

COVID-19 TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Tayside Contracts acknowledges that during the COVID-19 pandemic many of our employees must deal with the increased demands of caring for dependants and dealing with short notice situations in the absence of normal care arrangements.

Although long-term arrangements normally exist to allow these caring commitments and domestic issues to be met, due to COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings, a clash of work and domestic issues may arise requiring you to take time off work to care for a dependant.

This policy is subject to review by the end of March 2021 in response to any updated Government restrictions and/or guidance.

SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all employees working at all levels and grades within Tayside Contracts.

COVID-19 TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANT CARE

If you care for a spouse or partner, child(ren), grandchild(ren), parent(s) or any person who reasonably relies on you for the provision of care, you may be granted reasonable paid or unpaid time off work to deal with caring commitments and domestic emergencies.

The amount of time allowed will be what is considered reasonable to enable you to deal with the particular problem in the shorter term or to make longer term arrangements. The amount of time off to be granted and whether this time off should be paid or unpaid will be determined by your line manager's assessment of the specific circumstances of your case in relation to the impact of your absence on operational requirements.

Your line manager will seek advice from the HR Manager where paid time off is being requested.

COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS ON CARE

Schools and nurseries are currently closed except for children of key workers and vulnerable children. With effect from 22 February pre-school children, P1-3 and certain secondary school pupils were phased back and the Scottish Government announced on 23 February 2021 that it hopes that P4-7 pupils along with some more senior phase secondary school pupils can be phased back from 15 March. Thereafter, the remaining secondary school pupils will be phased back from 5 April assuming the Scottish Government deems it safe to do so.

If you are a key worker and feel your child might be eligible to continue attending school or nursery, you should contact your childcare provider or local authority.

Whilst registered childminders can remain open for all children, the rules on informal childcare advise against most in-home care unless it is essential. Informal childcare can still be used by those people who need essential childcare, for the following reasons:

- You are a key worker and require informal childcare to go to work.
- You work in an industry that is permitted to operate at Protection Level 4, and you require informal childcare to go to work.
- You are working from home and you need informal childcare so you can continue to work, and no alternative care can be found.

Advice on formal and informal childcare can be accessed through the Parent Club website <https://www.parentclub.scot/topics/coronavirus> and the Scottish Government website <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/>

If a dependant or child is unable to attend these facilities due to COVID-19 resulting in you being unable to attend work due to caring responsibilities a discussion should be held with your manager to determine your particular circumstances.

Where possible consideration should be given to alternative childcare arrangements for all or as much of your contracted hours as possible e.g., sharing with a partner, using alternative childcare arrangements etc. Where you live with a partner who also works – childcare should be shared unless your partner is a key worker and is unable to share childcare.

TIME OFF FOR DEPENDENTS ENTITLEMENT

Should you require time off to care for a dependant under the terms of this policy, the following options should be considered.

Unpaid leave

If you care for a spouse or partner, child(ren), parent(s) or any person who reasonably relies on you for the provision of care, you will be granted reasonable unpaid time off work to deal with caring commitments and domestic emergencies.

Annual Leave

You can request a period of annual leave which will be considered by your line manager and granted where operationally possible.

If you have fixed periods of annual leave you can request to use floating days, which will be considered on their merits and granted or otherwise in accordance with operational service requirements.

If you carried over a portion of annual leave from 2020 into the current leave year under the terms of Tayside Contracts' Annual Leave and Public Holiday Policy Addendum, this can be used to facilitate time off work for care arrangements.

Flexible Working

Tayside Contracts' adopts a flexible approach to working hours, where this can be accommodated without impact on service delivery and should be discussed with your line manager.

You can request a temporary amendment to your working pattern with your line manager which may include different start/finish times.

In all cases, working hours must comply with legislation, including rest breaks and the amount of time between shifts.

Parental Leave

Employees are entitled to unpaid Parental Leave if they have at least one year's continuous local authority service, have legal parental responsibility for a child under the age of 18 and comply with Tayside Contracts' notification, evidence and declaration requirements.

Eligible employees are entitled to up to a maximum of 18 weeks in total up to a child's 18th birthday. Parental Leave may be taken in multiples of a week up to a maximum of 4 weeks per child in any one year. In the event of a part week being taken, it will count as a full week of entitlement unless your child qualifies for Disability Living Allowance in which case Parental Leave may be taken in single days, subject to a maximum of 4 weeks in any one year.

If you wish to take a period of Parental Leave, you must complete and submit an 'Application for Parental Leave' form the HR Admin Team, ideally 21 days before you wish the leave to begin. Your application must include a copy of your child's birth certificate or adoption certificate.

Furlough

Tayside Contracts participates in the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) to recover pay costs which cannot be met in private works, capital works, the provision of paid school meals and Leisure Trust cleaning. Therefore, furlough can only be considered for full-time, part-time or fixed-term employees in Construction, School Catering, Non-school Cleaning and in office-based jobs who have been on Tayside Contracts' payroll since 30 October 2020.

Tayside Contracts will select and write to employees who are eligible to be furloughed and furlough will be considered for those who are unable to work due to caring responsibilities. You should inform your line manager if you are in scope for furlough and have caring responsibilities.

Paid Leave

Requests for paid time off for dependants will be considered on a case by case basis with each request being discussed between your line manager and the HR Manager to ensure that all reasonable alternatives are explored and to ensure consistency.

If all reasonable alternatives have been explored by yourself and your line manager, they can consider paid time off up until the end of March at which point Tayside Contracts' will review the position in line with the Scottish Government restrictions on schools.

When considering your case, your line manager will ask and consider the following questions:

- Number of children/dependants in the household?
- Age/school year of children/dependants?
- What is the normal childcare/dependant provision?
- What is the reason for the unavailability of care?
- Can a partner assist by changing working times, taking leave etc?
- Have informal childcare/dependant provisions been explored?
- Is there a reason why informal care is not an option?
- Can you amend your working times to accommodate care arrangements?
- Can you take flexi/annual leave to assist with time for caring responsibilities?
- If you have carried over annual leave from 2020 can this be used to assist with time for caring responsibilities?
- Is furlough an option?

Tayside Contracts appreciates that this is a difficult time for those with caring responsibilities and such an approach may seem intrusive, but as a publicly funded organisation we have a duty to ensure that all reasonable alternatives have been explored before permitting paid leave.

NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCEDURE

The amount of time off to be granted will be determined by your line manager's assessment of the specific circumstances of your case.

Requests for Time Off for Dependants must be approved, ideally in advance, by your line manager. In exceptional and emergency situations, where prior approval cannot be sought from your line manager, you must ensure that you contact your line manager as soon as possible to seek approval for your absence.

RELATED POLICIES

The COVID-19 Time off for Dependents Policy links to the following policies which can be accessed on the Intranet, or requested from your line manager or from the HR Admin Team:

- Flexible Working
- Job Share
- Parental Leave
- COVID-19 Homeworking Policy
- Annual Leave and Public Holiday Policy

POLICY REVIEW

The COVID-19 Time off for Dependents Policy will be reviewed in advance of the end of March 2021, or as required by legislative changes.

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

Tayside Contracts respects the privacy of our employees, any personal data processed during the application of this policy will be in line with Data Protection Legislation. Further information on how we may process personal data for the purpose of applying this policy can be found in our Privacy Notice.

Should you have any queries or require further clarification regarding any aspects of this policy or related policies please contact, HR Services on 01382 812721 or employment.policies@tayside-contracts.co.uk

If you would like this document translated into another language or in another format such as audio or large print then please contact Angie Thompson, Equalities and Communications Manager on 01382 834165 or angie.thompson@tayside-contracts.co.uk