

Leave Policy and Guidance

July 2026

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1. Purpose and Scope of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework for the management and use of employee leave arrangements. It sets out the principles, expectations, and responsibilities that support consistent and fair application across the Council.

This policy applies to all Council employees unless otherwise stated, subject to Section 4 of the Local Conditions of Service and individual contractual arrangements. It aims to support employee wellbeing, promote work-life balance, and ensure a healthy and productive workforce, while maintaining the effective delivery of services.

All leave and working arrangements under this policy are subject to service requirements and operational need, which will take precedence at all times.

This policy is supported by a guidance document – Time Away from Work Guidance - which outlines the main types of leave and the provisions that apply to each. This table is intended as a guide only and does not include every possible circumstance or example of leave. The full policy should be referred to for detailed guidance, and advice from HR should be sought if there are any uncertainties.

2. Key Principles

The Council is committed to supporting a healthy, engaged, and productive workforce through the provision of a range of leave arrangements.

While these provisions are designed to promote employee wellbeing, work-life balance, and fairness, the effective delivery of services to the public remains the Council's primary responsibility. As such, service requirements and operational needs will take precedence when considering and approving all forms of leave and working arrangements.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that adequate service cover is maintained at all times and for communicating clear expectations to employees regarding availability, attendance, and operational priorities. Employees are expected to take a responsible and proactive approach to managing their working time and leave, ensuring that requests are made in a timely manner and with regard to service demands.

All leave arrangements should be managed in a fair, consistent, and transparent way, supporting both individual wellbeing and the collective needs of the service. The Council encourages employees to take appropriate leave, recognising that this contributes to a healthier, more resilient, and effective workforce.

3. Annual Leave

Entitlement

- 3.1 Council employees under NJC terms and conditions are entitled to a basic entitlement of 24 days annual leave (pro rata for part-time, term-time and temporary appointments).
- 3.2 Craft Workers are entitled to a basic entitlement of 23 days (pro rata for part-time, term-time and temporary appointments).
- 3.3 For Chief Officers, annual leave entitlements are set out in other provisions rather than the standard framework described in this policy.
- 3.4 An award of five extra days' annual leave is granted to employees with five years continuous Local Government service, inclusive of continuous service with an employer that is part of the Greater Manchester Continuous Service Commitment.
- 3.5 Annual leave entitlement is calculated from the actual start date for new starters and to the actual leaving date for leavers.

Booking annual leave

- 3.6 Annual leave must be requested in advance by employees and approved by their Line Manager.
- 3.7 Annual leave must be booked using the iTrent self-service application, which can be found on the Intranet here: [iTrent User Information](#)
- 3.8 A requested period of 3-weeks (pro rata) annual leave, or more, requires additional approval from the relevant Head of Service or equivalent. It is the Line Managers responsibility to take advice and obtain approval from the Head of Service once an employee has requested this, before confirming the response to the employee.
- 3.9 All requests for annual leave will be considered in line with Service Requirements, although every effort will be made to approve requests.
- 3.10 Line managers should be mindful when approving annual leave for their employees, and ensure they monitor annual leave entitlement, to avoid all, or most, of the entitlement being taken early or late in the leave year.

Carry-over of annual leave

- 3.11 Employees are able to carry over up to and including 5 days leave (pro rata) at the end of a leave year and will not require approval to do so.
- 3.12 Requests to carry over more than 5 days will need the approval of the relevant Head of Service or equivalent. Such requests will not normally be agreed other than in exceptional circumstances and will also be subject to service requirements.
- 3.13 Any requests to carry over leave due to maternity/adoption/parental leave/sickness absence, should be dealt with in accordance with the appropriate policy.

Christmas closure

- 3.14 Most Council services will be open as usual during the Christmas period, with the exception of Christmas day, Boxing Day and any Bank Holidays.
- 3.15 Employees who are not required to work over the Christmas period will be required to take annual leave, unless they wish to work. If an employees' usual place of work is closed for Christmas, and working agilely or from home is not possible, an alternative workplace should be agreed with the Manager.

Outstanding leave

- 3.16 Any outstanding annual leave should be that which is outstanding in the leave year in which they left the Council's employment.
- 3.17 If an employee has been absent from work due to a long-term sickness absence and then leaves the Council, outstanding leave will be paid in accordance with the Managing Attendance Policy.
- 3.18 If an employee has been unable to take their annual leave due to high service demand, and their Manager supports this, all accrued and outstanding leave will be paid upon termination. Although, it is encouraged for employees to take any outstanding leave prior to leaving the organisation and where possible, Managers should support this dependent upon service needs.
- 3.19 If an employee has been dismissed from employment, all accrued and outstanding leave within the dismissal year will be paid, up until the termination date.
- 3.20 Employees will not normally be paid for any banked leave they have; this must be taken prior to leaving the Authority. Only in exceptional circumstances will this be paid, i.e. dismissal, leaving following a long-term sickness absence, etc. Please seek advice from HR if there are any uncertainties.
- 3.21 Where an employee has purchased any additional annual leave and is subsequently unable to take some, or all, of that leave due to a period of sickness absence, any requests for reimbursement will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by management, HR and payroll.

NB: The banked leave provision ceased in 2023. Employees have until the end of the 2027-28 leave year to draw down their banked leave and ensure this is taken. Details of how to do this can be found here: [Banked Leave Process](#)

4. Bank Holidays

- 4.1 All employees will have the bank holiday entitlement of hours included in their full leave entitlement which is accessible on iTrent.
- 4.2 The bank holiday entitlement is 1/5th of employees' total working weekly hours multiplied by the number of bank holidays there are in the relevant leave year.

- 4.3 If a bank holiday falls on an employees' usual working day, the number of hours an employee is expected to work on that day will automatically be deducted from their leave entitlement, regardless as to whether they are full-time or part-time.
- 4.4 If an employee is required to work on a bank holiday, their line manager must mark the bank holiday as 'not taken' on iTrent. Guidance on how to do this can be found here: [Manager Annual Leave and Bank Holiday Guide](#)
- 4.5 If an employee is absent from work through sickness on the bank holiday, they should be recorded as sick in the usual way, and their line manager should reduce their leave entitlement on iTrent for the bank holiday.
- 4.6 Where a member of staff is not due to work on a bank holiday, they may use the hours leave allocated for the bank holiday where they choose and in agreement with their line manager.

5. Special Leave

Definition

- 5.1 Special leave is not an automatic entitlement and exists for genuinely difficult circumstances when an employee may need to be absent from work.
- 5.2 Special leave is for caring and supporting a close relative in difficult situations. Special leave is not for attending personal appointments.

Close relatives

- 5.3 A close relative includes the following family members in either your family, or the family of your partner (including same sex partner):
- Partner
 - Mother / Father
 - Son / Daughter
 - Brother / Sister
 - Grandmother / Grandfather
 - Grandson / Granddaughter
 - Aunt / Uncle
 - Nephew / Niece

Adopted or step relations are also included within the definition of close relatives.

The definition also includes nominated 'carer' or nominated 'next of kin' subject to written confirmation of the relationship from the employee at the time of the request.

A partner (including same sex partner) is defined as someone who is not an immediate relative and lives with their partner (including same sex partner) in an enduring family relationship. It does not apply to partners (including same sex partners) who do not live at the same address.

Subject to written confirmation of the relationship, other relatives may be included and approved at the discretion of the Director or their representative.

Appendix H within the Local Conditions which defines Close Relatives, can be accessed here: [APPENDIX H-DefinitionOfCloseRelative-Apr2015](#).

Categories of Special Leave

5.4 Special leave is split into two categories – Category A and Category B.

Category A

Up to a maximum of three days in any leave year (pro rata for part time employees) may be granted if there is a sudden illness or emergency and the presence of an employee is immediately required, to give assistance to a close relative as outlined above.

Category B

Up to a maximum of five days in any leave year (pro rata for part time employees) may be granted in the following circumstances:

- To attend the funeral of a close relative, as outlined above, or of a close personal friend.
- To settle the affairs of a close relative, as outlined above, or of a close personal friend.
- To accompany, where necessary, a close relative as outlined above who is required to attend a hospital, medical practitioner or dental surgery appointment, and the relative cannot attend the appointment alone. In the circumstance where more than one carer/parent/guardian works for the authority, special leave will not normally be granted to both employees.
- To attend an appointment with a legal practitioner in respect of a matter affecting a close relative as outlined above, and the relative cannot attend the appointment alone.
- To attend one's own graduation ceremony in circumstances where the Authority has financially contributed towards any course fees and qualification as a requirement of the post.
- To attend interviews in connection with appointments to public service authorities, if an employee has completed one years' service with the authority.

The above list is not exhaustive. In exceptional circumstances there may be discretion to authorise special leave for reasons not listed above.

Special leave may be granted in circumstances where an employee is affected by domestic abuse or domestic violence, in line with organisational support arrangements. Employees who are experiencing domestic abuse or domestic violence are encouraged to speak to their line manager or HR, who will provide confidential support and discuss appropriate arrangements, including access to special leave.

Applying for Special Leave

5.5 Wherever possible, applications for special leave should be made in advance. Applications should be submitted via the iTrent self-service system, which can be accessed here: [iTrent User Information](#)

5.6 In cases of special leave category A, employees should contact their line manager within one hour of their normal starting time if possible, or as soon as possible to

verbally request special leave. Upon the employees return to work, this should then be recorded on the iTrent self-service system.

5.7 The employee should provide the following information when requesting special leave under category A and/or category B:

- First full day of special leave
- The length of the special leave
- The reason for the special leave
- The relation the absence applies to
- If possible, evidence of any appointments
- Expected return date and/or time

5.8 Special leave can be booked in days, or hours and minutes, and employees are able to state the exact time they require special leave for.

5.9 Special leave allowance should only be used for the duration of the appointment, or time afterwards if the relative requires company following their appointment.

5.10 If employees wish to take the full day off, and some of this time falls outside of the scope of special leave, employees can request to take the remainder of the day off via other means, such as annual leave or flexitime.

5.11 Special leave is not to be used for employees' standard medical appointments, such as routine dental or doctors appointments, please see the Time Away from Work Guidance for further information. Where possible, these appointments should be taken through provisions such as annual leave or flexitime. Please also refer to Section 6 within this policy for more information around Authorised Absence.

5.12 Special leave is not for childcare purposes. If an employee experiences issues with their childcare arrangements, they should try to find alternative arrangements. Special leave may be granted on the first day issues have arisen (category A) to enable the employee to care for their child and make arrangements for any time after this.

5.13 The birth of your child (if not the mother) does not come under special leave, as this is covered by the Family Leave Policy. However, if the birth is unexpected and an employee is required to leave work, this will be recorded as special leave category A.

5.14 IVF treatment is not specifically covered by the special leave scheme, but appointments attended with a close relative may be covered under category B of special leave, if the presence of an employee is required.

5.15 If a close relative is in the hospital, then special leave will normally only be granted if it is a requirement for the employee to be there. However, when a close relative has been discharged from hospital and if an employee is required to care for them at home; special leave (category B) will normally be granted.

5.16 Special leave (category A) will be granted to employees if they need to be at home, a hospital, or a hospice to be with a close relative who is sadly at end of life, or receiving end of life care.

- 5.17 Due to the nature of special leave, the provisions cannot be exhaustive, so if there are any queries, please contact your departmental HR contact for further advice and guidance.

6. Authorised absence

- 6.1 Authorised absence is primarily used for employees who may need to attend a medical appointment, that falls outside of those that can be scheduled by the employee themselves. These can be appointments such as hospital appointments, routine appointments to monitor an illness. Routine medical appointments should be made in the employee's own time using the flexibility of the flexi-time scheme (where this applies).
- 6.2 If an employee has requirements such as these, they must speak to their line manager to make them aware of such appointments at the earliest opportunity.
- 6.3 Where possible, employees must provide evidence of the appointment, such as a letter from the hospital, a text confirming the appointment, etc.
- 6.4 It may be beneficial for the employee to undertake an Occupational Health appointment, especially if appointments will be / are ongoing, which their line manager can refer them to. Details of how to do this can be found on the intranet, here: [Optima & myOHportal](#)
- 6.5 Authorised absence may only be given for the duration of the appointment time. If an employee wishes to take more time off, then this should be requested through other provisions, such as annual leave or flexi-time.

7. Flexi-time

Definition

- 7.1 Flexi-time applies to the majority of Council employees, however there may be specific job roles or service areas which do not allow for the provision of flexi-time. Where employees are unsure if this applies to them, they should speak to their line manager in the first instance to understand the service requirements.
- 7.2 It is the Managers responsibility to ensure Working Time Regulations are complied with. Employees should work no more than 6 hours without a break of least 20 minutes and no more than 48 hours a week. Young workers (under 18) should work no more than 4.5 hours without a break of at least 30 minutes, and no more than 8 hours a day, 40 hours a week.
- 7.3 The flexi-time bandwidth is 7.00am – 7.00pm, and hours should be worked between these times as standard. It is recognised that different services may operate during different hours, depending on individual service needs and requirements. Work outside of the current bandwidth may be possible with prior agreement from management. Managers must set out clear expectations regarding attendance, availability, and service requirements for their teams and employees. Employees are

expected to work in a manner that meets these operational needs and supports service delivery.

Working arrangements and time recording

- 7.4 A standard working day for employees based on a 37-hour week, is 7 hours and 24 minutes, and a standard half day is 3 hours and 42 minutes.
- 7.5 Flexi-time should be recorded over a designated period of four consecutive weeks, by the end of which employees should have worked their contractual number of hours (148 hours for an employee who works 37 hours per week). There will be thirteen settlement periods each year. The flexi-time log template can be found here: [Flexisheet Template.xlsx](#). Employees must ensure their flexi-sheet is submitted to their manager at the end of each settlement period and is readily available for them to access if required.

Balances and Limits

- 7.6 Employees are permitted to carry forward a limited number of working hours into the next settlement period. The carry over should normally be no more than the equivalent of two standard working days (pro rata).
- 7.7 Employees are permitted to be in a debit of one standard working day (pro-rata). This can be carried over into the next settlement period.
- 7.8 On each settlement period of flexi, there should be a credit of no more than two standard working days (pro-rata), or a debit of no more than one standard working day (pro-rata). If any of these are exceeded, the employee must speak to their manager. It may be more appropriate for required additional hours worked outside of the agreed flexi-time bandwidth to be claimed via different means if relevant, i.e. TOIL or overtime. An employee must speak to their manager in these instances and seek approval and agreement from them.

Taking flexi-time

- 7.9 In agreement with their manager, employees can use their flexi at their discretion, this may be to finish early, take a full-day or half day off, take a longer than usual lunch break, etc. Employees must gain approval from their manager before taking flexi, so service planning and cover can take place if needed, and this must be logged on their flexi-time log.
- 7.10 Employees must book any flexi-time via the self-service portal, which can be accessed here: [iTrent User Information](#)

Governance and Compliance

- 7.11 If an employee who is working within the flexi-time scheme fails to adhere to the provisions of the scheme, it may be necessary to take action in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- 7.12 If, for any reason, an employee is suspended or excluded from using the scheme, they will be required to work a standard working day agreed with their manager. Working hours should still be recorded to ensure requirement are being met.

- 7.13 Employees should not enter any Council buildings outside of normal opening hours (usually 7.00am until 7.00pm), unless prior agreement has been sought from both their manager and the relevant Building Manager.
- 7.14 Flexi-time will not be paid if an employee is unable to take this on a general basis. Only in exceptional circumstances, i.e. if an employee leaves the authority through sickness or disciplinary and has a substantial amount of authorised flexi-time built up, will this be considered.
- 7.15 The flexi-time scheme does not apply to Chief Officers. These roles by nature work in a more outcome-based manner, and they will have access to alternative flexibilities subject to agreement.

8. Time off in Lieu (TOIL)

Definition

- 8.1 Time off in lieu or 'TOIL' is time that employees can take off work in recompense for working time accrued where an employee has worked their contracted hours and accrued the maximum hours permitted within the Council's flexible working hours scheme or outside normal working bands (as defined within the flexible working hours scheme).
- 8.2 Wherever possible, employees should utilize the flexi-time scheme. However, it is recognised that all services may not be able to use this scheme if more of a 'set hours' approach is needed due to the nature of the service.

TOIL Guidelines

- 8.3 The following guidelines are to be used in conjunction with service requirements in relation to taking TOIL:
- Where possible work should be managed within the flexi-time scheme, but where there are periods of anticipated additional work this should be discussed between the manager and employee.
 - TOIL should be recorded and subsequent time off requested on the TOIL Record sheet.
 - Records should show the date additional hours were worked, for what reason and the date the time was taken in lieu.
 - Where TOIL is accrued employees are entitled to the equivalent amount of time in compensation.
 - TOIL should normally be taken within eight weeks from the date of working the additional hours. If TOIL is not able to be taken within eight weeks, consideration may be given to payment of overtime instead by the appropriate Manager. In exceptional circumstances where otherwise agreed between the appropriate

Manager and employee, TOIL maybe taken at a later date than the end of the eight-week period.

- Paid overtime working (where agreed) should not be recorded under the TOIL arrangements.
- TOIL should be monitored by line managers to ensure employees are not exceeding the Working Time Regulations.
- TOIL does not apply to lunch periods. If lunchtime meetings are necessary then employees should utilise the flexi-time scheme to have a late or early lunch, for example.
- TOIL cannot be taken in advance of it being earned and can never be a minus balance.
- TOIL must be taken in such a way that does not prevent the employee from taking their full annual leave entitlement as well.
- TOIL is not intended to be used to accumulate extra leave.
- It is the responsibility of the line manager to agree and formally monitor TOIL records in regular supervision sessions held with the employee and to ensure that an employee is not accruing an excessive amount of TOIL.
- Any employee suspected of abusing the TOIL scheme may have it withdrawn and may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
- If an employee leaves employment, outstanding TOIL will not be paid and needs to be utilised prior to leaving the authority. Only in exceptional circumstances, i.e. an employee leaving the authority due to sickness, will payment be considered.

9. Other types of leave

In addition to the types of leave outlined in this policy, there are other forms of leave available to employees, including:

- Leave for Bursaries and Seconded employees
- Leave for Year out students
- Additional Leave or Leave for other reasons (incl. Unpaid Leave)
- Attendance at Meetings of Outside Bodies
- Leave for Trade Union purposes
- Leave for attendance at Joint Consultative Committees
- Leave for Service in Volunteer Reserve Forces
- Leave for Service as a member of another Council
- Leave for Emergency Planning duties

- Leave for Public Duties
- Leave for attendance at Court
- Leave for Attendance at Employment Tribunals / Employment Appeals Tribunals
- Leave for Employees Elected to Professional Institutes
- Paid Breaks

Details of these provisions can be found within:

- Local Conditions of Service, Section 4 (Hours and Leave) which can be accessed here: [Section 4 - Hours and Leave](#).
- Family Leave Policy, which can be accessed here: [Family-Leave-Policy-Feb-26.docx](#).

Reservists Policy which can be accessed here [Reservists - Policy on Time off for Reservists](#)

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This is a live document effective from the issue date. It supersedes any previous versions of this document, which are now withdrawn.



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