

Swindon Borough Council

Human Resources & Organisational Development

Title:	Fostering Friendly Policy
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Sponsor:	Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development
Endorsed by:	Cabinet Member for Organisational Excellence
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Introduction

Swindon Borough Council recognises and values the contribution that foster carers make to society and especially the lives of children in care. We understand that foster carers who do other work, in addition to fostering, need some flexibility in their working arrangements in order to meet the needs of their fostered child.

Swindon Borough Council is committed to support any staff member who is a foster carer or a connected carer.

We will do this, wherever possible, by creating a fostering friendly organisation that offers flexible working arrangements which respond to the needs of all foster carers or approved connected carer employees.

Swindon Borough Council's Fostering Friendly policy is supported by the Corporate Management Team and the Leader of the Council.

By becoming a foster carer, you can change the lives of children and young people who are in need of a caring family to set them on a positive path through their life and open them up to experiences they may not have had otherwise.

The process of seeking approval to become foster carers is a lengthy one and places a number of reasonable but demanding expectations upon prospective carers, particularly in relation to the training, assessment and approval process.

Wherever possible we will extend the terms of this policy to prospective foster or connected carers who have begun the formal

process of seeking approval and registration as carers.

Who does it apply to?

This policy applies to all Swindon Borough Council employees who:

- Are applying to become foster carers or approved connected 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) or are an approved connected carer

This includes employees who have transferred to the Council under TUPE regulations with the exception of:

- Those employed within schools
- Casual workers, agency workers or other workers who supply services to the Council, such as freelancers or contractors

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Policy Aim

1. Swindon Borough Council offers staff the opportunity to work flexibly where this is compatible with service demands. Our flexible working, time off for dependants and parental leave policies all apply to all employees who are foster carers and approved connected carers.
2. Employees need to be confident that they will not be treated less favourably if they take up the Council's support for foster caring. Managers should create a workplace culture that is supportive of foster carers.
3. This policy sets out the additional paid time off that we will offer prospective and existing Foster Carers and Connected Carers.

Paid time off

4. Swindon Borough Council values and will support foster carers and approved connected 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 – up to 1 day
 - Child review meetings, annual foster carer review meeting and training – up to five days

Requesting time off

5. Employees can request foster caring paid leave for authorisation by the line manager via the Employee Self-Serve System (ESS). The request for leave should outline the reason and the amount of leave required.
6. The employee's line manager will consider and approve the leave on a discretionary basis, taking into account individual circumstances of each case and operational requirements of the business and dependent on service needs. The leave will be considered and approved on a pro-rata basis.
7. Where more than the maximum entitlement of fostering friendly paid leave is requested, the line manager and the staff member should discuss other means available e.g. annual leave, time off in lieu, flexi time (where appropriate).
8. The Council will also consider requests from staff to change their work pattern because of their foster caring responsibilities. It is important to remember it is dependent on service need.

Data protection

9. The Council processes personal data collected for information concerning employees who are foster carers in accordance with the Council's [Privacy Notice Policy \(for employees\)](#) and the Council's [Retention & Disposal Policy](#) which are available on the intranet. In particular, this personal data is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of this policy.

10. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the Council's incident reporting and management process immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be managed under the Council's [Disciplinary Policy](#).

Equality

A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) has been undertaken in relation to this policy in order to identify opportunities to promote and mitigate any negative or adverse impacts on particular groups. No adverse impacts were identified for any protected characteristic group.

Advice, guidance and further information

Swindon Borough Council has a carer's network that provides practical peer-to-peer support and information for carers. Information, guidance and FAQs are available on the Swindon Borough Council website: <https://www.swindon.gov.uk/fostering>

There are a number of related policies and documentation that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- [Fostering Friendly Policy: FAQs](#)
- [Annual Leave](#)
- [Career Breaks Guidance](#)

Contacts:

HR Advice and Admin (e-mail): HRAdviceandAdmin@swindon.gov.uk	Trade Unions (intranet page) https://intranet.sbcintra.com/WorkingatSBC/netosbc/tradeunions/Pages/default.aspx
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For further information please speak to your supervisor, manager, head of service or contact HR Advice and Admin. Trade Unions members can also contact their Branch.