

## Other Time Off (Special Leave) Guide

### Guide for employees

**This guide explains the time off arrangements that are available to assist the balance of commitments to work and/or family and any additional responsibilities**

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#### Getting help

**Contact your manager if you have any queries about this guide.**

Managers can obtain advice by:

Calling the HR Services Advice Centre on 0345 6060603 / 5456 7100

Managers working for Parcelforce Worldwide should call 0345 6042787 / 5456 4747

For web access please go to:

<https://www.psp.royalmailgroup.com>



# Other Time Off (Special leave) Guide

## Guide for employees

### Overview

Other time off is a benefit offered to support employees who may require time off in addition to their annual holiday, so they can fulfil certain commitments during work hours.

Royal Mail recognises there may be instances where employees need time off that does not fall under Annual Holiday, Career Break or Family Friendly policies. There are various reasons and circumstances why an employee might request other time off and these applications should be handled fairly and promptly.

This guide provides advice on some of the situations in which other time off could be considered. It also explains the application process.

This should be read in conjunction with the Other Time Off Policy.

### What is available?

There are two types of other time off:

- Paid
- Unpaid

Allowing this time off is the managers' decision as other time off is discretionary.

However, UK legislation allows for employees to have a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during working hours to make emergency caring arrangements and provide emergency assistance for dependants (see the Dependants' Leave section).

Other reasons for requests of other time off are outlined in the sections below in this guide. Please note this list of reasons is not intended to be exhaustive.

### Domestic leave

#### Urgent domestic leave

One day's paid leave (up to three days in exceptional circumstances) may be given to employees who need to deal with an emergency at home. Additional days can be covered by holiday or unpaid leave. Examples include:

- Their house has flooded
- Their house has been burgled

#### Domestic events

There may be occasions when employees need to be at home. In these circumstances employees may be able to take holiday, unpaid leave, make up the time or swap their shift. Examples include:

- They need to be at home to take a delivery
- They have maintenance being carried out on their house

### Family leave

#### Dependants' leave

UK Legislation allows for employees to have a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during working hours to make emergency caring arrangements and provide emergency assistance for dependants.

### **Who would be considered to be a dependant?**

- A spouse or civil partner
- A child
- A parent
- Someone who lives as part of the family (this does not include tenants or boarders living in the family home, or someone who lives in the household as an employee e.g. live-in housekeeper)
- Anyone who reasonably relies on the employee for assistance when they fall ill (or are injured or assaulted)

### **In what circumstances should reasonable time off be considered?**

- When a dependant falls ill or is injured or assaulted
- When arrangements for caring for a dependant unexpectedly break down
- When a dependant gives birth
- When a dependant dies
- To deal with an unexpected incident involving a child

The purpose of the time off is to allow the employee to cover immediate emergencies and, if required, make alternative care arrangements.

If further time off is required the employee should discuss such requirements with their manager. Consideration could be given to a further day off either unpaid or covered by holiday entitlement.

If more time is requested then consider HR Advice and Support to discuss options.

### **Family emergency leave**

Family emergency leave is where there is an immediate need to deal with a more serious emergency to do with a dependant, e.g. they are injured. Leave will normally be one day with pay, with further days unpaid or covered by annual holiday. Exceptional circumstances might warrant up to three days with pay.

### **Family events**

If employees would like to take time off for family events such as, weddings, their child's school concert, they may be able to take holiday, unpaid leave, make up the time or swap their shift.

### **Long-term care of a dependant**

Dependants' leave noted above only provides for employees to take reasonable time off to deal with immediate issues and sort out longer-term arrangements where necessary. However, support can be offered to an employee who is providing long term care of a dependant.

The manager should talk to the employee to find out how best to support them.

- There could be opportunities to support the employee by exploring alternative shift or attendance patterns, or Flexible Working (see the Flexible Working Policy) to help them fulfil their nursing commitment
- If the employee requires time off, consideration could be given to granting

unpaid time off for up to six months

- Where the employee is looking for a longer period of time off, a Career Break could be considered (see the Career Break Policy)
- If taking unpaid time off, pensionable service can be protected by the employee making good their own and Royal Mail Group's contributions to make the period reckonable. For further information refer to Pensions.

### **Bereavement**

It is an upsetting time when an employee loses someone close to them, so managers should try to give them time to deal with the loss. Employees should be allowed reasonable time off when experiencing a bereavement. The amount of time required will vary depending on the employee's relationship with the person who has died and the circumstances of the bereavement:

- Up to one week with pay should be allowed for the death of immediate family, e.g. next of kin or a blood relative (spouse, civil partner, child, parent, or sibling)
- One day with pay for parent-in-law or grandparent (or equivalent in a civil partnership or long-standing unmarried relationship). This is usually to attend the funeral
- For other family or friends, any time off granted would usually be unpaid or taken as annual holiday

Additional time off can be considered in exceptional circumstances where the care of a dependant is involved. Further time off may be without pay or taken from annual holiday entitlement.

### **Ad hoc medical / dental appointments**

Employees should try to arrange medical and dental appointments outside of working hours. If this is not possible, managers can allow them to make up the time or change their shift. In exceptional circumstances, managers may give paid time off.

### **Regular medical treatment**

A supportive approach should be taken when an employee has regular medical treatment or hospital appointments. Attempts should be made to arrange appointments outside of their working hours. If this is not possible then the manager should talk to the employee to discuss options which would allow them to meet the commitment, and take into account the impact on the business and our customers.

- The employee should provide their manager with confirmation of the appointment from their doctor or the hospital
- Consideration could be given to arranging changes to working hours where possible
- Paid time off could be granted where it is not possible to change working hours
- Requests for additional time off should be treated sympathetically bearing in mind that a stoppage of pay may add to the stress of having to attend hospital for treatment or for hospital appointments

Absences should not count towards the Attendance Policy.

## **IVF Treatment**

A sensitive and flexible approach is encouraged to accommodate employees undertaking assisted conception including IVF treatment. This would extend to post treatment to allow for a longer period of rest or reduced activity:

- Consideration should be given as to whether the required time off can be resolved through managing work patterns. This could be by duty adjustments or swapping days off. If all options have been exhausted, offering paid time off may be appropriate
- Partners/donors may need to attend donation appointments; counselling sessions with their partners; and to support partners after treatment
- Assisted conception treatment does not always have an instant success. Therefore as an individual moves from one treatment to the next the need for extra care and time off may become greater

## **Ante-natal appointments**

If possible, antenatal appointments should be arranged outside work hours. Where this is not possible, managers should be flexible in making arrangements to allow employees to attend these appointments as pregnant women, adopters and their partners have a legal right to time off to attend antenatal care:

- Pregnant women – paid time off to attend antenatal appointments
- Fathers/partners of pregnant women - unpaid time off to attend up to two appointments
- Primary adopters – paid time off to attend up to five appointments with their adoption agency or child they have been matched with
- Secondary adopters (partners of primary adopters) – unpaid time off to attend up to two appointments

A maximum of 6.5 hours per day is permitted and the appointments must have been made on the advice of a registered medical practitioner, midwife or nurse.

## **Study and exams**

If an employee is completing a course for which they are supported by Royal Mail Group, they are able to take paid time off:

- Half day for study
- The day of the exam

For other courses or study any time off should be taken from the employee's annual holiday entitlement.

Where an employee wishes to study full time, they will have to resign from the business, unless they have had a career break approved. However, they should be favourably considered if they subsequently apply for a vacant position.

## **Redundancy notice period**

Employees given notice of dismissal due to redundancy are able to take reasonable paid time off to look for another job, attend interviews or arrange training.

## **Sport**

Royal Mail Group recognises the positive benefits of employees who represent their country in national and international sporting events.

The manager has full discretion when authorising time off in these

circumstances. Consideration should be given to:

- How the employee will be financially supported during the sporting event
- Royal Mail Group's commercial and operational needs

No paid or unpaid time off will be granted for inter-office or local community sport

### **Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) / Duke of Edinburgh Award Schemes**

Where time off is requested for expeditions (such as VSO, Raleigh International) consideration could be given to offering a Career Break (see the Career Break Policy).

For the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme trips, holiday entitlement should be used where possible. However consideration can be given to offering up to five days paid time off for gold award camps.

For Investiture of the Duke of Edinburgh gold award, holiday entitlement should be used where possible.

### **Mandatory Duties**

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There are civic duties that an individual is expected to perform when required such as Jury Service.

#### **Jury Service**

- Employees will continue to be paid basic pay and assigned allowances for the time they are on jury service. They will also be paid an average of the last 13 weeks overtime and non assigned allowances
- An employee must provide their manager with the notification of dates from the court for jury service. The relevant sections of the loss of earnings form provided by the Court Service should be completed by the employee and submitted to the Jury Service Administrator
- The loss of earnings form will be returned to the employee for them to present to the court on their first day on jury service
- The employee should claim loss of earnings from the court and Royal Mail Group will make up pay to basic earnings
- On completion of jury service, the court will send the employee a Certificate of Attendance and remittance invoice. These documents should be sent to the Jury Service Administrator
- HR Services will notify the employee of the amount of money Royal Mail Group needs to recover from them, and arrange repayment

#### **Jury Service Administrator Address**

Jury Service Administrator  
HR Services  
2nd Floor  
Pond Street  
SHEFFIELD  
S98 6HR

For information on allowances paid by the court refer to the [YOUGOV.UK](http://YOUGOV.UK) website.

See the Jury Service Guide for more details.

**Retained Fire  
Fighters/ Special  
Police Constables**

When volunteering for these roles, the employee should specify their availability to the fire service or police. The employee should perform their role outside of normal attendance hours.

In the event of a major incident flexibility should be shown. This could be by releasing the employee if at work, or if they are already at an incident, allowing a delayed start to work.

**Voluntary unpaid  
service**

**Justice of the Peace or Local Councillor**

- For activities such as Justice of the Peace and Local Councillor, three paid weeks per year can be offered. The employee would be expected to claim loss of earnings wherever possible
- Where attendance allowance is claimed for a commitment during paid release this should be deducted from basic earnings

**School Governor and Hospital Boards**

- Activities such as School Governor and membership of Hospital Boards would justify in the region of one week paid time off, subject to local assessment of the commitment involved
- Where employees have multiple responsibilities, no more than a total of three weeks' paid time off should be given in a holiday year

**Mayors or Lord Provosts**

- Mayors or Lord Provosts should be provided with up to four weeks paid time off during their Mayoral year

**Civic and  
community duties**

Paid time off may be granted for unpaid voluntary service such as charity work not related to Royal Mail's chosen charities.

- Time off must not be used to support alternative paid employment or self-employment. For example, where an employee asks for time off to work additional hours in their other job
- Unpaid time off may be granted where the employee has paid civic/community duties
- Where paid time off is granted, employees should reimburse the business for any payments received from the outside body

**Paid civic duties**

Where an employee undertakes civic duties that attract payment, such as Non-Executive Directors of NHS Trusts, they should receive reasonable unpaid time off.

**Parliamentary  
Candidate**

During the election period the employee would normally be given two weeks paid leave. Following that any further additional time off would be taken from their annual holiday entitlement.

**Reservists and  
Cadet Forces  
Leave**

Royal Mail Group actively supports employees who are members of the reservist and cadet forces.

- Employees who are reservists would usually be provided with two weeks

paid time off for their Annual Active Service Commitment

- Additionally a maximum of nine days per year unpaid time off may also be granted to cover travel to mandatory weekend training camps
- Cadets and cadet officers may also be provided with up to two weeks paid time off to attend their annual training camp or special instructional courses
- Any additional time must be taken from the employee's annual holiday entitlement

To qualify for military leave noted above, the employee must provide evidence to their manager on each occasion that time off is required.

Reservists will be sent a 'call-out notice' if they are needed for full-time service. This is known as 'mobilisation'.

Information on the military procedures for notifying employers of their employees' service with the reserves may be obtained from <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/defence-relationship-management>.

Employees can obtain information using the relevant link below:

Army reservists : <http://www.army.mod.uk/belong/reserve/>

RAF reservists: <https://www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment/lifestyle-benefits/life-as-a-reserve/>

Naval reservists: <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/royal-naval-reserves>

Royal Marine reservist: <http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/royal-marines/what-can-i-do/royal-marines-reserves>

Army cadets and cadet officers/instructors: <https://armycadets.com/>

Sea cadets: <http://www.sea-cadets.org/>

Air training corps cadets: <http://www.raf.mod.uk/aircadets/>

Combined cadet force: <http://combinedcadetforce.org.uk/>

## Adverse Weather

Any employee who cannot get to their normal workplace because of adverse weather should contact their manager or their office in accordance with local arrangements and keep them advised of any change in their circumstances.

On return to work, a meeting will take place with their manager to discuss with them how their absence is to be treated. The employee may be accompanied by a work colleague or union representative at this meeting. Each case will be treated on its merits and in recognition of the difficulties for employees to attend work in adverse circumstances.

The options for treating the absence are:

- **Annual holiday:** Where the full year's entitlement has been taken, holiday may be brought forward from the following year's entitlement. This should be recorded locally, confirmed in writing to the employee and their entitlement adjusted in April
- **Make up time:** Employees may choose to make up time, the timing of this to be arranged with their manager

As an alternative employees can, if they prefer, take the time as unpaid



other time off (special leave). Please refer to the Adverse Weather Guide for more details.

## How to apply

### How to Apply

Requests for other time off should be arranged through the employee's manager. The employee should complete a request through Me at Work or by using the Other Time Off application form.

- The application should clearly show the reason for the request
- An employee may be asked to show supporting documentation before the request is considered

The manager should review the request and decide whether to accept. Consideration should be given to:

- The reason for the request
- Whether there is a legal right to request time off
- If there are other ways to allow the employee to meet their commitment without having to take time off
- The commercial and operational impact of granting the time off
- Previous other time off requested by the employee

If the manager **accepts the request**, they should confirm this through *Managing My Team*, select paid or unpaid time off and notify the employee of their decision. If unpaid time off is given, the amount will be deducted from the employees next available pay.

Annual holiday will not accrue during periods of unpaid other time off.

Where the **request is rejected** the manager should notify the employee in writing. This response should include the reasons for rejecting the request. Employees can use the Grievance Policy to raise their concerns if unhappy with the decision.

## Where to go for further information

The Getting help box on the front page tells you where to find further information.

Please also refer to the Policy and Information Site on PSP or the HR pages of the intranet (non-PSP users) for further guidance.

## Forms

The following form can be found on the Policy & Information Intranet site:

- Other Time Off application form

## Related documents

You may find it useful to read the following documents (located on the Policy and Information site on PSP and the HR pages of the intranet (non-PSP users)) in conjunction with this policy:

- Other Time Off Policy
- Other Time Off Hints and Tips Booklet for Managers
- Adverse Weather Guide
- Annual Holiday Policy and Guide

- Jury Service Guide
- Flexible Working Policy and Guide
- Career Break Policy and Guide
- Providing time off and facilities in the workplace for religious prayer or observance guide
- Religious Holidays Guide

At a glance policy summaries are also available on the [intranet](#) and [myroyalmail.com](http://myroyalmail.com)