

Supporting Bereaved Employees Policy

The Bristol Methodist District. (Charity Number 1134873)

First Issued	January 2025
Last review	January 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 We recognise that dealing with a bereavement can be among the biggest challenges in life.
- 1.2 This policy sets out our commitment to supporting staff through their grief by providing bereavement leave, keeping in touch with staff while they are off work, and supporting staff on their return to work.
- 1.3 We acknowledge that every bereavement is different and grief impacts everyone in different ways.
- 1.4 This policy is intended to cater for a wide range of circumstances and the differing impacts that a bereavement can have, while also recognising the needs of the business.
- 1.5 The policy does not form part of your contract of employment, and we reserve the right to amend it at any time.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to employees employed by us. It does not apply to workers, contractors, consultants or any self-employed individuals working for the organisation.

Bereavement leave

3 Immediate family member (other than a child under 18 where parental bereavement leave applies)

- 3.1 In the event of the death of an immediate family member you will be granted unpaid bereavement leave. For the purposes of this policy, an "immediate family member" is defined as a:
 - 3.1.1 spouse or civil partner;
 - 3.1.2 partner (including same-sex partner);
 - 3.1.3 parent (including step-parent);
 - 3.1.4 child under the age of 18 who passes away (meaning you have the right to take parental bereavement leave);
 - 3.1.5 adult child aged 18 or over (meaning you are not eligible for parental bereavement leave);
 - 3.1.6 sibling (including step-sibling);
 - 3.1.7 grandparent; or
 - 3.1.8 grandchild.

4 Employee's child under 18 where the employee is eligible for parental bereavement leave

- 4.1 We recognise that, while dealing with any bereavement is difficult, the death of a child is among the most devastating events that an employee can ever face.
- 4.2 We are committed to supporting staff coping with the loss of a child by ensuring that bereaved parents can take parental bereavement leave. This is a legal entitlement for bereaved parents to be absent from work for up to 2-weeks where their child passes away.
- 4.3 Whatever your length of service, you can take parental bereavement leave if you have lost a child (i.e. under the age of 18) and are the:
 - 4.3.1 parent of a child who has passed away; or

- 4.3.2 partner of the child's parent, where you live in an enduring family relationship with the child and their parent; or
 - 4.3.3 "parent in fact" of a child who has passed away, which means that, for a continuous period of at least four weeks before the child passed away, they have been living with the child and had "day-to-day responsibility" for the child (but who is not being paid to look after the child).
- 4.4 In practice, this means that most employees with parental responsibility for a child who passes away can take parental bereavement leave.
- 4.5 Parental bereavement leave is available in a number of other scenarios, including for adoptive parents whose child has passed away and where a parent suffers a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy.
- 4.6 If you have suffered a bereavement but are unsure if you are entitled to parental bereavement leave, you should contact your Line Manager for clarification.
- 4.7 A bereaved parent can take parental bereavement leave at any time from the date of the death of the child until 56 weeks after of the date of the death of the child.
- 4.8 To be eligible for statutory parental bereavement pay, employees who are on parental bereavement leave are required to have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with their employer by the week before the week in which their child passes away, and still be employed by that employer on the day on which the child passes away; and normal weekly earnings in the eight weeks up to the week before the child's death that are no less than the lower earnings limit for national insurance contribution purposes.
- 4.9 If you take parental bereavement leave and qualify for statutory parental bereavement pay, you will be paid at the rate set by the Government for the relevant tax year, or 90% of your average weekly earnings where this figure is lower than the Government's set weekly rate. *A non-eligible employee's parental bereavement leave will be unpaid.*

Individual who is not immediate family member

- 4.10 We recognise that you may be grieving following the death an individual who is not an immediate family member, but with whom you nevertheless have a close relationship, for example an aunt, an uncle, a cousin or a close friend.
- 4.11 If this is the case, you can request bereavement leave and it will be up to your Line Manager to decide whether or not to grant bereavement leave and, if so, how much bereavement leave to grant. The decision will depend on the circumstances, considering issues such as:
- 4.11.1 the closeness of your relationship with the deceased;
 - 4.11.2 your obligations towards the deceased (e.g., if responsible for arranging the deceased's funeral);
 - 4.11.3 travel required (e.g., if you need to travel a significant distance to be with relatives); and
 - 4.11.4 any bereavement requirements in relation to religion, such as an extended period of mourning, with the onus on you to tell your Line Manager about these requirements.

5 Support during bereavement

- 5.1 If you have suffered a bereavement and cannot attend work, you should inform your Line Manager of what has happened by telephone as soon as reasonably practicable. This will allow us to support you.
- 5.2 You should inform your Line Manager of what you would like colleagues to know about the situation and of any urgent tasks that other staff can pick up or meetings that need to be cancelled or rearranged.

5.3 Following the initial contact, you and your Line Manager should keep in touch. The level of contact is a matter for agreement between the two of you.

6 Other types of leave

- 6.1 Where you have exhausted bereavement leave, or you are not entitled to bereavement leave under this policy, or do not wish to take bereavement leave because it is unpaid, you can still apply for annual leave in the usual way.
- 6.2 Employees who are not entitled to bereavement leave under this policy may be able to take unpaid time off under our separate Time off for Dependants Policy.
- 6.3 Employees can take unpaid time off work to take action necessary 'in consequence of' the death of a dependant. However, the right is limited to the death of a spouse, civil partner, child or parent, or someone who lives in the employee's household not as a lodger, tenant or employee.
- 6.4 If you are taking sickness absence as a result of ill health brought on by a bereavement, our usual Sickness Absence Policy applies. Under the sickness absence policy, you must:
- 6.4.1 complete a self-certification form for sickness of seven calendar days or less; and
 - 6.4.2 provide medical evidence for sickness of more than seven calendar days.

7 Return to work

- 7.1 Once you are back at work, you can discuss with your Line Manager what further support we can provide.
- 7.2 We recognise that a bereaved employee may not be able to return immediately to their full duties or way of working. We see the value of temporarily adjusting a bereaved employee's duties or phasing the employee back to work when it is appropriate to do so.
- 7.3 We will consider requests to make temporary changes to working arrangements, such as allowing you to work reduced hours; work from home on certain days; or be reassigned to another role.
- 7.4 Depending on the nature of the temporary changes, the Line Manager may agree the temporary adjustments informally with you, or you may need to make a formal request.
- 7.5 We recognise that some bereavements will result in an employee being permanently unable to return to their full duties or way of working.
- 7.6 Permanent changes that could be requested include moving to part-time working; working from home on certain days; or being reassigned to another role, if such a permanent position is available.
- 7.7 Line managers will consider requests for permanent changes, which may involve you making a formal request.
- 7.8 Should we agree permanent changes that impact on your terms and conditions of employment, you will be asked to agree to a variation of contract.

8 Health and safety

- 8.1 A bereavement can result in an employee experiencing lapses in concentration, impaired decision-making, fatigue, and depression or anxiety. If you are concerned about your fitness for work, you should discuss this with your Line Manager.
- 8.2 We reserve the right to require an employee who is unfit for work to go home on sick leave or to adjust their duties temporarily.

8.3 It may be appropriate to seek a medical report on the employee via our Obtaining Medical Records Policy or to carry out a risk assessment.

9 Data protection

9.1 When dealing with parental bereavement leave, Line Managers will process any personal data collected in accordance with our Data Protection Policy. In particular, Line Managers will record only the personal information required to deal with a request for bereavement leave and keep this information only for as long as necessary to deal with the request and provide the necessary support.

10 Review

10.1 This policy may be reviewed at any time at the request of any member of staff, but it will be automatically reviewed two years after initial approval and thereafter on a biennial basis unless organisational changes, legislations, guidance, or non-compliance prompt an earlier review.

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12 Definitions

12.1 The Bristol Methodist District ("we", "us", "our")

12.2 The Employee ("you", "your")

Document control box

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