

# Flexible Working and Special Leave Policy

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Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to highlight available options for managers and staff in achieving a balanced work/home life.
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*This policy can only be considered valid when viewed via the ICB website or ICB staff intranet. If this document is printed into hard copy or saved to another location, you must check that the version number on your copy matches that of the one published.*

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## **1. Introduction**

NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB) is committed to offering flexible, modern employment practices which recognise that all our staff want to strike a sensible balance between their work and home life. The ICB recognises that different balances may be needed at different times during an employee's working life.

The purpose of this policy is to highlight the options available for managers and staff to consider when trying to achieve the right work-life balance for a staff member. Consideration must always be given to the service needs and those of colleagues so that we achieve a solution which works for all parties.

## **2. Scope**

This policy applies equally to all ICB directly employed staff and in accordance with the ICB Equal Opportunities Policy.

## **3. Policy Statement**

This policy has been based on a number of guidelines including relevant employment legislation, NHS terms and conditions of service and good employment practice.

Flexible working options should be included in an advertisement and /or discussed at interview if appropriate for the advertised job.

## **4. Responsibilities**

### **4.1 Responsibility of Managers**

Ensuring that they are aware of the content of this policy and its implementation. Ensure all staff are aware of this policy and procedures contained within. Follow procedures and treat each request that arises under this policy fairly.

### **4.2 Responsibility of Employees**

Be aware of and follow the procedures in this policy.

### **4.3 Responsibility of Human Resources**

Provide initial training and on-going support in the application of this policy.

### **4.4 Responsibility of Staff Representatives**

Provide advice and support to staff on work life balance related concerns/queries.

## **5. Access to Flexible Working**

Flexible working may be requested for any personal or service reason. A manager may

suggest flexible working patterns to their team or possibly to an individual with a particular need. An employee may also approach their manager to discuss flexible working. Managers and employees should discuss the options recognising the potential impact on colleagues and services but with a genuine desire to find a satisfactory solution to meet all needs. Undertaking trial periods could determine if a different working pattern would suit both the service and the employee. There should be feedback to an individual if flexible working is not appropriate due to operational demands.

Managers will need to give serious consideration to such requests and will therefore need to reconsider ways in which work is organised to allow for more flexible arrangements.

The ICB would wish to accommodate flexible working where possible and therefore flexible working is available to all staff not just those with caring/parental responsibilities.

If a change is agreed, it will be permanent and therefore constitute a change in terms and conditions of employment.

## **5.1 Eligibility**

All NHS employees who are employed by the ICB have the contractual right to request flexible working from day one of employment regardless of role, shift pattern, team or pay band.

Employees can make more than one flexible working request per year and can do so regardless of the reasons for them. This does not preclude other statutory or policy entitlements where flexible working may be relevant.

## **5.2 The Application Process**

Staff may if they wish, take advantage of one of the schemes below, which allows flexibility in taking extended leave from the workplace. There are two options to consider:

Unpaid Leave – Staff may wish to consider taking a period of unpaid leave of no less than 1 week and no more than 12 weeks break (breaks over 12 weeks fall under the Career Break Scheme) during the annual leave year April to March. The rules regarding the taking of leave remain the same in line with the ICBs Annual Leave Policy. Employees opting for this arrangement will pay for the leave on a monthly basis therefore spreading the cost over the 12-month period of the financial year or the remaining months to the end of the financial year. In the eventuality that the employee leaves during this period, arrangements will be made to recover any outstanding amount from the final salary.

Where a member of staff is given unpaid leave of a month or more in any given leave year (apart from unpaid maternity, shared parental or adoption leave) this will have the effect of reducing the total entitlement for the year. The entitlement

will be re-calculated and the number of months of unpaid leave deducted from the full year entitlement.

Payroll considerations for taking unpaid leave: Authorised unpaid leave is a deduction that is made before Tax and Pension deductions have been made. (e.g., it is a salary sacrifice). This reduces the employee's pensionable whole time equivalent, as pension is not paid on their total amount of earnings. Therefore, there is a small impact on the employees NHS Pension.

Purchase Additional Annual Leave – Staff may consider purchasing additional annual leave on a pro rata basis, via deduction from salary over the 12 months leave year period, April to March, or a one-off lump sum payment, up to a maximum of 4 contractual weeks leave per annual leave year. In the eventuality that the employee leaves during this period, arrangements will be made to recover any outstanding amount from the final salary.

Payroll considerations for purchasing Additional Annual Leave: This is a deduction that is made before Tax and Pension deductions have been made (e.g., it is a salary sacrifice). This reduces the employee's pensionable whole time equivalent, as pension is not paid on their total amount of earnings. Therefore, there is a small impact on the employees NHS Pension.

Staff who wish to apply for one of the above-mentioned options must first discuss their case with their manager. It will initially be the employees' responsibility to consider ways in which workloads can be managed in order to support the taking of unpaid leave/additional annual leave. It will be at the Line Managers discretion as to whether applications are approved or not, taking into account service demands and whether the staff member has submitted any previous applications.

Application forms for the above schemes can be located on the staff [Intranet](#). However, managers must also complete the relevant payroll documentation to authorise the change with payroll.

### **5.3 Reasons for Turning down Requests.**

A request may be refused on the grounds of:

- extra costs that will damage the business.
- the work cannot be reorganised among other staff.
- people cannot be recruited to do the work.
- flexible working will affect quality and performance.
- the business will not be able to meet customer demand.
- there's a lack of work to do during the proposed working times.
- the business is planning changes to the workforce.

A refusal must be for genuine and justifiable reasons.

### **5.4 Type of Flexible Working**

Managers are encouraged to consider flexible working in its widest sense as it is often the best way to meet short- or long-term needs. Flexible working patterns can be considered for an individual or for a team. It may address the difficult balance of meeting service demands and employee's needs. Not all options are suitable for all situations, but some formal or informal patterns are considered below.

**Job Share** (Time Share) - Job sharing provides opportunities for staff who cannot work full time but who are employed in a post that needs full or near full time cover. The whole job is split into two. The job share partners accept the full responsibilities of the whole job and share its rewards. It may be an option to pair up staff who wish to work part time into job shares rather than have lots of part-time posts.

**Part Time Working** - Part time hours may vary from just a few hours to over 30 hours per week. Similarly, patterns of work vary tremendously to fit in with personal circumstances. Part time staff receive pro-rata benefits such as salary and holidays (in line with the Annual Leave Policy). There is no restriction on the number of hours you need to work to join the NHS Pension scheme. Managers and employees need to be flexible in thinking about how part time working may suit the post in question – if in doubt, a trial period could be undertaken.

**Annual Hours** - Annualised hours is a system whereby staff are contracted to work a certain number of hours per year. This suits posts where the workload has peaks and troughs. It can also enable staff to work fewer hours at certain times during the year when they have greater demands from home. The system can be linked to self-rostering and as such hours would be agreed with the manager at least one to three weeks in advance.

**Compressed Working Week/Fortnight** - This is a system where full-time hours are worked over, for example, 9 days over a fortnight instead of 10. This does involve long days and should initially start on a trial period to ensure no ill effects to the employee or work. The extra day taken off will need to be agreed with the manager in advance and could vary from week to week.

**Term Time Only Working** - Staff who work in term time only do not work at all during the school holidays but get paid all the year round at a pro rata rate. The salary is divided into twelve and paid monthly.

A term time only contract will not exceed 38/39 weeks of the year and salary payments will be pro rata for these 38/39 weeks, thus allowing for at least 13 weeks of school holidays each year. Contracts are restricted to 38/39 weeks on the following basis:

- The school term will be deemed to be 38 weeks, unless otherwise stated, that being the number of pupil contact weeks. An employee is not expected to work on days when pupils do not attend school unless otherwise specified.
- The school term will be deemed to be 39 weeks, unless otherwise stated,

that being the number of teacher contact weeks. An employee is not expected to work on days when teaching staff do not attend school unless otherwise specified.

Employees on term time only contracts are not allowed to take annual leave during term time, but managers, can authorise unpaid leave in exceptional circumstances.

Line Managers must utilise the ICB Term-Time only calculator (TTO Calculator) (this can be located on the staff [Intranet](#)) to establish the number of hours which need to be recorded on ESR. The figure entered onto ESR is inclusive of the employees' working hours, annual holiday, and bank holiday entitlements pro-rata to that of a full year employee.

The weeks where a school holiday occurs must be documented using the Term-Time only record form (this can be located on the staff [Intranet](#)). The Term-Time only record form should be completed in conjunction with the ICB TTO calculator and should be completed and agreed prior to the commencement of the next school year.

In the event of a Term-Time only employee being in a half or nil pay situation due to sickness absence, the Term-Time only employee should continue to receive full payment for their annual leave and bank holiday entitlements. Line Managers must notify Payroll to ensure the appropriate payment is made for the annual leave and bank holiday hours. The half or nil pay situation will only affect the payment for the employees' working hours.

Time off in Lieu - The ICB encourages the promotion of flexible working in the interest of the service, and in certain circumstances this may mean an employee needs to work extra hours in a day which may give entitlement to Time off in Lieu. All time off in lieu must be agreed by the line manager before it is taken.

Flexible Working Day/Pattern - Flexible working could include altering start and/or finish times, lunch times or days, to suit an individual's needs on an occasional basis, or for a period of time to cover a particular home life situation, bearing in mind the needs of the service.

Voluntary reduced working time - This is where people work reduced hours by agreement at a reduced salary.

Flexible Retirement – please refer to Section 15 of this Policy.

Working from Home - Some posts may be suitable for working from home on a full time, part time or ad hoc basis for example to complete a particular piece of work. This enables employees to work flexibly, for example, in the evenings or at weekends – to allow for time off during the week. Working from home could make one feel very isolated but if it is the right job to enable working from home and the time is used wisely, it can be beneficial to the employee and the organisation. Points to consider include:

- The nature of the work that may be done at home.



- Equipment that can be used at home, such as a computer, whether equipment can be borrowed.
- Security, confidentiality, and safety issues connected with using IT equipment off site.
- Contact arrangements e.g., attending team briefing and statutory training, and for regular meetings with their manager.
- Health and Safety issues

Please see the ICBs Agile Working Guidance on the [Intranet](#) for further, more detailed information.

## **6. Difference between flexible working and agile working**

**Flexible Working** - Flexible working is a circumstantial or contractual concept that can be used to meet the lifestyle demands of individual members of staff by breaking down the barriers of a traditional 9-5 working day. Flexible working allows for more bespoke work patterns – agreed between employer and employee – to flexibly agree things such as hours, location (e.g., working from home) and job sharing.

**Agile Working** - Agile working is about encouraging new ways of working to improve productivity, boost motivation and prioritise the physical and mental wellbeing of staff in order to nurture a more efficient workforce. It's a more responsive approach which enables employees to react to specific requirements.

## **7. Purchase of Additional Annual Leave / Unpaid Leave**

Staff may if they wish take advantage of one of the schemes below, which allows flexibility in taking extended leave from the workplace. There are two options to consider:

### **7.1 Unpaid Leave**

Staff may wish to consider taking a period of unpaid leave of no less than 1 week and no more than 12 weeks break (breaks over 12 weeks fall under the Career Break Scheme) during the annual leave year April to March. The rules regarding the taking of leave remain the same in line with the ICBs Annual Leave Policy. Employees opting for this arrangement will pay for the leave on a monthly basis therefore spreading the cost over the 12-month period. In the eventuality that the employee leaves during this period, arrangements will be made to recover any outstanding amount from the final salary.

Payroll considerations for taking unpaid leave: Authorised unpaid leave is a deduction that is made after Tax and Pension deductions have been made. Therefore, pensionable days are not reduced as this pay has received a pension deduction before the unpaid leave has been deducted.

### **7.2 Purchase Additional Annual Leave**

Staff may consider purchasing additional annual leave on a pro rata basis, via deduction from salary over the 12 months leave year period, April to March, or a one-off lump sum payment, up to a maximum of 4 contractual weeks leave per annual leave year. Therefore, such requests such be submitted and agreed prior to the leave year period. In the eventuality that the employee leaves during this period, arrangements will be made to recover any outstanding amount from the final salary.

Payroll considerations for purchasing Additional Annual Leave: This is a deduction that is made before Tax and Pension deductions have been made (e.g., it is a salary sacrifice). This reduces the employee's pensionable whole time equivalent, as pension is not paid on their total amount of earnings. Therefore, there is a small impact on the employees NHS Pension.

Staff who wish to apply for one of the above-mentioned options must first discuss their case with their manager. It will initially be the employees' responsibility to consider ways in which workloads can be managed in order to support the taking of unpaid leave/additional annual leave. It will be at the Accountable Officer's or identified deputy's discretion as to whether applications are approved or not, taking into account service demands and whether the staff member has submitted any previous applications.

Application forms for the above schemes can be located this can be located on the staff [Intranet](#). However, managers must also complete the relevant payroll documentation to authorise the change with payroll.

## **8. Time off to deal with Emergencies involving dependents and domestic responsibilities.**

All employees have the right to a reasonable amount of time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependent. Where possible, employees should consider if they can work from home as an alternative to taking time off work. Managers should therefore, wherever possible and within service needs, allow staff reasonable time off to attend to emergencies involving dependents, such as a child being ill whilst at school.

A dependent is a spouse, partner, child or parent, or a person who lives with the employee but not as a lodger. A dependent could also be someone who reasonably relies on the employee for care, e.g., an elderly neighbour.

Staff can also request time off to deal with domestic emergencies at home such as a boiler breakdown.

- For guidance purposes, reasonable time off would usually be a few days (up to 5 days) per rolling 12-month period, not regular days off or long periods off. Working from home rather than taking leave - this must have prior approval from line management and may not be appropriate on some occasions.

If longer time off is needed, other arrangements will be considered, such as:

- Reducing working hours on a permanent or temporary basis
- Altering working patterns to allow great flexibility.

- Career break

Time off for dependents and domestic responsibilities is intended to support employees in times of urgent and unforeseen need (normally 1 day with pay) in order to enable staff to deal with the crisis and make arrangements to manage their situation. Examples of appropriate situations are:

- If a dependent relative is injured or taken ill, it will allow time to care for them and make arrangements for longer-term care.
- If normal care arrangements breakdown, such as a child minder being ill, or an elderly parent goes into hospital and the other parent cannot look after themselves.
- If a dependent comes out of hospital following major surgery, it will allow time to settle them in at home and ensure planned long term care arrangements are working.
- If you are called to school for an urgent meeting regarding an incident involving a child (e.g., suspension from school, child is being bullied at school, in a fight etc.)
- A tree falls on the house or the house is flooded.

In exceptional circumstances up to 5 days with pay may be granted, depending on the severity of the situation. The granting of paid leave for time off to deal with dependents and domestic responsibilities will be at manager's discretion. Depending on the situation managers could ask staff to take annual leave or time off in lieu, they could also allow a combination of paid leave and annual/unpaid leave or time off in lieu.

In the first instant the employee should contact their manager to inform them of their situation and request time off. On return to work the relevant application form must be completed, (this can be located on the staff [Intranet](#)).

## **9. Bereavement Leave**

Some situations require a supportive approach from the ICB, therefore for times of great distress staff can request bereavement leave. Between 1 to 5 days with pay could be granted depending on the severity of the situation. In exceptional circumstances, staff may be granted reasonable additional time off whether through paid, unpaid, or annual leave.

Examples of appropriate situations where bereavement leave may be granted are outlined below:

- Death of a close relative/dependent, it will allow time to make funeral arrangements and/or attend the funeral.

In the first instant the employee should contact their manager to inform them of their situation and request time off. On return to work the relevant application, form must be completed, (this can be located on the staff [Intranet](#)).

### **9.1 Child Bereavement Leave**

In line with Section 23 of Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions the ICB is committed to showing compassion in circumstances where staff, who are parents, experience the death of a child. The provisions below set out the national standard of leave and pay in these circumstances.

For the purpose of this Section, a bereaved parent is anyone who had responsibility as a primary for a child who is now deceased. This includes adoptive parents, legal guardians, individuals who are fostering to adopt, and any other parent/child relationship that the employing organisation deems to be reasonable. For example, this may include grandparents who have had caring responsibilities for a child, or instances where someone other than the biological parent is the primary carer (this could be the case where the parents of the child have separated).

There is no requirement for the child to be under 18 years of age.

All bereaved parents will be eligible for a minimum of two weeks of child bereavement leave. A bereaved parent will not be required to demonstrate any eligibility criteria in order to access bereavement leave or pay.

All bereaved parents will be entitled to two weeks' occupational child bereavement pay which will include any entitlement to statutory parental bereavement pay. Pay is calculated on the basis of what the individual would have received had he/she been at work. This would normally be based on the previous three months at work or any other reference period that may be locally agreed.

Where both parents of a deceased child work in the same NHS organisation, the entitlements in this Section will apply to both members of staff.

Parents who experience a still birth from the 24th week of pregnancy will be eligible for these provisions and will subsequently still be eligible for the provisions set out in Section 15 of Agenda for Change. Bereavement leave and pay may be extended to members of staff, by local arrangement, in these circumstances where they were hoping to become parents under surrogacy arrangements.

Bereaved parents do not have to take the two weeks of leave in a continuous block. The employee should agree with their employer the leave they wish to take. Taking child bereavement leave is an individual choice, it is not compulsory for the employee to take child bereavement leave.

Bereaved parents may request to take child bereavement leave at any point up to 56 weeks following the death of the child. Should the parent wish to take child bereavement leave immediately following the death of a child they shall be able to do so upon informing their employer that they will be absent from work for this purpose. Should the parent wish to take child bereavement leave at another time, after the initial period following the death, they should give their employer reasonable notice of their intention to take the leave at this time.

The method for informing the ICB of a child bereavement should be recorded on Special Leave Form (this can be located on the staff [Intranet](#)).

Bereaved parents will at no point be required to produce the child's Death Certificate, or any other official documents, in order to access child bereavement, leave or pay. The ICB may ask for a written declaration from the employee, within a reasonable timeframe, in order to satisfy statutory requirements.

## **10. Time of for appointments**

This is for staff or for them to accompany a dependent. Examples of this are as follows:

- Routine appointments, for example to a GP, dentist, clinic, or regular hospital appointment should wherever possible be made in one's own time. Working arrangements may be changed to allow the member of staff to make these hours up, however, if this is not possible time off without pay or annual leave will be given.
- Consultant appointments are more difficult to arrange and indicate that a more serious health problem exists; therefore, these may be taken in works time with pay within reason and with the manager's consent.
- Non-routine appointments concerning the welfare and care of a dependant (e.g., for a doctors or hospital appointment, making arrangements for resettlement of people in long-term sheltered accommodation/nursing home/psychiatric care etc.) where the situation is stressful and the dependant cannot go alone, may be with pay.

## **11. Time off for IVF Treatment**

The ICB recognises the emotional pressure of undergoing IVF treatment and understands the potential anxiety and distress which individuals may suffer during the process. The ICB wishes to support members of staff who undertake such treatment themselves or whose partners do so. There is no legal right for an employee to request time off for IVF treatment or for any other form of treatment for or investigation into infertility. Requests for time off will therefore be treated in the same way that requests for time off for any other medical appointment – see section 10 above. Eligible staff should request leave in relation to IVF treatment from their line manager. A member of staff must make an application to their manager for paid time off for fertility treatment at least four weeks prior to the commencement of treatment (where possible). Further information can be found in 'IVF Treatment – Guidance for Line Managers.'

## **12. Special Leave for Gender Re-assignment**

The ICB recognises the emotional and psychological pressure involved in undergoing gender re-assignment and wishes to support any employee during the process where possible. The organisation will allow the employee to use a reasonable number of days leave using annual leave or unpaid leave during the course of the process or where possible to work flexibly in line with service needs. Any agreement will be made with the Line Manager.

Any leave requested for appointments will be managed in accordance with Section 8 of this policy (doctors/ dentist and medical appointments).

### **13. Absences caused by adverse weather conditions.**

There will be a few occasions during the year when some staff can either not get to work on time, need to go home early, are unable to travel, or cannot come into work as their child's school has shut due to snow or other severe weather conditions.

Whilst the ICB will make every effort to assist staff and be sympathetic to their circumstances, it is unreasonable to expect these employees to be treated more favourably than those who attend for work despite the difficulties caused by the weather. The following leave will be available for absences in these exceptional circumstances:

- **Annual Leave** - Although the normal policy is for this to be agreed in advance, in the exceptional circumstances of heavy snow etc., it is acceptable for staff to take a day's annual leave from their existing entitlement.
- **Unpaid Leave** - Although the normal policy is for this to be agreed in advance, in the exceptional circumstances of heavy snow etc., it is acceptable for unpaid leave to be agreed on the day that the employee is unable to travel into work due to bad weather.
- **Working from Home** – This may be granted when staff are able to work from home on specific projects or pieces of work. It is acceptable for this to be agreed on an ad hoc basis when staff are unable to travel to the office due to bad weather.
- **Flexible Hours** - A manager may agree revised working hours in order to enable the employee to fulfil their contracted hours, e.g., a missed or short day one week can be made up over the next week(s).

### **14. Time off for Public Duties**

This policy reflects the ICB recognition of its role in the community by supporting staff to undertake essential civic and public duties. The ICB will allow reasonable time off for such activities and may contribute by giving some of that time off with pay.

The amount of leave granted to a member of staff is at the discretion of the manager. He/she must decide what is reasonable in the circumstances having regard for:

- The amount of time required to perform such duties.
- The amount of time previously permitted to that individual and whether it was paid or unpaid.
- The effect on the service provision.

In order to do this, members of staff should produce in advance where possible written information outlining dates and times and frequency of meetings/training commitments

etc. for the year. This will assist the manager in deciding how much time off is reasonable and how much of that time off will be paid and unpaid.

Leave is applicable to both full and part time members of staff, although it may be appropriate for part timers to be granted leave pro rata. Types of public duties:

- Serving as a justice of the peace
- Attendance at court as a witness or on jury service
- Membership of a Local Authority
- Membership of the Broads Authority
- Membership of the National Rivers Authority
- Membership of an NHS Trust
- Membership of any statutory tribunal
- Membership of a Board of Prison Visitors
- Membership of the managing or governing body of an educational establishment maintained by a Local Education Authority.
- Membership of a governing body of a grant-maintained school, further or higher education corporation or of a school board or board of management of a college of further education or self-governing school.
- Attendance as a witness at appeal hearings
- Courts will reimburse wages to the ICB on application. Also, applications can be made to the courts to excuse staff from jury service in exceptional circumstances where they cannot be spared.

## **15. Members of the Reserve Forces/Cadet Forces**

The reserve forces include The Maritime Reserve Forces, Army Reserve, and the Royal Air Force Reserves.

The ICB recognises that many of the skills that reservists gain during their training are transferable to the workplace.

It is a requirement that employees advise their line manager as soon as possible of their intention to become a reservist. This requirement is to allow the department/organisation to deal with the practical implications.

### **15.1 Eligibility**

These provisions apply to all employees.

### **15.2 Entitlement**

Employees who need time off for activities as reservists are expected to use days out of their normal holiday entitlement. To avoid reservists being unable to take time off when needed, they should apply for any leave they require as soon as possible. This should be submitted in the usual manner to the employee's Line Manager in accordance with the Annual Leave Policy.

An additional 5 days paid leave and 5 days unpaid leave in any 12-month rolling

period will be given to help the reservist meet their commitments. This includes attendance at the annual camp.

Reservists may be 'called up' for military operations, with notice typically given 28 days before mobilisation. Should this occur, the employee should present their MOD papers to their Line Manager as soon as possible after receipt, outlining the date and possible duration of the employee's mobilisation. During this period of active service, unpaid leave will be granted. Employment will continue without pay, unless specified otherwise by the employee. Staff wishing to preserve pension rights should contact the Pension Officer within Payroll for clarification of their personal circumstances.

Reservists have the right to return to their former posts on terms and conditions no less favourable than those that would have applied if they had not been 'called up.' To exercise the right to be reinstated, the reservist must write to the organisation confirming the employee's intention to return to work within 13 weeks of a return.

The continuity of a reservist's employment is not broken by the period of voluntary mobilisation if the employee is reinstated within their employment within 6 months of the demobilisation.

## **16. Time off for Study**

Employees may submit requests in relation to any type of study or training that they believe will improve their effectiveness in their organisation and the performance of the business. Please refer to the Policy for Further Education and CPD for further information (HR10).

## **17. Religious Observance**

When an employee seeks leave for a religious festival or cultural observance, employees will be entitled to request the following, subject to the needs of the service:

- Flexibility in arrangement of hours
- Annual leave
- Time off in lieu
- Unpaid leave

When requesting time off/leave for a religious observance, employees should provide as much notice as possible to their Line Manager.

## **18. Employment Interviews**

To attend an internal interview within the organisation, paid leave will be granted with the Line Manager's approval and within the needs of the service.

Paid leave will be granted to attend interviews external to the organisation if the employee is under notice of redundancy or have been notified that they are 'at risk.'



For any other interviews external to the organisation, annual or unpaid leave may be requested. Any requests for annual leave should be submitted to the Line Manager in accordance with the organisation's Annual Leave Policy.

## **19. Employment Break Scheme**

An employment break could be considered to enable an employee to leave their employment on a temporary basis. It could be used to bring up children, eldercare, care for a dependent person, undertake research, sabbaticals, re-enter full time education, or travel.

Applications will be considered in line with the interests of the service and the ability to offer suitable employment after the break.

Please refer to section 36 of the Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions of Service Handbook for more information and guidance relating to taking an Employment Break. In brief:

- Applications should be submitted in writing.
- All breaks should be subject to an agreement between the employer and employee before the break begins.
- Open to all employees who have a minimum of twelve months' service.
- Maximum length of break is 5 years; minimum length of break is 3 months.
- If the break is longer than one year, there will be a return to as similar a job as possible.

If a member of staff chooses to take an employment break at any stage during their career their pay progression will be 'frozen' at the pay point they have achieved at their last working day. The member of staff therefore returns to work at the same pay point they left on including any cost-of-living increase awarded during the employment break period. This incremental credit must be stopped and restarted by the employees' manager via change notices at the start and end of the employment break period.

## **20. Flexible Retirement Options**

This gives an opportunity for members of the ICB's staff to work flexibly, balancing work and home life more effectively. It may be that a member of staff approaching retirement wants to spend more time with family members, to pursue other leisure activities or, quite simply, wants to spend less time at work and more time at home.

There are a number of flexible retirement options available, but some are dependent on whether staff are in the 1995 section or the 2008 section. Further information is available in the ICB Retirement Policy and from the Pension's Agency website – <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-pensions>

## **21. Appeals Process**

If the employee feels that an application for other leave has been unreasonably declined, they should discuss the matter with their Line Manager in the first instance, putting their case in writing within 5 days. If the manager upholds the original decision s/he should respond in writing setting out the reasons for the decision within 5 days.

If the employee still feels aggrieved by this decision the employee should appeal through the grievance procedure.

## **22. Equality Impact Assessment**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy review and can be located on the staff [Intranet](#).

## **23. Implementation and Dissemination**

The Senior Corporate Business Manager will arrange for all ratified policies to be published on the ICB Website or Staff [Intranet](#) and staff will be notified of all policy activity through the ICB's internal email communication system.

The ICB website or staff [Intranet](#) <https://intranet.lancashireandsouthcumbria.nhs.uk/> will be the only point of access for up to date, version controlled ICB policies. A full record of all dissemination activity will be managed by the Corporate Business Team.

## **24. Training Requirements**

It is not envisaged that staff will need specific training on implementation of this policy. It is anticipated that any member of staff with line management responsibilities familiarise themselves with this policy.

## **25. Monitor and Review**

The ICB will have responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of this policy on a periodic basis. Where review is necessary due to legislative change, this will happen immediately.