

## Human Resources

# Paid Special Leave Guidance

Updated: November 2019

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## **Domestic reasons**

You may apply for paid special leave to deal with an urgent domestic crisis (e.g. burglary, flood, etc.) and make suitable long-term arrangements. Normally up to five days paid special leave per application may be granted for this purpose, but additional special leave may be granted exceptionally where circumstances justify it. To apply for Domestic Leave you should:

- log into SOP > go to “Leave of Absence” and then “Create Absence”.
- select Absence Type “Special Leave with Pay” and then Absence Reason “Emergency Leave”.
- Enter the dates for the period of absence, then select “Calculate Duration” and finally add any comments, which should include a statement covering the degree of responsibility that you have for dealing with the problem, before submitting your request.
- Once submit your request will be routed to your line manager for approval.

## **Bereavement**

You may apply for up to five days paid special leave to attend to bereavement matters, including making funeral arrangements and attending the funeral, of your husband, wife or partner, child, mother, father, brother, sister, uncle or aunt (blood relative), grandparents, grandchildren, father-in-law, mother-in-law, cohabitants, dependant relatives or children's partners. This list is not exhaustive and there are other relationships which justify comparable treatment (e.g. ex-partner, sister/brother-in-law or if the deceased is not related to you either by blood or marriage, such as an established heterosexual or homosexual relationship).

State the date of death and the date, time and place of the funeral on your application, together with your relationship to the deceased and the degree of responsibility you have for the funeral arrangements.

Other matters associated with bereavement (e.g. closing up home, making arrangements for the care of the deceased's pets, contact with the DWP over pension or other benefits) can also be considered but paid special leave is not intended for you to sort out the estate of the deceased. Unpaid special leave can be granted to cover any period of absence not covered by paid leave.

If you are not responsible for making arrangements, one day's paid special leave will be allowed for attendance at the funeral of a relative. Additional leave, to a maximum of five days, may be granted if you are required to attend other formal cultural religious ceremonies in connection with the bereavement. Full details should be given on your application.

If your attendance at the funeral of a relative involves a long or difficult journey (one which would take more than half a day) then up to two additional days may be allowed.

## **Leave for looking after sick relatives/children**

You may apply for paid special leave to cope with the sudden illness of a close relative or child requiring your personal attention, up to 5 days in any period of 12 months. Your Line Manager should be satisfied that other suitable arrangements could not have been made and, if the absence is for three days or more, consider whether a letter from a doctor should be provided. Applications which take you beyond five days in any 12 month period (or for unpaid special leave) should be endorsed by your Line Manager or Head of Business Area.

## **Contact with infectious diseases**

Paid special leave will be available if you are exposed to a notifiable infectious disease and you can provide medical evidence that you have been advised by your doctor to stay away from work for this reason.

## **Sports activities**

Defra encourages staff to participate in sports in the interests of health and fitness. Paid special leave may be granted if you are selected to:

- represent Defra in Civil Service individual or team sports championships
- represent the Civil Service in a national or international event
- participate in international events including Olympic and Commonwealth Games.

Please see separate Guidance for Managers.

## **Jury service**

Paid special leave will be allowed for jury service. Notify your Head of Business Area immediately the summons is received. The court will reimburse you for any travelling and subsistence, and as there is no loss of earnings you are not required to complete a loss of earnings certificate. If, whilst on jury service, you are not required to attend court you should report for duty.

## **Giving evidence in court**

If you are required in your official capacity to give evidence in criminal and civil proceedings and in coroners' courts, or to attend other outside bodies as witnesses or in other capacities, you will be regarded as being on duty. In addition to normal pay you may

be entitled to payment for travelling time and travel and subsistence allowances, but any sums recovered from outside sources should be passed to the Department.

If you appear in court in a private capacity, including special constables, you are entitled to paid special leave when appearing as a witness for the prosecution or defence in criminal proceedings or as a witness in coroners' courts. You may retain any travel or subsistence allowance received from the court.

## **Trade Union activities**

Details of allowances for leave are set out in the Departmental Operating Procedures on Trade Union Facility Time and Facilities. If you hold accredited Representative status as a union office holder, you should apply to your Head of Business Area or Line Manager.

## **Training of safety representatives**

If you are a Trade Union appointed safety representative you are entitled to paid leave to attend training to help you perform your functions properly. To apply for paid leave you should:

- log into SOP > go to “Leave of Absence” and then “Create Absence”.
- select Absence Type “Special Leave with Pay” and then Absence Reason “Special Leave with Pay - Trade Union Related”.
- Enter the dates for the period of absence, then select “Calculate Duration” and finally add any comments, which should include a statement covering the degree of responsibility that you have for dealing with the problem, before submitting your request.
- Once submit your request will be routed to your line manager for approval.

The time off will not be set against time off allowed under the Departmental Facilities Agreement. If, as a safety representative, you need specialised training in order to deal with particular aspects of the Department's work, the Department will provide the training and the normal rules apply in respect of attendance.

## **British and European Parliamentary elections**

If you are free to stand for Parliament you may be granted up to one month paid special leave at the period of an election, ending on the date on which your resignation takes effect.

## **Civil Service societies**

Special leave may be granted for attendance at meetings or conference of Civil Service Societies as follows:

- a) Paid special leave
- Civil Service Council for Further Education
  - Council and Committee of Management of the Charity for Civil Servants
  - Council and Committee of Management of the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship
  - Committee of Management of the Benenden Healthcare Society
  - Management Committee of the Civil Service Sports Council
  - Committees of Management of the Civil Service Medical Aid Association.
- b) Time off or paid special leave as appropriate for quarterly meetings.
- Local Committees of the Civil Service Benevolent Fund and the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship
  - Departmental Committees of the Benenden Healthcare Society
  - Regional Councils and Regional Executive Committees of the Civil Service Sports Council.
- c) Up to two days paid special leave plus a third day if the time spent in travelling necessitates an absence of three days from the office.
- Conferences of the Benenden Healthcare Society, and of the Civil Service Sports Council.
- d) Other special leave granted for the business of these societies will be without pay.

## Study and Sabbatical leave

From time to time you may be authorised to undertake studies that have a particular relevance to Defra's function and work. For further information, please refer to the [Study Leave guidance](#).

Sabbatical leave may be open to you if you are holding (or likely to hold) a position of high responsibility. Normally, sabbatical leave will only be allowed once in a career, and on full pay. To apply for sabbatical leave you should:

- log into SOP > go to "Leave of Absence" and then "Create Absence".
- select Absence Type "Special Leave with Pay" and then Absence Reason "Further Education Leave".
- Enter the dates for the period of absence, then select "Calculate Duration" and finally add any comments, which should include a statement covering the degree of responsibility that you have for dealing with the problem, before submitting your request.

- Once submit your request will be routed to your line manager for approval.

Attachments to Industry and secondment to jobs abroad should not be regarded as attracting sabbatical leave.

## **Civil Service examinations**

Paid special leave may be granted for your attendance at a Civil Service examination, a GCSE examination to qualify for a clerical or executive post or an EC interview or examination and for any necessary travelling time. Travelling expenses and subsistence in connection with the EC post will not be paid by the Department, but should be claimed from the relevant EC institution.

## **Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award**

Paid special leave will be granted for your presentation with the Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award.

## **Voluntary public service appointments**

There are many voluntary public service appointments which attract paid special leave. The following list of the more common appointments includes details of the annual limits of paid leave which apply. Guidance on the eligibility of other appointments can be obtained from SSCL.

- Magisterial duties – Justice of the Peace (18 days)
- Local Government work – Elected member of a local authority including Mayors in their mayoral year and Chairs of Councils (18 days)
- Lord/Lady mayor and Lord/Lady Provost in Mayoral year (24 days)
- Parish Councils in England or Community Councils in Wales (6 days)
- Managing or governing body of an educational establishment (6 days)
- School or college or governing body of central institution or college of education (Scotland) (6 days)
- Attendance at meetings of fee paying bodies, such as employment tribunals provided an undertaking is given not to claim or accept any compensation other than for travel or subsistence purposes (3 days)
- Granted up to 12 days paid special leave which should be used for training in the first instance and then any other associated duties as a member of the Special Constabulary

## **Voluntary Work**

Three day's paid special leave is allowed per year for you to participate in an unpaid voluntary activity undertaken for a non-profit making organisation serving the public. In all cases check whether there is any risk of conflict of interest between your official functions and your unofficial duties.

## **Training courses in youth leadership**

One week's paid special leave (as a complete week, or in days) may be granted if you are a part-time or assistant youth leader undertaking courses in youth leadership run by a recognised national voluntary organisation. Paid special leave will not normally be granted more frequently than once in three years, although applications for once every two years will be considered on their merit.

## **Special Constabulary**

Up to 12 days paid special leave may be granted for training in the first instance and then any other associated duties as a member of the Special Constabulary.

## **Auxiliary Coastguard Service and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution**

One week's paid special leave may be granted for your initial training course to the Auxiliary Coastguard Service or Royal National Lifeboat Institution.

## **Reserve Forces training**

You may be granted fifteen days paid special leave for annual reserve training of 15 days or more. Working days that exceed this limit will be treated as unpaid special leave, unless annual leave is taken. If annual training is less than 15 days the allowance will be proportionally reduced. Seek permission at Head of Business Area level before you join the Force.

## **Cadet Forces training**

You may be granted paid special leave:

- if you are a member of, or an instructor or officer in, the cadet forces (e.g. Air Training Corps, Sea Cadet Corps) you may be allowed one week a year for attendance at camp or special instructional courses provided they are held under naval, military or air force auspices;

- if you are commissioned officer of the cadet forces and are required to undergo a course in addition to annual cadet camp, you may be allowed special leave for this purpose.

## Civil defence courses

Consult SSCL if you wish to participate in Civil Defence courses and require leave.

## Transfer and resettlement

Paid special leave within the limits set out below may be granted if you are transferred on permanent and compulsory terms in the interests of the Civil Service. If your husband or wife is also a Civil Servant and is being permanently transferred at the same time, they are eligible for the special leave as a married officer. To apply for transfer leave you should:

- log into SOP > go to “Leave of Absence” and then “Create Absence”.
- select Absence Type “Special Leave with Pay” and then Absence Reason “Transfer Leave”.
- Enter the dates for the period of absence, then select “Calculate Duration” and finally add any comments before submitting your request.
- Once submit your request will be routed to your line manager for approval.

a) Preliminary visit to new station, at any convenient time within three months of the expected date of transfer, to obtain furnished or unfurnished accommodation. However, more than three months may be allowed in the case of bulk moves.

- Staff with married status – 7 days
- Staff with single householder status – 7 days
- Staff with single non-householder status – 3 days

b) To search for accommodation after transfer to the new station, when no preliminary visit has been made.

- Married Officer – 5 days
- Single Householder – 5 days
- Single Non-Householder – 3 days

c) Return visit to supervise removal, taking into account the packing and unpacking of furniture.

- Staff with married status – 2 days (plus a third day, if justified, e.g. because of the distance between the old and new stations).
- Staff with single householder status – 2 days (plus a third day, if justified,

e.g. because of the distance between the old and new stations).

d) Reconnaissance visits to bulk transfer locations.

- For all staff – 1 day (plus a second day, if the distance justifies an overnight stay).

When a voluntary transfer involves removal of home, up to three days unpaid special leave may be granted. Applications should be treated sympathetically wherever possible.

If you come back to this country from an overseas posting you may apply for one week's paid special leave, in addition to any other special leave already granted, which may be taken immediately on your return.