

Supporting Foster Carers Policy

The Bristol Methodist District. (Charity Number 1134873)

First Issued	January 2025
Last review	January 2025

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out our support for employees who are undertaking the care of a child or children under a foster-care arrangement with a local authority.
- 1.2 We recognise that, in such cases, employees have specific obligations towards the child or children in accordance with their arrangement with the local authority and that, in some cases, the child or children may require a high level of care.
- 1.3 This policy is intended to form part of our organisation's overall family-friendly approach, and it attempts to strike a balance between our business needs and the needs of the employee to meet their care obligations.
- 1.4 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.

3 Letting us know

- 3.1 We are committed to providing employees with support to help them to balance their work and foster caring responsibilities.
- 3.2 If you are a foster carer or you intend to train as a foster carer, you are encouraged to discuss this with your Line Manager to ensure that you are provided with the right level of support.

4 Entitlement to special leave to care for new foster children

- 4.1 We recognise that, if you are a foster carer, you may need to take time off work to help any child in your care to settle into their new environment. You may also need time off to attend training courses, meetings with professionals or other appointments related to your position as a foster carer.
- 4.2 If you require time off to attend training or meetings, or to care for any child under your care at the start of a foster-care arrangement, you may request special leave to do so.
- 4.3 You will qualify for time off under this policy if you have been continuously employed for at least 26-weeks.

5 Amount of special leave you can take

- 5.1 You can take up to 5 days' special leave. If you are caring for more than one foster child, you do not have a separate entitlement to special leave under this policy for each child.
- 5.2 To make a request you should give your Line Manager as much notice as possible of when you need the time off.
- 5.3 All special leave must be approved in advance by your Line Manager. Every effort will be made to meet your request however, there may be circumstances where your Line Manager may turn down request due to operational needs or where we have insufficient capacity to accommodate high levels of leave.

6 Pay during special leave

6.1 Any leave taken as special leave under this policy is unpaid.

7 Other types of leave

7.1 Special leave under this policy is intended to be to help you as a foster carer settle any child under your care into their new environment, or to attend training courses, meetings with professionals or other appointments related to your position as a foster carer.

7.2 We recognise that you may need a longer period of time off work that goes beyond the special leave under this policy. In such cases, we may agree for you to take the time off work as annual leave.

7.3 We also have a separate Career Break Policy and Sabbatical Leave Policy if you feel that you would benefit from an extended period of time away from work and if you need to take time off to manage an unexpected or sudden problem relating to a dependant and for you to make any necessary longer-term caring arrangements, please see our Time off for Dependants Policy.

7.4 We also provide guidance on an employee's statutory right to carer's leave to provide or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need, and other support that we offer to combine work with care. The statutory right to carer's leave is intended to be for planned and foreseen caring commitments.

8 Requesting flexible working

8.1 We realise that flexible working can help navigate the challenges of foster caring while also working and we enable a wide range of flexible working practices within the workplace.

8.2 If you feel that you would benefit from a permanent change to your working arrangements to help balance work and caring responsibilities, please read our Flexible Working Requests Policy.

8.3 We appreciate that the option to work flexibly on a temporary rather than a permanent basis may be enough for you to balance work and your foster caring responsibilities. This could include working from home, hybrid working or changing your start and finish times.

8.4 If you feel that you would benefit from a temporary change to your working arrangement on an ad hoc basis, you should discuss and agree these with your Line Manager.

8.5 We will try to facilitate temporary flexible working arrangements wherever this is possible and will continue to review these to ensure that they meet your needs.

9 Foster to adopt

9.1 If you are a local authority foster parent who has been approved as a prospective adopter, and a child is placed with you in a "foster to adopt" situation, you will be entitled to adoption leave and pay. Please refer to our separate Adoption Leave Policy for more information.

10 Data protection

10.1 We will process any personal data collected in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

10.2 Data collected from the point at which we become aware of the issue is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of providing the necessary support.

11 Review

11.1 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.

12 Definitions

- 12.1 The Bristol Methodist District ("we", "us", "our")
12.2 The Employee ("you", "your")

Document control box

Policy title:	Supporting Foster Carers Policy
Date approved:	January 2025
Version:	1.1
Supersedes:	NA
Next review date:	January 2027
Lead contact:	District Policy Committee