end of 56 weeks of the child passing and can be taken in either 1 single or 2 separate blocks.
- In the event of the death of an immediate relative, up to 1 week of paid leave will be granted. An immediate relative includes a spouse, civil partner or partner, child, parent, step-parent, sibling or a person with whom the employee is in a relationship of domestic dependency. Immediate family may also include a more distant relative who may have fulfilled the role of formal or informal parent/guardian or for whom the employee had a direct responsibility of care.
- One day's paid leave will normally be allowed for attending the funeral of extended family members and close friends

This policy is not intended to be overly prescriptive. It is recognised that the death of a family member or close friend is a difficult and emotional time for employees and due consideration will be given to this. Discretion will be exercised, appropriate to individual circumstances, where it may become necessary to consider either further paid leave, annual leave or unpaid leave.

An employee should notify their line manager of their need to take leave as soon as possible or, at the latest, on the first day of absence.

### **Religious Observance**

Where possible the Society will enable employees to take time off for religious festivals. Employees should use their annual leave allocation in the first instance. Unpaid leave or an alteration in working hours may also be considered.

Employees need to discuss their request with their manager in good time so that cover can be arranged.

### **Medical / Dental / Hospital Arrangements**

Employees should endeavour to arrange any appointments outside working hours. However, unpaid time off may be granted for emergency appointments and where it is not possible to arrange outside working hours.

You may be asked to produce proof of the appointment by your line manager.

### **Study / Exam Leave**

Employees who have school, college or other exams are will be permitted to have the day of the exam off and a day prior to this. Employees should use their annual leave or, if agreed with their line manager, a period of unpaid leave may be granted. This must be discussed at the earliest opportunity with the line manager to allow cover to be arranged.

### **Time off for Training**

Providing you meet the eligibility criteria, you have the right to request time off for training. For further information on this please see the 'Right to Request Time off for Training policy'.

### **Other Unpaid Time Off**

There may be times where an employee needs time off for reason that does not fall into the above categories. In this case employees should discuss this request with their manager who will then consider if a period of unpaid leave can be granted.

## **Statutory Rights to Time Off**

There are various circumstances where an employee has a statutory right to paid or unpaid time off work. These are detailed below.

### **Time Off For Dependants**

Employees are permitted a reasonable amount of **unpaid** time off work to:

- provide assistance when a dependant gives birth, falls ill, is injured or assaulted;
- make arrangements for the care of a sick or injured dependant;
- make necessary arrangements as a consequence of the death of a dependant;
- deal with any disruption in arrangements for the care of a dependant; or to
- deal with an unexpected incident involving a dependant child at school.

A dependant is defined as a spouse, civil partner, child, parent (but not grandparent), or a member of the Employee's household (but not an Employee, tenant or lodger), and may also include another individual who reasonably relies on the Employee for assistance.

The leave granted by the Society will be what it considers reasonable in the circumstances, and will not normally be longer than one or two days.

Employees must notify their line manager at the earliest opportunity of any absence and its expected duration.

If the Employee does not comply with the above provisions, his/her absence may be viewed as unauthorised and disciplinary action may be taken.

### **Ante-Natal Care**

Employees are entitled to reasonable paid time off for ante-natal care. Where possible, employees should schedule appointments as close to the end, or the start, of the working day as possible. Please see the relevant section in the maternity policy for further information or contact the People & Performance Department.

### **Redundancy**

Employees may take a reasonable amount of paid time-off to look for alternative work/re-training opportunities, where they are under notice of dismissal for redundancy. This must be scheduled in agreement with management and will not be unreasonably refused.

## **Safety Representatives**

Appointed safety representatives are entitled to a reasonable amount of time off during their normal working hours to carry out relevant health and safety activities.

## **Jury Duty / Court Attendance**

Employees called for Jury Duty or Court Attendance must inform their line manager as soon as they are in receipt of a citation as a Witness or Juror.

The original or photocopy of the court citation should be passed on to the Wages department so that they can complete the relevant section with regard to 'loss of earnings'.

Time off is normally unpaid; however, in regards to Jury Duty, employees are entitled to receive payment from the Court for some or all of their lost earnings.

## **Trade Union Duties**

Employees who are recognised USDAW Trade Union Representatives will be given paid time off in order to undertake the duties associated with the role in their geographic area, or in another geographic area where cover is required, in line with the Scotmid/USDAW Facilities Agreement.

All time off will be agreed between representatives and their Manager/regional manager.

Where previously authorised by People & Performance and the appropriate Operations Manager, time off with pay will be provided for USDAW training, as per the Scotmid/USDAW Facilities Agreement.

## **Public Duties**

Employees are also entitled to reasonable unpaid time off from work where they carry out the following public duties or are members of the relevant bodies:

- justice of the peace;
- local authority;
- statutory tribunal;
- police authority;
- board of prison visitors or prison visiting committee;
- relevant health body;
- relevant education body; or
- Environment Agency or Scottish Environment Protection Agency.