

Human Resources Committee

Date of Meeting: 12 February 2020

Report by: Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Report title: Updated General Leave Policy

Ward(s) affected: None

Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR:

(a) To note the Updated General Leave Policy which has been published on the intranet in January 2020

(b) To note the removal of Carers Policy from January 2020 (which duplicated sections of the General Leave Policy and the Family Friendly policy which had caused confusion).

1.0 Proposal(s)

- 1.1 The proposals are set out in the recommendations above. The General Leave Policy has been updated with Unison agreement to ensure it is clear and up to date with East Herts practice including clarity previously only made in the Carers Policy which had created an opportunity for inconsistent practice. The updated General Leave Policy and the deletion of the Carers Policy will ensure duplication is removed along with any previous confusion between the policies.
- 1.2 The background and reasons sections below will outline the issues which led to the need for an updated General Leave Policy. The sections below will also set out the changes that have been made and incorporated in the organisation to ensure greater clarity and consistency going forward.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Early in the autumn the Head of HR & OD was asked to attend the Carers support group which meets on a monthly basis to explain what support was available for Carers. At the previous Carers meeting the group had identified that the support they had as individual carers from their line managers and Heads of Service varied and was not consistent and staff wanted to know if there was any paid dependency leave provision available.
- 2.2 The Head of HR & OD with support from an HR Officer reviewed the Carers Policy, the General Leave Policy and the Family Friendly Policy. The review identified that there was duplication between the Carers Policy and both of the other policies (General Leave Policy and the Family Friendly Policy). However, the main issue identified was that whereas the Carers Policy made it clear that there was a provision for eligible staff for 5 days paid Dependency Leave (further such leave would be unpaid) the General Leave Policy only referred to Dependency Leave in the unpaid leave section but did refer elsewhere to 5 days paid discretionary leave.
- 2.3 It was clear from the review that although East Herts like similar organisations/sectors had a provision for paid dependency leave it was not in the main known to our employees/managers as a form of paid support available in such circumstances and very little use had therefore been made.
- 2.4 The Head of HR & OD attended the Carers support group and the differences were shared along with the need to seek clarity from Leadership Team and agree actions going forward which included the need to manage the use of such paid leave through the self-service HR system called MyView.

- 2.5 The issues were then raised at Leadership Team and it was agreed that Head of HR & OD would revise policies to provide clarity and ensure Unison agreed any changes. HR would also add the provision to MyView for managers to be able to administer and so that the system could process such leave to unpaid if the discretionary 5 day provision had been utilised (the 5 days would be pro-rata for part-time staff).

3.0 Reason(s)

- 3.1 The review identified that apart from the 5 days paid dependency provision established in the adopted Carers Policy all other provisions were contained elsewhere meaning that the best option was to remove duplication by deleting the Carers policy and ensure the clarity was correct in the General Leave Policy.
- 3.2 The reference to a discretionary 5 days paid leave provision was therefore removed and replaced with the intended 5 days paid dependency leave provision.
- 3.3 As agreed with Leadership Team it was also determined that in line with other absences that a line manager could approve paid dependency leave through MyView and this was then set up. Employees cannot request such leave through the system (as is the case with sick pay) but the manager can log absence as dependency leave but the system will only allow up to 5 paid days within a 12 month period.
- 3.4 As the unpaid leave section only referred to dependency leave which had helped cause the confusion this was removed and dependency leave was moved up from the end section to section 7 so it was more visible to all.
- 3.5 The General Leave Policy was updated with more detail on dependency leave (see section 7 for full details) based on the detail previously set out in the Carers policy. This included a clearer definition of a dependent

in line with statutory guidance (unpaid dependency leave is a statutory right). The policy also makes clear that line managers should consult with HR over its' use to ensure consistency. Clear examples of when dependency leave would be applicable for employees to take have been incorporated to ensure it is used to support unplanned/emergency events and not for planned events that can be managed through planned leave (flexi or annual leave).

- 3.6 A sub-section (7.6) called 'Further support for Carers/Staff with dependents' was added to the General Leave Policy to replace information previously covered in the Carers Policy. This was also updated to ensure all was current i.e. details of the current EAP were added as well as useful links to external bodies/guidance provided to ensure it remains up to date.
- 3.7 Once the re-drafting had been completed and the provision set up and tested on MyView Unison were fully consulted. Subject to a few minor adjustments requested, Unison then agreed to the updated General Leave Policy and the deletion of the Carers Policy.
- 3.8 The revised policy has been published and a guidance email sent to line managers (who were also briefed over the changes that were being implemented at the last Service Manager Quarterly Meeting).
- 3.9 Where appropriate staff have been authorised for paid dependency leave and equally been asked to manage planned events through other provision. Managers are engaging well with HR to ensure consistency. The paid provision is also now outlined as part of the excellent terms and conditions available at East Herts as part of our recruitment literature.

4.0 Implications/Consultations

Community Safety

No

Data Protection

No

Equalities

Yes – the General Leave Policy support a number of equality areas i.e. those with dependents, career breaks, religious events

Environmental Sustainability

No

Financial

No (Paid provision was already established)

Health and Safety

No

Human Resources

Yes as set out this is an employment matter and the report has been produced by HR

Human Rights

No

Legal

As set out in the report unpaid dependency leave is a statutory right

Specific Wards

No

5.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material

5.1 The updated General Leave Policy is attached at Appendix 1.

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