



Leave of Absence Policy

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The purpose of this policy is to inform employees wishing to take any Leave of Absence of their rights and entitlements offered by Transport for the North (TfN).

1. Paid Annual Leave

The provisions relating to the entitlement to paid annual leave are set out in the contract of employment and in the section on Holidays within the TfN Handbook.

2. Paid Sick Leave

The provisions relating to the entitlement to paid sick leave are set out in the contract of employment and within the section on Sickness/Absence of the TfN Handbook.

3. Jury Service and other Public Duties

Should an employee be called up for jury service or required to attend court to give evidence as a witness, they must notify their Line Manager as soon as reasonably practicable. Time off work will normally be granted in these circumstances. The employee will be required to provide a copy of the court summons to support their request for time off work.

The employee has no contractual or statutory right to be paid for time not worked due to jury service or other related public duties. Any payment of salary by the TfN during this period is done so at TfN's absolute discretion and will be subject to the deduction of any monies received from the court in respect of loss of earnings. The employee must therefore submit a claim to the court for loss of earnings and claim the full allowance available to them.

If on any day on which the employee attends court they are told that their services are not required, they must then return to work and report to their Line Manager before starting work.

4. Membership of the Reserved Armed Forces

If an employee is a member of the reserved armed forces, they may use their paid annual leave entitlement to carry out their duties, provided they comply with the provisions relating to paid annual leave set out in their contract of employment and in the section on "Holidays". TfN expects all employees to use their paid annual leave first before applying for further time off.

Otherwise, any further time off relating to membership of the reserved armed forces will only be granted at the absolute discretion of TfN and the employee has no contractual or statutory right to be paid for this leave.

Any payment of salary made by TfN in such circumstances is done so at TfN's absolute discretion.

If an employee wishes to apply for this type of leave, they should apply in writing to their Line Manager stating the period of leave requested and the reasons for it.

5. Medical Appointments

Appointments with doctors, dentists and other medical practitioners should, as far as reasonably practicable, be made outside of employee's normal hours of work or with the minimum disruption to the working day (i.e. made at the beginning or end of the working day).

Time off work to attend medical appointments must be authorised by the Line Manager in advance. In any event, unless there are exceptional circumstances, no more than two hours should be taken off work for any one appointment. There is no contractual or statutory right to be paid for absences relating to attendance at medical appointments. Any payment of salary during attendance at such appointments is made at the absolute discretion of TfN.

6. Compassionate Leave

Subject to employee's statutory right to time off to deal with a family emergency, if an employee suffers a bereavement or serious illness in family or in a close relationship, compassionate leave must be approved by their Line Manager. All requests for compassionate leave will be considered on an individual basis in consultation between the Line Manager and Head of HR.

There is no contractual or statutory entitlement to be paid for absences relating to compassionate leave. Any payment of salary during compassionate leave is made at the absolute discretion of TfN.

Subject to employee's statutory right to time off to deal with a family emergency, TfN expects employees to use their paid annual leave entitlement for time off needed to care for sick relatives or friends.

7. Bereavement Leave

If an employee suffers a bereavement in their immediate family or in a close relationship, leave must be approved by their Line Manager. All requests for leave will be considered on an individual basis in consultation between the Line Manager and Head of HR.

In addition, employees will be entitled to any statutory bereavement leave available under the legislation in force at the relevant time. This is a day-one right and provides protected time off following the death of a loved one, including pregnancy loss. TfN will apply the statutory minimum entitlement and will consider any additional paid or unpaid bereavement or compassionate leave on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the individual circumstances of the employee and the nature of the bereavement.

TfN will provide up to five working days' paid bereavement leave where an employee suffers the death of an immediate family member or someone with whom they had a close personal relationship. Requests will be considered sensitively and on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the employee's relationship with the person who has died, their personal circumstances, travel requirements, funeral arrangements and any responsibilities for administering the estate.

In special circumstances up to 2 additional days may be authorised by the Line Manager and if the employee is responsible for funeral arrangements or administering the estate, up to a further 5 days may be authorised. Any salary payment over and above this is made at the absolute discretion of TfN.

8. Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave

Employees are entitled to Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave in accordance with the legislation in force at the relevant time. This is a day-one right and applies where an employee's child dies under the age of 18 or where a stillbirth occurs after 24 weeks of pregnancy.

Eligible employees may take up to two weeks' Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave. Entitlement to Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay will be subject to the statutory eligibility, service and earnings requirements applicable at the time.

Employees should notify their Line Manager as soon as reasonably practicable of their intention to take leave. TfN will treat all requests with compassion and sensitivity and may, where appropriate, consider additional bereavement or compassionate leave in accordance with this policy.

9. Bereaved Partner's Leave

Employees may be entitled to Bereaved Partner's Leave in accordance with the legislation in force at the relevant time where the child's mother, birth parent or primary adopter dies.

This is a statutory entitlement designed to support employees who assume primary caring responsibilities following such a bereavement. The amount of leave and any associated statutory pay will be determined in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions in force at the time of the request.

Employees should notify their Line Manager and HR as soon as reasonably practicable so that the appropriate leave and pay entitlements can be confirmed. This leave is separate from any entitlement to bereavement leave or compassionate leave under this policy.

10. Statutory Carer's Leave

Employees are entitled to Statutory Carer's Leave in accordance with the legislation in force at the relevant time.

This is a day-one right and provides up to one working week of unpaid leave during any rolling 12-month period to provide or arrange care for a dependent with a long-term care need.

The amount of leave available will depend on the employee's normal working pattern and may be taken in accordance with the statutory arrangements applicable at the time.

Employees wishing to take Statutory Carer's Leave should provide notice in accordance with the statutory requirements and discuss their request with their Line Manager as soon as reasonably practicable.

11. Special Unpaid Leave

TfN may, in certain circumstances, consider requests for special unpaid leave, for example, for the purposes of education, family responsibilities or for important personal reasons. However, TfN expects an employee to use their paid annual leave first. Otherwise, any further time off for special reasons will only be granted at the absolute discretion of TfN and an employee have no contractual or statutory right to be paid for this leave. If an employee wishes to apply for special leave, they should do so in writing to their Line Manager stating the period of leave requested and the reasons for it. Requests for special leave will be assessed on their individual merits and circumstances. Special leave is operated entirely at the discretion of TfN and it may be withdrawn at any time.

This section does not replace statutory rights to unpaid parental leave, paternity leave, parental bereavement leave, bereaved partner's paternity leave, carer's leave or neonatal care leave. Employees should refer to the relevant TfN family friendly leave policies or contact HR for further guidance.

12. Career Breaks

TfN may, at its absolute discretion and subject to certain conditions being satisfied, permit employees to take a career break or sabbatical and then return to work at the end of that break. The conditions that must be satisfied are:

- a career break must be for an agreed duration which is between eight weeks and one year
- career breaks will only be available to employees who have a minimum of three years' service with TfN
- employees must make a request for a career break at least eight weeks before the proposed start date
- the purpose of the career break must be agreed with TfN in advance and a career break will not be granted where the intended purpose is to purely enable the employee to take up other paid employment.

A career break can be used for a variety of purposes, such as time off to undergo a college or university course, on account of family responsibilities, to allow an employee to pursue a personal interest or undertake voluntary work, for overseas travel or for any other purpose agreed with TfN.

Any career break granted will be unpaid.

For further details related to career breaks please refer to TfN's Additional Leave Purchase and Career Break Policy.

13. Gender Transitioning

Any transitioning employee can seek support from their Line Manager; it is recommended that both parties work together to agree an action plan to cover the period of employee's transition. If an employee requires time off for medical treatment and any associated follow-up treatment, this should be discussed and agreed with their Line Manager as part of their action plan. The employee should provide details of the anticipated treatment requirements, including the likely duration and frequency of any appointments where possible.

Any arrangements for time off will be considered by the Line Manager in consultation with Head of HR, taking into account both the employee's needs and the operational requirements of TfN.

Line Managers should be aware that access to gender-related medical services can often involve lengthy waiting times and appointments may be offered at short notice. Where possible, reasonable flexibility should be provided to enable employees to attend appointments associated with their treatment and care.

Line Managers should also recognise that gender-affirming treatments and surgeries, including but not limited to genital surgery, can have a significant impact on an employee's physical and psychological wellbeing and should not generally be regarded as purely cosmetic procedures. Where an employee has been referred by a medical practitioner for treatment or surgery, any request for time off should be considered by the Line Manager in consultation with Head of HR, taking into account the employee's circumstances and the operational requirements of TfN.

Employees should not ordinarily be expected to rely solely on annual leave to accommodate such treatment.

14. Domestic Violence

TfN is committed to supporting employees who experience or witness domestic abuse, with the aim of safeguarding their wellbeing and helping them access appropriate support.

An employee affected by domestic abuse may require a range of supportive measures, including temporary adjustments to working arrangements or location, time off to attend appointments with support agencies, solicitors, the courts, medical professionals or the police, and time to make alternative housing, childcare or other practical arrangements.

Requests for time off associated with domestic abuse will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Reasonable paid time off of up to 10 working days may be granted to enable an employee to access support, attend relevant appointments, or make necessary arrangements relating to their circumstances. Any such absence should be discussed with the employee's Line Manager and approved by the Head of HR, taking into account the individual circumstances and the operational requirements of TfN. Time off may be taken as full days, part days, or individual periods of absence, as appropriate. Additional time off beyond 10 working days may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

15. General

Failure to return from leave and report for work on the due date of return without reasonable excuse is a potential disciplinary offence and will be dealt with in accordance with the TfN's Disciplinary Policy.

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