

October 2010

## PEOPLE AND WORK UNIT

### TIME OFF FOR DEPENDANTS POLICY

***(This document forms a part of the People and Work Unit Employment Pack)***

The People and Work Unit is fully committed to helping employees balance work and family life, whilst maintaining the effective running of the Unit.

#### **1. Employees' Statutory Rights**

- Employees have the right to take a **reasonable time off work** to deal with unexpected events or sudden emergencies involving dependants and to make longer term arrangements
- Employees who use this right cannot be penalised for taking the time off, providing their reasons for taking it are genuine
- Employees do not have the right to be paid for this time off
- Employees have the right to take this time off from day one of starting their job
- Legislation does not limit the number of times an employee can take time off for dependants, provided it is for real emergencies.

#### **2. Who is a dependant?**

- A husband, wife, partner, child, parent, or anyone living in the household as a member of the family
- The term does **not** include tenants, lodgers or paid staff e.g. a housekeeper
- In case of emergency, a dependant may also be anyone who reasonably relies on the employee for help e.g. an elderly neighbour living alone who falls and breaks a leg and the employee is the closest on hand.

#### **3. What counts as an emergency**

- Any unexpected or sudden problem involving someone who depends on your help or care.

#### **4. A 'reasonable' amount of time off**

- This will vary according to circumstances e.g. if a relative falls ill, a day or two should be adequate to deal with the immediate crisis and make longer term arrangements for that relative's care
- It would not, however, be deemed reasonable to take two weeks off to care for a sick relative
- If a dependant dies, time off is allowed to make funeral arrangements and attend the funeral
- Any disputes about what forms a reasonable amount of time off will be dealt with in the first instance through the Unit's Grievance Procedure

### ***3. Examples of problems which do not involve a dependant and so are not covered***

- a burst boiler or other domestic emergency
- problems with a family pet
- accompanying a friend to hospital

### ***4. Statutory Requirements for Employees***

- Employees should let their employer know they are taking time off as soon as they can
- This need not be in writing
- If the employee returns to work before they have had the chance to contact the employer, the employee must still tell the employer why they were absent.
- If an employee needs to be off for longer than at first thought, they should contact the employer as soon as they can, to let them know why and how long they might need.

### ***5. Situations involving dependants which are covered by other legislation***

- a child's hospital appointment which has been booked in advance (see parental leave policy)
- caring for a dependant who has had a baby (see maternity leave policy)
- problems regarding a child returning daily from school to an empty house (see flexible working policy)

### ***6. The People and Work Unit's Policy on Time off for Dependants***

- The People and Work Unit will always deal sympathetically with employees who need to take Time Off for Dependants but must balance this against the smooth running of the Unit.
- However, The Unit will always seek to support the employee in finding a solution if an employee is having to take a large number of days off