

# Other Time Off Guide

## Guide for employees

### Overview

This is the employee guide to Other Time Off in Royal Mail Group. Other Time Off is a benefit offered to support employees who may require additional time off in addition to their annual holiday to fulfil certain commitments during work hours.

We recognise 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 line 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.

Likely reasons for requests of other time off may include any of the following, although this list is not intended to be exhaustive:

- Dependants Leave
- Family Emergency
- Bereavement
- Providing long term care for a dependant
- Regular medical treatment
- IVF Treatment
- Study and Examinations
- Redundancy notice period
- Sport
- Civic and Community Duties
- Mandatory Duties (Including Jury Service)
- Paid Civic Duties
- Retained Fire Fighters
- Special Police Constables
- Voluntary Unpaid Service
- Parliamentary Candidate
- Military Leave (Including Territorial Army)

### Dependants/Family Emergency 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 line manager. Consideration could be given to a further day off either unpaid or covered by holiday entitlement.

In exceptional circumstances up to three days may be considered.

If more time is requested then consider Getting Help to discuss options.

### **Providing long-term care for a dependant**

Time off for care of dependants 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 line 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 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
- 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**

Employees should be allowed reasonable time off when bereaved. The amount of time required will vary depending on the employee's relationship with the deceased and the circumstances of the bereavement.

- Up to one week with pay should be allowed for the death of 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 relationships with the deceased 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.

## **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 line 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 line 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 Procedure

## **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 maybe 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
- An Occupational Health referral can be considered if the employee needs some support to return to work after a failed treatment or where they feel

unwell during or after a treatment

<b>Study and exams</b>	<p>If an employee is completing a course for which they are supported by Royal Mail Group they are able to take paid time off for the exam and study. This is half a day for study and the day of the exam.</p> <p>For other courses or study any time off should be taken from the employee's annual holiday entitlement.</p> <p>Where an employee wishes to study full time they should be permanently released from the business. However they should be favourably considered if they subsequently apply for a vacant position.</p>
<b>Redundancy notice period</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Sport</b>	<p>Royal Mail Group recognises the positive benefits of employees who represent their country in national and international sporting events.</p> <p>The line manager has full discretion when authorising time off. Consideration should be given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• how the employee will be financially supported during the sporting event</li><li>• Royal Mail Group's commercial and operational needs</li><li>• no paid or unpaid time off will be granted for inter office or local community sport</li></ul>
<b>Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) / Duke of Edinburgh Award Schemes</b>	<p>Where time off is requested for expeditions (such as VSO, Raleigh International) consideration could be given to offering a <i>Career Break</i>.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>For Investiture of the Duke of Edinburgh gold award holiday entitlement should be used where possible.</p>
<b>Civic and community duties</b>	<p>Paid time off may be granted for unpaid voluntary service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 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</li><li>• Unpaid time off may be granted where the employee has paid civic/community duties</li><li>• Where paid time off is granted, employees should reimburse the business for any payments received from the outside body</li></ul>
<b>Mandatory Duties</b>	<p><b>Mandatory Duties</b></p> <p>There are civic duties that an individual is expected to perform when required such as Jury Service.</p> <p><b>Jury Service</b></p>

- 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 line 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 los 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 *DirectGov* website.

#### **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.

#### **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

### **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.

### **Military Leave (Including Territorial Army)**

Royal Mail Group actively supports employees who are reservists for the UK Armed Forces.

- Employees would usually be provided 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 six mandatory weekend training camps
- Any additional time must be taken from the employee's annual holiday entitlement
- To qualify for military leave, the employee must provide evidence to their line manager on each occasion that time off is required. Usually this is by showing the call-up papers. Individuals normally receive about six month's notice of their call up and should advise their manager as soon as possible

Details of service within the Military Reserve Forces may be obtained from the joint military / employers liaison group SaBRE on either their helpline (0800 389 5459) or web site <http://www.sabre.mod.uk/>

Information on the military procedures for notifying employers of their employees' service with the Reserves may be obtained from <http://www.en.mod.uk/>

### **How to apply**

Requests for other time off should be arranged through the employee's line manager.

- This should be 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 line 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 line manager **accepts the request**, they should through *Managing My Team*, select paid or unpaid time off and notify the employee of their decision.

Where the **request is rejected** the line 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 more information**

Please refer to the 'Getting help' box on the front page of this guide for details of where to go for further information.

Please also refer to the *HR help* and/or the *Policy and Information Site* on PSP for further guidance relating to this guide.

**Forms**

The following forms can be found on HR Help and/or the Policy & Information Intranet site:

- *Other Time Off application form*

**Related documents**

You may find it useful to read the following documents (located on HR Help and/or the Policy and Information Intranet site) in conjunction with this policy:

- *Other Time Off*