

Guidelines on Bereavement Leave

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Death is a tragic and difficult part of life. It is a painful reality which everyone has to face at some point in their lives. Death is challenging, especially at work where it can be seen as a difficult topic which is avoided, dealt with privately.
- 1.2 Stirling Council seeks to support bereaved employees and help them to come to terms with their loss. This in turn can:
 - support their return to productivity
 - help to improve morale and commitment
 - help to avoid unnecessary turnover of staff
 - may help to reduce sick leave

2 Understanding Grief at Work

- 2.1 Employees most commonly experience the impact of grief through the death of someone close to them.
- 2.2 Grief is a normal, though difficult, part of life. Work is also a normal part of life and the workplace along with the family, friends etc has an important role in helping employees to adjust to the losses they encounter in their working lives.
- 2.3 Grief is not an illness and it does not need 'to be fixed'. It is a process of adjustment that affects people in a number of ways including physically, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually. Examples of these are:
 - **Physical** – tiredness, sleep disturbances, crying, feeling flat and lacking enthusiasm.
 - **Emotional** – sadness, anger, guilt, relief, anxiety, and loneliness
 - **Psychological** – difficulty concentrating, disbelief, confusion and preoccupation with the person who has died
 - **Spiritual** – trying to make sense of what has happened, searching for a meaning, questioning

3 The Five Stages of Grief

- 3.1 Research shows that there are common emotions and stages of grief experienced by those left behind after bereavement.

3.2 The five basic stages in relation to death are:

- **Denial** - They can't have died
- **Anger** – I can't believe they died and left me or why has God taken them?
- **Bargaining** – If only I had stayed they might not have died
- **Depression** – What is the point of carrying on?
- **Acceptance** – I've lost someone I love but I know I can move on

Working through the stages is believed to be the best way to eventually find a sense of peace and acceptance.

4 The Grieving Process

4.1 The workplace, along with family, friends and relatives can play an important role in helping employees come to terms with their losses:

4.2 Acknowledging an employee's loss

One of the most helpful things a manager can do for a bereaved employee is to acknowledge their loss. Accept that it may feel awkward, but do not let this prevent the acknowledgement of their loss.

4.2 Grieving takes time

It is important to support people around the immediate time of the loss, however, it can often be some time later (6-24 months) before the full impact of the loss begins to sink in and it may take some time before the full impact of the loss is felt by the employee.

4.3 A New Normal

The bereaved employee has to deal with the reality that they are never going back to the 'normal' that existed before the loss. Be aware that grieving employees have to adjust to a 'new normal' which will take time and may not be 'back to normal' quickly.

4.4 People Grieve in Different ways

Each employee's grief is unique and individual to that person. Some employees are very private and do not want everyone to know their business, while others prefer to talk openly about what has happened to them. Remember, there is no one fixed way to grieve.

5 How Managers Can Support Bereaved Employees

5.1 Establish good communication with bereaved employees, acknowledge their loss, check about what information to share, and inform colleagues appropriately.

5.2 Attend, or facilitate employees to attend the funeral.

5.3 Show flexibility and understanding around work issues and manage the return to work.

5.4 If unsure, seek advice from:

- Human Resources
- Employee Counselling Service
- Occupational Health

5.5 Further Information:

- Cruse Bereavement Care
0870 167 1677
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- National Association of Bereavement Services
020 7709 0505
020 7709 9090 (helpline)
- SANDS (Still Birth and Neo Natal Death Society)
020 7436 5881

Procedure for Requesting and Approving Bereavement Leave

1 Introduction

An employee is entitled to bereavement leave on the death of a family member or partner, to arrange and/or attend the funeral. The amount of bereavement leave given is dependent on the relationship between the employee and the deceased. However, the Council will also take into account any specific religious or cultural requirements when considering how much time off is appropriate.

An employee may be granted a maximum ½ day bereavement leave to attend the funeral of a friend or neighbour if it is during working time.

In reaching a decision about the appropriateness of paid leave to be granted managers must demonstrate sensitivity, tact and consistency. It may be appropriate to make the employee aware that bereavement leave can be clarified following the funeral if the employee prefers.

2 Procedure for Granting Bereavement Leave

- 2.1 In all circumstances of Bereavement Leave, a Special Leave Form must be completed for recording and monitoring purposes.
- 2.1 Due to the nature of Bereavement Leave it is likely that the Special Leave Form may require to be completed following the event.
- 2.2 Part A of Stirling Council's Special Leave Form should be completed by the employee and be approved by their manager.
- 2.3 The manager will retain a copy of the completed Special Leave form for their records and pass to HR.
- 2.4 HR will record the information on Cyborg.
- 2.5 If the employee is not entitled to bereavement leave in line with the Bereavement Leave Guidelines, the employee and manager should agree how the time can be taken eg flexi leave, annual leave or unpaid leave.

If the leave is to be unpaid, the manager will circle this on the Special Leave Form and send to HR for recording. HR will send the form to Payroll who will deduct the appropriate amount from the employee's wage/salary.