This policy is a template and should be adapted to suit your organisational values, needs and requirements. You should also check this policy is compliant with the law and your organisation’s governing document. No liability rests with SCVO.

**Note: This policy refers to ‘employees’ i.e. PAYE employees only.**

**Compassionate Leave**

**Introduction**

[Org Name] recognises the importance of supporting our employees during times of personal loss and bereavement. Compassionate leave is a special type of paid leave granted to employees who are dealing with the death or serious illness of a close family member or other significant personal circumstances. The purpose is to allow employees time off work to make necessary arrangements and grieve without the added stress of work responsibilities.

**Eligibility**

All employees of [Org Name] are eligible for compassionate leave.

**Types of events covered**

* Death or serious illness of a close family member
* Other exceptional personal circumstances (to be considered on a case-by-case basis).
* [you could add other types of compassionate leave here]

If you experience the loss of a child under the age of 18, you will be entitled to take two weeks’ parental bereavement leave. See the Parental Bereavement Leave section below for more information on this entitlement.

**Duration of compassionate leave**

Employees are entitled to up to [number] days of paid compassionate leave. This leave is separate from and in addition to any other leave entitlements.

**Requesting compassionate leave**

1. Notify your line manager as soon as possible, providing details of the situation.

2. Wherever possible, provide an estimated duration for the leave.

3. In exceptional circumstances, additional leave may be granted upon request and discussion with the [e.g. senior manager / CEO / board member]

**Returning to work**

We understand that the return to work following compassionate leave can be challenging. Employees are encouraged to communicate their needs and work with their manager to ensure a smooth transition back into the workplace. Flexible working arrangements, phased returns and additional support will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**Parental bereavement leave**

Parents, including adoptive parents and stepparents who lose a child under the age of 18 or after 24 weeks’ pregnancy are entitled to 2 weeks’ bereavement leave. Parents, including adoptive parents and stepparents that have been continuously employed by us for at least 26 weeks will receive statutory parental bereavement pay.

Visit this webpage for more information about your statutory entitlement to parental bereavement leave <https://www.gov.uk/parental-bereavement-pay-leave>

**Guidance for employers implementing a compassionate leave policy**

**What is compassionate leave?**

Compassionate leave is a type of unplanned time off from work that an employee takes due to a bereavement and/or serious illness of a close family member. Examples include the death of a loved one, caring for a family member who is seriously ill, or being the victim of a crime. It gives employees time to deal with the situation without worrying about attending work.

**Is there a difference between compassionate leave and bereavement leave?**

Bereavement leave is a specific type of compassionate leave. Bereavement leave only refers to taking time off due to the death of a loved one or family member and can be included in your compassionate leave policy or as a separate policy in addition to compassionate leave. Parents, including adoptive parents and stepparents who lose a child under the age of 18 or after 24 weeks’ pregnancy are entitled to 2 weeks’ parental bereavement leave and may be entitled to statutory pay during this period.

**Examples of situations that qualify for compassionate leave**

There are many different situations that could qualify for taking compassionate leave. Some common compassionate leave examples include dealing with the death of someone close, receiving a serious or terminal medical diagnosis, taking time off to attend a funeral, caring for a family member who has been injured or fallen ill, or dealing with the aftermath of a crime or domestic emergency.

Which situations employers choose to include in the compassionate leave policy are at the employer’s discretion. Some may only cover attending a funeral for an immediate family member as being eligible for compassionate leave, with other instances requiring holiday leave.

However, as employers come to better understand the importance of a healthy work-life balance and supporting their employees’ mental wellbeing, many are choosing to offer more flexible compassionate leave.

Taking compassionate leave allows employees to:

* Take time to grieve
* Make arrangements to deal with the situation
* Attend a funeral service
* Process what’s happened and take care of their mental health
* Focus on a healthy work-life balance

**Is compassionate leave paid?**

In the UK, there’s no legal right for employees to receive payment during compassionate leave. This means that it’s up to the employer to decide whether to offer paid compassionate leave. Employers might also choose to offer an initial period of paid days, followed by a set number of unpaid days. Whatever their policy, any organisation should clearly outline their compassionate leave policy in their employee contract, including which situations are eligible.

**6 tips for creating a compassionate leave policy**

When creating your organisations’ s compassionate leave policy, make sure to:

* Include as a bare minimum which situations are covered, how much compassionate leave is available, and whether it is paid or unpaid
* Ensure that the policy states the employees’ legal rights
* Explain the process employees need to take to alert their line manager of their need to take compassionate leave
* Allow for a certain amount of flexibility to support the unique needs of each employee
* Ensure that the policy is easy to read and understand, and readily accessible to all employees
* Provide training for line managers to make sure the policy is applied correctly and compassionately

**How to support employees through compassionate leave**

Good employers offer compassionate leave, but great employers provide genuine care and support both during the employee’s time off and once they return to work.

After a period of compassionate leave, it’s important to make sure your employees are adequately supported and ready to come back. This might include booking regular one-to-one meetings to check in with them and discuss any necessary support, offering a phased return to work plan, and generally being more considerate and understanding of any minor mistakes immediately following their return.

**Understanding the laws and regulations surrounding compassionate leave**

While there isn’t specific law for compassionate leave in the UK, anyone classed as an employee has the right to take time off from work to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. A dependant is defined as a spouse, partner, child, grandchild, parent or other person who depends on you for their care. This is for unexpected situations and doesn’t apply to those that an employee could plan for

<https://www.gov.uk/time-off-for-dependants>

**Bereavement leave policy template**

ACAS has produced a template policy for bereavement leave. This could be adapted to include other types of paid or unpaid compassionate leave. SCVO’s HR Service can review your draft polices and make recommendations.

<https://www.acas.org.uk/example-bereavement-policy-template>

**Please contact the SCVO HR Service for advice if you have any questions regarding this policy. If you are not a member of HR for Creatives or an HR service subscriber, we may still be able to help. Email** [**hrservice@scvo.scot**](mailto:hrservice@scvo.scot) **and we’ll get back to you within 48 hours.**