



**Scottish
Ambulance
Service**
Taking Care to the Patient



**SPECIAL LEAVE POLICY
APRIL 2016
VERSION 1.0**

DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET:Key Information:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Title: | Special leave policy |
| Date Published/Issued: | April 2016 |
| Date Effective From: | April 2016 |
| Version/Issue Number: | 1.0 |
| Document Type: | Policy |
| Document status: | Agreed |
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| File Location: | @SAS |

Revision History:

| Version: | Date: | Summary of Changes: | Name: | Changes Marked: |
|----------|---------|--------------------------------|-------|-----------------|
| 0.01 | 1.10.15 | Initial draft for consultation | NA | |
| 0.02 | 4.2.16 | Draft for sign off at NPF | NA | |
| 0.03 | 14.4.16 | Draft for sign off at SGC | NA | |
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Approvals: This document requires the following signed approvals.

| Name: | Date: | Version: |
|----------------------------|-------|----------|
| Policy Review Group | | 0.01 |
| National Partnership Forum | | 0.02 |
| Staff Governance Committee | | 0.03 |

Distribution: This document has been distributed to

| Name: | Date of Issue: | Version: |
|------------------------|----------------|----------|
| Senior Management Team | | 1.0 |
| All Staff via @SAS | | 1.0 |

Linked Documentation:

| |
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| Document Title: |
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Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment:

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| Completed |
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1.0 Policy Statement

The Scottish Ambulance Service recognises that many staff balance the demands of work requirements and domestic responsibilities. While each member of staff is responsible for ensuring that they have appropriate care mechanisms in place to meet their personal needs the Service will endeavor to assist in circumstances where these arrangements have unavoidably broken down, or where additional unforeseen pressures arise and for which time off work may be required.

All requests from staff will be dealt with on a strictly confidential basis and no pressure will be exerted on staff to divulge details which might breach their personal privacy.

2.0 Scope and Purpose

- 2.1 A dependent is someone who lives in the same home as the member of staff and who is a spouse, partner, child, parent, grandparent, or other relative or person living in the same house, with whom the member of staff has a similar relationship.
- 2.2 The provisions within this policy applies to all staff irrespective of length of service, hours of work or grade and no member of staff will suffer any detriment as a result of making an application for time off under these provisions. The policy sets out the rights and responsibilities of members of staff to paid and/or unpaid leave for a range of circumstances.
- 2.3 As always, the extent and duration of such leave must be balanced by service needs accepting the emergency and unforeseen nature of requests particularly in the early stages.
- 2.4 The purpose of this policy is to allow for an appropriate response to:
 - The sudden and immediate need for a member of staff to provide care to a family member, dependant, close friend or colleague;
 - A family member, dependant, close friend or colleague of the employee suffering ill health;
 - A family member, dependant, close friend or colleague of the employee suffering a bereavement;
 - Civic and public duties.

This could be where normal arrangements break down without notice, or where an urgent and unforeseen situation arises.

Examples of this include:

- A family member, dependant, close friend or colleague of the employee falling ill, being involved in an accident, or being assaulted, including instances where the victim is distressed rather than being physically injured;
- The need to make longer term care arrangements for a family member, dependant, close friend or colleague who is ill or injured;
- To deal with the death of a family member, dependant, close friend or colleague e.g. to make funeral arrangements, or to attend a funeral;
- To deal with an unexpected disruption, or breakdown, in care arrangements for a family member, dependant, close friend or colleague e.g. when a child-minder or nurse fails to turn up; or
- To deal with an incident involving the employee's child during school hours, e.g. if the child has been involved in a fight, or is being suspended from school.

4.0 Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Managers

- Ensure a fair and consistent approach in applying the entitlements within the policy;
- Monitor and review special leave requests in their department;
- Ensure that a Special Leave Record Form is completed for each period of leave granted;
- Meet with the member of staff on their return to work to discuss the special leave taken to clarify if any further assistance is required;
- Monitor ongoing absences associated with this policy.

4.2 Staff

- To make request for special leave in line with the policy entitlements;
- To notify the line manager as soon as they are aware of the need for special leave and must explain the reasons for the requested time off and the likely duration;
- Meet with the line manager on return from special leave and complete the relevant special leave documentation (appendix 1).

4.3 Human Resources

- To ensure that the manager is supported and advised appropriately;
- To ensure that the special leave policy is applied fairly and consistently across the Service.

5.0 Time off provisions

The provisions for time off are as follows:

5.1 Serious Illness/Bereavement Leave

5.1.1 Definition

To provide reasonable support to members of staff at times of distress due to the unforeseen serious illness, or the death, of a family member, dependant, close friend or colleague.

5.1.2 Entitlement

Managers have the discretion to award paid leave of up to one working week in each occurrence of serious difficulty. In particularly distressing circumstances, the manager, in discussion with the HR Team, may extend this by up to a further week of paid or unpaid leave.

5.1.3 Duration Criteria

In considering the amount of leave, the manager should take into account the specific circumstances, e.g. the relationship between the member of staff and the person in question, whether the member of staff has a responsibility for the estate of the deceased, the availability of other relatives or friends and the distance to be travelled in dealing with such matters.

5.2 Domestic Emergencies

5.2.1 Definition

Leave under this heading can be defined as arrangements granted when members of staff need to be absent from work under circumstances not covered by sick leave, annual leave, bereavement leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, adoption and fostering leave, or flexible working arrangements. It is urgent and unforeseen.

This leave is provided as a short-term solution to help members of staff to balance the demands of their work and home responsibilities.

5.2.2 Entitlement

- Up to one working week can be allocated as paid leave by the manager, taking into consideration the amount of the time reasonably required to attend to the situation which has arisen.
- In cases of exceptional difficulty, the manager can extend this period for up to a further working week and, in discussion with the HR Team, has the discretion to determine whether this should be on a paid or

unpaid basis. It may, however, be considered appropriate for the member of staff to utilise annual leave under circumstances where the situation, while still important, has ceased to be an emergency.

- In exceptional circumstances, a member of staff may be faced with long-term difficulties and the manager, in discussion with the HR Team, should consider other options to assist in the situation. This may include a reduction in hours, an alteration to the employee's shift pattern, a move to another post, etc.
- There should be no requirement for the approved number of days to be taken in one block.

5.3 Carer Leave

5.3.1 Definition

Where members of staff are responsible for caring for a spouse or civil partner, child parent or a person who lives within the same household (not a lodger) work and home life can cause conflicting pressures. Carer leave is designed to encourage managers to adopt flexible working practices at times when staff need assistance to balance their caring responsibilities with their work commitments.

5.3.2 Entitlement

Carer Leave allows for up to one working week's paid leave, which can be extended by up to a further working week of paid or unpaid leave, to deal with urgent unforeseen care needs. Thereafter and depending on the specific circumstances, a manager may agree a period of annual leave, or unpaid leave.

5.3.3 Local Arrangements

The needs of staff can often be very simple, e.g. knowing that they will be able to leave work on time each day, or being able to make a telephone call home during the day to check that all is well. Alternatively, a variation in the working pattern, such as altered shifts, or earlier/later starting and stopping times, may provide an adequate solution.

Needs such as these may be relatively easy to satisfy and it is expected that the individual's manager will provide sympathetic support and strive to reach a mutually acceptable solution to the employee's requirements that balances these with the needs of the Service.

5.3.4 Long-term arrangements

There may, however, be times when the caring demands on the employee are such that s/he is forced to consider more extreme measures, such as a long-term reduction in working hours, in order to meet their caring commitments.

While each case must, quite obviously, be judged on its individual merits, the Service is committed to ensuring that where the reason for an employee requesting a reduction in contracted hours is for the provision of care, his/her case will be considered sympathetically and will not be unreasonably denied.

Staff with caring responsibilities, who recognise the need to alter their contracted working hours on a long-term basis, should discuss the matter with their manager in the first instance. It may be considered appropriate for a member of the HR Team to be involved in these discussions.

Where the manager feels unable, because of the needs of the Service, to accommodate the member of staffs request, the member of staff should contact the HR Team in order to investigate other alternatives, e.g. secondment, redeployment, etc. Under circumstances where it is agreed that redeployment is an option, the member of staff concerned will be entitled to the full range of provisions available under the Scottish Ambulance Service's Redeployment Policy.

5.3.5 Other assistance

Staff with caring responsibilities are encouraged to take advantage of other facilities which already exist within the Service and which may provide them with support or access to coping mechanisms, e.g. Occupational Health Service or employee counseling service.

6.0 Essential Civic duties

6.1 Definition

Other types of special leave are those where it is required to make available, special leave with pay for staff to be absent from work to perform 'essential civic and public duties'.

The legislative requirement for this is contained within the Employment Rights Act 1996 and covers a wide range of circumstances, a number of which are given below as examples:

- Justice of the Peace
- Attendance at court as a witness
- Members of a variety of public bodies including Children's Panels
- Jury Service
- Training with Volunteer Forces

*This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

6.2 Entitlement

Up to one working week per year can be allocated as paid leave by the manager taking into consideration the amount of time reasonably required to devote to the issue.

In exceptional circumstances the manager can extend this period for up to a further working week and in discussion with an appropriate member of the HR Team, has the discretion to determine whether this should be on a paid or unpaid basis. It may, however, be considered appropriate for the member of staff to utilise annual or unpaid leave.

Whilst the Service is under no legal obligation to pay staff who undertake jury service, any staff who are called to fulfil the role of juror will be paid their basic pay with enhancements for unsocial hours.

NHS Scotland is pleased to support employees who are members of, or wish to join, the Volunteer Reserve Forces. The training undertaken by Reservists enables them to develop skills and abilities that can be of benefit not just to the armed forces but also to the NHS patients they serve. Staff should see the NHSScotland Reserve Forces Training and Mobilisation policy.

7.0 Additional special leave requests

Guidance for additional instances where staff may request time off work are outlined below:*

- Doctor, dentist and other health appointments
- Job Interviews
- Severe weather and other travel problems
- Professional Activities
- Attendance as a witness at internal hearings, investigations and grievances

*This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

7.1 Doctor, dentist and other health appointments

Members of staff making appointments with GPs, dentists or opticians, etc are expected to ensure that wherever possible these take place out with working time. Time off will not normally be given for these.

On occasions it may be necessary to attend appointments such as hospital appointments, which may not be within the control of the individual, during working time. These appointments will be regarded as time on duty but must nevertheless be sanctioned by the manager.

If the appointment is likely to be for more than half a day, it should be taken as special leave and, as such, must be authorised by the individual's manager.

Appointments with Occupational Health will be accommodated during working time.

7.2 Job Interviews

Subject to the exigencies of the Service, staff who apply for a new post within the Scottish Ambulance Service and are invited to attend an interview will be granted reasonable paid time off to enable them to attend for interview or selection.

7.3 Severe weather and other travel problems

At times of inclement weather or where there are other travel difficulties, e.g. bus/rail strikes and staff are having difficulty attending work, they should contact their manager at the earliest opportunity to discuss options. Staff are expected to make every effort to attend work in these circumstances, however, it is appreciated that there may be times in cases of extreme weather conditions where this is more difficult.

Consideration will be given to allowing a combination of annual leave, working from home and unpaid leave. If staff are unable to travel to their usual place of work, where feasible, arrangements should be put in place to allow them to work from an alternative location

Alternatively, where service requirements allow, it may be possible for staff to make up any hours lost at a later time.

7.4 Professional Activities

By agreement between the line manager and member of staff, paid leave may be given for activities beneficial to the NHS, the Scottish Ambulance Service, or to the professional standing of the employee. Examples of this would include being a member of a tribunal or inquiry, acting as an assessor for appointments for other NHS employers, speaking at relevant conferences, or participating in the work of a specialist professional organisation.

7.5 Attendance as a witness at internal hearings, investigations and grievances

Staff who are called as witnesses to hearings, investigations and grievances will be granted paid leave for that purpose. This includes both the individual who is the subject of the hearing and any other members of staff who are required to give evidence.

Any travel or subsistence payments will be made in accordance with the Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions of Employment.

8.0 Notification and entitlement

Members of staff must make their manager aware of the potential need for all Special Leave at the earliest opportunity and should keep in regular contact throughout that period.

It is noted that for each of these entitlements there should be no requirement for the approved number of days of leave to be taken in one block.

All references to a “working week” means the number of hours that an individual member of staff is contracted to work each week.

9.0 Consistency

Managers should aim to be fair and consistent in applying this policy ensuring that they have taken all of the facts into consideration in making their decisions, and where appropriate, discuss options with the HR Team.

10.0 Recording special leave

Leave should be recorded on the Special Leave form (**Appendix 1**) to enable monitoring of its fair application throughout the Service.

11.0 Resolution of differences

No request for leave under this policy will be unreasonably withheld. Should a disagreement arise, the individual has the right to raise a formal grievance. It may be preferable in such circumstances, however, for the manager to seek advice on resolving the matter from the HR Team and a Staff Side Representative.

12.0 Review of policy and procedure

This policy and procedure (s) has been updated as part of continual improvement programme within the Service focusing on ensuring best practice in partnership with Managers and staff representatives through a partnership working group. The policy will be formally reviewed on a continuing basis as part of this process, no later than the date on the front cover of this document.

APPENDIX 1



Special Leave Record Form

| |
|--|
| Employee's Name: |
| Payroll number: |
| Job Title: |
| Department: |
| Type of Special leave requested: |
| Reason for the Request: |
| Dates requested: |
| Paid <input type="checkbox"/> Unpaid: <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Additional Information: |
| Employee's Signature: |
| Manager's Signature: |
| Manager's Name (Print): |
| Date: |

Please send this form to the HR Department, NHQ.