

# Foster Friendly Policy

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## Contents

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1. Introduction .....	3
2. Aim .....	3
3. Foster care leave .....	3
4. Foster placement leave .....	4

## 1. Introduction

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- 1.1 Bury Council recognises and values the essential contribution that foster carers make to the lives of children and young people. As a Corporate Parent we are committed to providing any and all possible support to those employees who are, or wish to become, foster carers. We understand that foster carers who do other work in addition to fostering need flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child and, through both our policy framework and management culture, will do all we can to support this critical activity.
- 1.2 The Council is committed to supporting any and all staff members who are a main or linked foster carer and those who are applying to be a foster carer with a local authority or independent fostering service. Through this, the Council is seeking to align its strategic objectives in relation to the support of Bury Children with its own employment policy framework and organisational culture.
- 1.3 We will work to create and maintain a truly fostering friendly organisation that offers flexible working arrangements which respond to the needs of employees who are foster carers.
- 1.4 This policy sets out the additional time off that we will offer foster carers and those going through the approval process.
- 1.5 It recognises that the process of seeking approval to become a foster carer can be lengthy and places a number of reasonable but demanding expectations upon prospective carers, particularly in relation to the training, assessment and approval process.
- 1.6 It also recognises the circumstances when employees who are foster carers are taking on a placement/child under a short or long-term fostering arrangement.
- 1.7 For cases relating to adoption please see the Adoption Policy.

## 2. Aim

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- 2.1 Bury Council offers staff the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with the demands of their job. Our family friendly policies apply to foster carers.

## 3. Foster care leave

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- 3.1 Foster care leave is available to staff who:
  - are applying to become foster carers
  - are approved foster carers and have a child in placement (or have had a child in placement for 75% of the previous 12 months), and

- have three months or more employment service with Bury Council  
School staff, casual staff and contractors are not eligible for foster care leave.

3.2 Bury Council values and will support foster carers by giving paid time off in any 12-month period as follows:

- assessment and initial training prior to approval as a foster carer - up to three days
- attendance at panel for approval – half a day
- looked after child statutory review meetings, child review meetings, annual foster carer review meeting and training – up to five days.

3.3 The employee's line manager will approve the leave wherever possible, taking into account individual circumstances of each case and operational requirements of the business. The leave will be considered and approved on a pro rata basis. The employee will provide necessary evidence to support their request for leave if requested.

3.4 Foster care leave should be requested via the iTrent Employee Self Service system.

## 4. Foster placement leave

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4.1 To qualify for leave when taking on a placement/child under a short or long-term fostering arrangement, staff members must:

- have continuous service of 3 months or more with Bury Council
- provide a notice of acceptance for a placement
- have not taken child placement leave in the last 12 months
- be the primary carer of the child

In exceptional circumstances, when the needs of the child requires both carers' full time involvement, leave may be granted when the staff member is not the primary carer.

School staff, casual staff and contractors are not eligible for foster placement leave under the terms of this policy. However, the Council will look to support these workers wherever possible.

4.2 Qualifying staff are eligible for up to six weeks paid leave of absence following the placement being made.

4.3 If the Council employs both foster carers, then they are only entitled to receive a single allocation of leave, however it may be split between both carers with agreement from the appropriate Heads of Service.

4.4 Where only one foster carer works for the Council, there shall be entitlement, provided that their partner is working but not entitled to claim equivalent leave. There shall be no entitlement where the partner is not working; unless there are

exceptional circumstances, when the needs of the child require both carer's full-time involvement.

4.5 There is only one period of leave and or pay available irrespective of the number of children being fostered.

4.6 Where the child placed is under five years of age on the day of placement:

- weeks 1–3 inclusive will be paid at 90 per cent of pay
- weeks 4–6 inclusive will be paid at half pay. Staff not returning to work by the first day of the seventh week shall repay the three weeks at half pay.

Where the child placed is over five years of age on the day of placement one week's leave with pay shall be available to the primary carer in consultation with the line manager.

4.7 In exceptional circumstances, when the needs of the child require the carer's full-time involvement for a longer period of time, the leave entitlement for a child under five years of age may apply at the discretion of the Head of Service.

4.8 Foster placement leave should be requested via the iTrent Employee Self Service system.