



## Fostering Friendly Policy

### 1. Policy Statement

The Council is committed to being a 'Fostering Friendly Employer' through supporting our employees who are prospective or existing foster carers.

### 2. Background

There are currently 64,000 children in care in the UK. The highest proportion, 78%, of those children and young people are in foster care and with a child coming in to care every 20 minutes in need of a fostering family we recognise the need to do more to help recruit new foster carers.

The demographic profile of foster carers, many of whom are approaching retirement age, places further pressure on future foster carer numbers. 94% of foster carers nationally are aged 40 and over and 65% are aged 50 and over

To address the national challenges around fostering, and to try and encourage more working people to become foster carers, the Government has called on employers to become "fostering friendly".

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.

The Council wishes to support those employees who are already foster carers and to encourage those who may be considering foster care to take that step as by doing so, they will be providing positive working role models and widening the pool of available foster carers. In this way, more children in care can be matched with the very best foster carer for them.

We recognise that having the support of the organisation, may make the vital difference in the decision of an employee to become a foster carer.

The Council will encourage partners and other organisations to adopt this approach.

### Key principles

It is proposed that the following key principles are applied as policy:

- Up to 5 days paid additional leave for employees who are going through the application process to become a foster carer, as part of the fostering assessment process

- Up to 5 days paid additional leave each year for employees who are foster carers in order to attend training related to their position as foster carers and/or to attend meetings, panels, hearings or any other key events or activities in support of foster children and young people in their care.
- The Council adopts a flexible and accommodating approach to requests for time off, leave and flexible working arrangements from foster carers and prospective foster carers in relation to their care of a looked after child or during their journey through the process to become foster carers.
- Further support to cover any extra training which may be needed or to cover unforeseen emergencies related to their fostering role remains at their line manager's discretion.
- As a 'Fostering Friendly Employer' the Council will commit to supporting the annual fostering awareness campaign, Foster Care Fortnight.

These principles accord with best practice for employers promoted by the Fostering Network. The Council is the first Local Authority on Merseyside to become a fostering friendly employer.

### **3. Commitment to Equality**

Please identify which, if any, of the following Equality Duties this policy addresses:

Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	To advance equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	To foster good relations between different groups of people	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---	-------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------	---	-------------------------------------

This policy allows the Council to manage requests for time off consistently. It embeds an open and accommodating approach to any requests from foster carers for flexible working arrangements in relation to their responsibilities as a foster carer.

### **4. Procedures**

Requests for paid leave will be managed through the Council's existing special leave policies and procedures. An employee's request for leave must be submitted via Selfserve and approved by their line manager.

Human Resources will monitor the categories of Special Leave that are recorded in the HR & Payroll system.

Any abuse of the Procedures within this Policy will be dealt with through the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

## 5. Supporting Documentation

## 6. Related Policies

- Special Leave
- Adoption
- Annual Leave
- Flexi-Time

## 7. Consultation

The policy was approved by Employment & Appointments Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

## 8. Communication and Awareness

This policy is considered:

<b>Internal</b>	<b>External</b>
[For Members, Officers and Contractors] <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	[For our Residents, Customers and Service Users] <input type="checkbox"/>

The Council will communicate the support available to employees via the Council's intranet and other forums and work with Children's Services to continue to raise awareness and promote foster caring to employees.

## 9. Monitoring and Review

The table below sets out the ownership and review schedule for this policy. The Fostering Friendly Policy will be reviewed every three years as part of the Human Resources & Organisational Development Policy Review Programme. However it may be necessary to review as and when required, for example, due to legislative changes or if an issue arises around its effectiveness.

<b>Document Ownership</b>	
<b>Policy owned by:</b>	Assistant Director for Human Resources & Organisational Development
<b>Policy written by:</b>	Tony Williams, Acting Assistant Director
<b>Date policy written:</b>	27 June 2017
<b>Policy due for 1<sup>st</sup> review:</b>	June 2020

<b>Version Control Table</b>			
All changes to this document are recorded in this table.			
Date	Notes/Amendments	Officer	Next Scheduled Review Date
	•		