



WEST BEDLINGTON
TOWN COUNCIL

Bereavement Leave Policy
West Bedlington Town Council

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Bereavement Leave Policy

West Bedlington Town Council acknowledges the personal nature of bereavement and grief and is committed to supporting employees in practical and reasonable ways.

Paid bereavement leave

Bereavement leave is paid leave that allows an employee time off to deal with their personal grief and related practical arrangements, primarily, but not limited to, when a family member dies.

West Bedlington Town Council acknowledges that bereavement impacts all individuals differently and the guidelines below are intended to show the minimum paid leave an employee is entitled to in different circumstances.

West Bedlington Town Council acknowledges that not all employees will need to take the full allowance, and some employees will need additional time, depending on their relationship with the person who has died and the circumstances of the death. Additional time off can include [annual leave, flexi-leave or unpaid leave].

If a dependant (close relative or family member) dies:

- Up to five (5) working days paid leave will be granted in the event of their death if required.

If a non-family member dies:

- In these circumstances, one (1) day for funeral attendance (paid at the discretion of the Town Council) leave may be granted on the death of someone who is not a family member. These circumstances would include (but are not limited to) situations where the employee is responsible for funeral arrangements or has to travel abroad to attend the funeral, additionally unpaid leave will be considered at the discretion of the Council.

Giving notice for bereavement leave

An employee should notify the Town Clerk (Town Clerk to notify Chair of the Council) of their need to take leave as soon as possible or, at the latest, on the first day of absence. An employee's next of kin or family member can notify the Town Clerk (Chairman of Council) on their behalf.

In exceptional circumstances, applications for leave will be considered after the first day of absence. The Town Clerk and or Chairman of the Council have the right to exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances as outlined above. Leave days do not have to be taken consecutively.

Additional time off

Annual leave

In the event of a bereavement, an employee will be able to take annual leave at short notice to supplement their bereavement leave. Requests should be directed to the Town Clerk (Town Clerk to notify Chair of the Council).

An employee who experiences a family bereavement while on annual leave can convert their annual leave into bereavement leave and take their annual leave at a future date.

Unpaid leave

Unpaid leave on compassionate grounds up to a maximum of fifteen (15) days may be granted after bereavement. An employee must consult with the Town Clerk (Town Clerk the Chairman of the Council) before starting unpaid leave, and consideration to the effective operation of the Council and its services must be considered as part of the discretionary consideration.

Parental bereavement leave

Employees are entitled to two (2) weeks Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave if their child:

- dies under the age of 18
- is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy

Employees can claim this leave if they are the:

- birth parent
- natural parent (the person who gave birth to the child who has since been adopted, but has a court order to allow them to continue having access to the child)
- adoptive parent, if the child was living with them
- person who lived with the child and had responsibility for them, for at least four (4) weeks before they died
- 'intended parent' – due to become the legal parent through surrogacy
- partner of the child's parent, if they live with the child and the child's parent in an enduring family relationship

Parental Bereavement Leave can be used within 56 weeks of the date of the death or stillbirth. It can be taken as either:

- 2 consecutive weeks
- 2 separate weeks
- 1 week only

In order to take Parental Bereavement Leave, an employee should tell the Town Clerk (Town Clerk – Chairman of the Council):

- when they want their Parental Bereavement Leave to start
- whether they want to take 1 or 2 weeks' leave
- the date of their child's death

To take or cancel Parental Bereavement Leave, an employee should also give the Town Clerk (Town Clerk – Chairman of the Council) the correct notice:

- if within eight (8) weeks of the death or stillbirth – notice must be given before the employee would usually start work on the first day of leave
- if more than eight (8) weeks after the death or stillbirth – notice must be given at least one (1) week before the start of the planned leave

Parental Bereavement Pay

If an employee has been with West Bedlington Town Council for at least 26 weeks, they will be entitled to Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay if all of the following apply:

- their child dies under the age of 18 or is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy
- they were employed when their child died
- they earn on average at least the average weekly minimum amount set by the government

To enable West Bedlington Town Council to pay the employee for this time off, the employee must ask in writing (give 'notice') for Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay within 28 days of taking Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave, starting from the first day of the week they're claiming the payment for.

The notice should state the employee is entitled to Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay and include:

- their name
- the start and end dates of the leave they want to claim the pay for
- the date of their child's death
- their relationship with the child

On top of the two (2) weeks Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay for parents, West Bedlington Town Council will consider a request from eligible employees for additional time off and pay.

West Bedlington Town Council will consider a total of four (4) weeks' paid leave. This is paid at the employee's usual rate of pay.

Miscarriage leave

If an employee or their partner has a miscarriage in the first 24 weeks of pregnancy, West Bedlington Town Council recognises many people will consider this a bereavement.

In these circumstances, West Bedlington Town Council provides five (5) days leave. This time off will be paid and be paid at their usual rate of pay.

Up to two (2) weeks sickness absence related to a miscarriage will be recorded as 'pregnancy related sickness'. This absence will be kept separate to other types of sickness and West Bedlington Town Council will not count these absences towards any review or trigger points set out in the organisation's absence policy.

Miscarriage that happens at work

West Bedlington Town understands it can be a very distressing time if an employee's miscarriage happens at work. Any employee who needs assistance, for example help contacting a partner or family member, or needs immediate medical help such as a first aider, can contact any other member of staff or the Council.

If an employee needs to leave the work premises, they should report a sickness absence to the Town Clerk (Town Clerk – Chairman of the Council). An employee does not have to report the exact reasons for their sickness absence if they do not feel comfortable to do so.

Return to work

In certain circumstances a full return to work may not be possible for an employee following a bereavement. For example, when the employee's grief is likely to impact on their ability to perform their role, or where new child care arrangements have to be sourced or responsibility for the care of an elderly parent has transferred to the employee.

In such instances, West Bedlington Town Council will allow a phased return to work on a part-time or reduced hours basis where practicable. Alternative duties may also be considered. Any such arrangement would need to be agreed in advance by the Town Clerk (Town Clerk – Chair of the Council). It would be subject to an agreed maximum number of days and would be managed in line with West Bedlington Town Council's flexible working or part-time working policy.

Employee support

West Bedlington Town Council acknowledges that bereavement leave is intended to support employees in the immediate period around the death of a relative. However, the process of grief, the natural reaction and adjustment to loss and change may take a significant time and will be personal to each individual.

An employee with any concerns about the grieving process impacting on their work performance should discuss this in confidence with the Town Clerk (Town Clerk – Chair of the Council).

This is to ensure that:

- any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary are discussed and put in place
- the employee is supported in their return to the full range of duties and responsibilities that they had prior to the bereavement
- the employee's duties and responsibilities are adjusted (as necessary) with the prior agreement of line manager

West Bedlington Town Council recognises that people may not require counselling to cope effectively with their grief. However, for employees wishing to seek professional help in coming to terms with a death, the organisation will cover the cost of up to six (6) counselling sessions with an independent counselling practice. This is a confidential service and can be accessed directly through the West Bedlington Town Council's HR support provider.

Health and safety

Bereavement can have an impact on concentration, sleep and decision making. The health and safety assessment of the workplace will include consideration of the impact of bereavement on employees, their duties and responsibilities, and the context in which they are working. For example, if they operate heavy machinery. Any employee who is concerned about their ability to conduct their duties safely in the weeks following a bereavement must discuss this with the Town Clerk (Town Clerk – Chair of the Council).

West Bedlington Town Council reserves the right to request an employee to meet the organisation's doctor before resuming full duties.

Culture and diversity

West Bedlington Town Council recognises that different cultures respond to death in significantly different ways. Those responsible for the welfare of employees (Town Clerk / Chair of the Council) will check whether the employee's religion, belief or culture requires them to observe any particular practices or make special arrangements which would require them being off work at a particular time. Employees should not assume that West Bedlington Town Council is aware of any such requirements and should draw this to its attention (to the Town Clerk or Chair of the Council as appropriate) as soon as possible.

Where West Bedlington Town Council (Town Clerk / Chair of the Council) are unsure of how to respond to a bereaved employee from a different culture they should ask the bereaved employee or someone else from their cultural group about what is appropriate.