

# **FOSTERING FRIENDLY EMPLOYER POLICY**

## **SCOPE**

This Policy applies to all employees of Bridgend County Borough Council except those employed by Governing Bodies in educational establishments under delegated powers.

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## **1 Policy Statement**

- 1.1 Bridgend County Borough Council supports the ambitions of Foster Wales, the collaborative of all 22 local authority fostering services, to increase the number of foster carers across Wales and encourage all local current and prospective foster carers to consider fostering with their local authority team.
- 1.2 The council recognises its commitment to support any employee who is applying to become a foster carer or who is currently a foster carer, by providing time off where necessary. It also recognises and values the contribution that foster carers make to the lives of children and young people who are care experienced and that foster carers may need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order that they can meet the needs of their fostered child or young person.
- 1.3 The provisions of this policy apply to those employees who are going through assessment to become a foster carer or approved foster carers with a registered foster care provider (a local authority or Independent Foster Agency).

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Fostering Network has called for employers to become more “fostering friendly” to address national challenges around fostering, highlighted by Welsh Government through the Foster Wales work stream, and to support the objective of encouraging more working people to become foster carers.
- 2.2 Part of the national push to encourage more people to become foster carers, has been to “bust the myth” that you are not allowed to work if you become a foster carer.

## **3. Aim**

- 3.1 The aim of this policy is to offer employees the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of their job, support employees who are already registered foster carers, and to encourage those who may be considering becoming a foster carer, and to take that step. By doing so they will be supporting children and young people who are care experienced in their local communities, providing positive working role models, a stable and caring home and widening the pool of available foster carers.

## **4. Leave Entitlement**

- 4.1 An employee who is applying to become an approved foster carer may be granted up to 5 days ‘foster carer leave’ with pay (pro rata for part time employees) to attend preapproval training, home assessment visits or to attend foster panel as part of the preparation and assessment process.
- 4.2 Where a couple are applying to become foster carers, and both are employees of the council, the leave entitlement will apply to each partner.
- 4.3 An employee who is already an approved foster carer may be granted 5 days paid leave (pro rata for part time employees) to support in helping the child to

settle into their home, to attend relevant meetings, to undertake training and for emergency circumstances arising from their role as a foster parent. This is in addition to the special leave provisions for childcare responsibilities.

- 4.4 Employees are allowed to make applications for up to 5 days paid leave, per leave year and pro rata from the date of the first request. Where more than the maximum entitlement of paid leave is requested, the employee should discuss with their line manager other options available such as annual leave, special leave, flexitime, time off in lieu, flexibility in their shift pattern etc.
- 4.5 Employees wishing to take leave under this policy must produce written evidence to their manager to show that they are approved foster carers or actively applying to become foster carers. Authorised leave should be recorded in the normal manner

## **5. Flexibility**

- 5.1 Managers should adopt a flexible and accommodating approach to requests for time off, annual leave and flexible working arrangements from foster carers and prospective foster carers.
- 5.2 This should continue during their journey through the process of becoming a foster carer and for the duration that they are foster caring.

## **6. Procedure for Requesting Time Off**

- 6.1 The request for time off should be made to the line manager and should outline the reason and the amount of leave required. The line manager will approve the leave on a discretionary basis, considering individual circumstances of each case and operational requirements of the business. Employees must give their manager as much notice as possible when making a request for foster carer leave. Failure to provide sufficient notice could result in the leave not being approved.

## **7. Advice & Support**

- 7.1 Advice and support for those with management responsibility for employees wanting to foster, or those who are already foster carers can be sought from the Foster Wales Bridgend Team within the council. Advice on the application of this policy can be accessed from Human Resources or Trade Union colleagues.

## **8. Monitoring and Evaluation**

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed in accordance with the policy review arrangements or any legislation changes, whichever the sooner.

## **9. Enquiring about becoming a Foster Carer**

- 9.1 Why become a foster parent in Bridgend County Borough? It is about putting local children first and making the commitment to do what is best for them.

Foster Wales Bridgend are the council's team and so are not-for-profit, the local experts and part of Foster Wales, the national network of all 22 Welsh Local Authority fostering services.

- 9.2 The team's purpose is to build better futures for local children, and this is done by helping them stay in their local area when it is right for them. If employees think they could help and foster, whether this is supporting a child permanently, on a respite basis, for vulnerable young people or for the growing young refugee community, please contact the council's foster team who want to talk to you.
- 9.3 To find out how fostering could look like, please get in contact, with no obligation, in the following ways:



<https://bridgend.fosterwales.gov.wales/>

01443 425007

enquiries@fosterwalesctm.co.uk

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