

Requests for and the Granting of Long-term Special Leave

Staff should request long-term special leave from their manager. Depending on the nature of the request, a more senior manager, the Divisional Personnel Manager or Director may need to be consulted before any decision is finalised. Every endeavour will be made to accede to reasonable requests but the ability of the Service to adequately cover the duties of the member of staff, without detriment to core services, will be a prime consideration in reaching a decision.

Effect on Entitlements

Various entitlements and employment provisions will be affected by periods of unpaid leave. Individual circumstances and differing provisions for each staff group will determine the exact effect and will be specified by the respective Personnel Department prior to a decision being reached. In general terms the following will apply:-

- pension contributions will not be deducted and benefits will not accrue
- current annual leave entitlement will not accrue
- service towards higher leave entitlement will not accrue
- service towards increased sickness entitlement will not accrue
- incremental dates will be extended by the period of unpaid leave
- qualifying periods will be extended by the period of unpaid leave

Such leave will not affect continuous service with regard to the Employment Rights Act 1996, i.e. the period of unpaid leave will count in assessing the periods of employment required to be covered by various statutory employment rights.

Extended Leave

The main period of continuous annual leave is usually two weeks, up to three weeks may be accommodated by local arrangements, but leave in excess of three weeks is considered to be extended leave. When extended leave is requested, the maximum notice possible will be expected. If the leave entitlement of the member of staff covers the period requested and the manager approves it, no further action is required.

When the period of leave requested requires additional unpaid special leave, the reason for and timing of the leave will be a further consideration in reaching a decision. If such leave is granted, a set of conditions will be attached to the approval e.g. staff visiting sick relatives who are living abroad will provide a contact address, agree a date of return, be responsible for advising the manager of

any unforeseen changes and accept the disciplinary implications of failure of return.

Extended leave will normally be subject to a maximum period of thirteen weeks, including annual leave.

Family Leave

Staff may have to take on the responsibility of care for an adult dependant which is a full-time but temporary commitment. Family leave is intended to assist such staff when the time-off required is likely to be long-term.

Staff may apply to their manager for a period of unpaid leave of up to six months. It is often difficult to predict the exact amount of leave that will actually be required and regular contact will be maintained so that changes in the circumstances, that may allow for an earlier return to work, are noted and acted upon.

When staff take on such a commitment, particularly to nurse the terminally ill, they may themselves suffer from a stress related illness. In such cases, where the absence is covered by medical certification, normal sickness provisions will apply. The circumstances will, however, be taken into consideration when reviewing the individual's sick record in regard to the irregular attenders procedure.

Applications for family leave will be considered sensitively and in confidence. The manager receiving the request may consult the appropriate Personnel Manager or Director and the services of Occupational Health or the Welfare Officer may be offered.