a managers' guide to time away from work

We've created this guidance to give you an outline - but we recommend that you take a look at our policies on annual leave, career break and other types of leave first.

And if you have a particular question, you might find the answer in our FAQs on time away.

annual leave

People who are permanent and full time are entitled to 25 days of annual leave each year. From 2016, they can increase it by up to 15 days a year, as long as their total annual leave isn't more than 40 days. They can also reduce their annual leave, but not below the legal minimum for their working pattern. People can buy or sell annual leave when the window is open for choosing our benefits each year (we all do this through *myrewards*). The leave year runs from 1 January to 31 December.

summary of key steps - annual leave

* People request annual leave on people portal.
* They should give as much notice as possible for booking time off - as a guide we ask for a minimum of five days, or twice as long as they're asking for.
* Annual leave of more than two weeks is possible, but they'll need to discuss their plans with you early on.
* In certain circumstances, you may have to refuse a request - for example where there's no cover in the team, or you're working towards a tight deadline.
* To approve or reject a request, please log into people portal.

compassionate leave

Compassionate leave can be given when someone has passed away or is seriously ill. It's up to whether you approve or reject a request. Usually it would be one or two days' paid leave.

summary of key steps - compassionate leave

* Gather all the relevant information - in an empathetic and sensitive way.
* Because compassionate leave doesn't only apply to people whose relative is ill or has passed away, you may want to understand the relationship between the employee and the person - and where they need to travel to visit them or attend a funeral.
* Discuss the request with your HR business partner to make sure we're consistent in our approach.
* Compassionate leave should be requested through people portal. As a manager, you can also enter a record on behalf of one of your team. Take a look at our guide to find out how.

career break

If someone has been with the organisation for two years continuously, they can request a career break. A career break is unpaid leave of any length from three months up to a year. We'd normally expect someone to give us three months' notice before they start their break. The executive team will consider the request. We can't agree to every request for a career break, so we don't expect people to make any firm plans until we get back to them.

summary of key steps - career break

* Make sure you understand the reasons behind the request.
* If you're happy to approve, please ask the person to complete a career break form.
* You'll then need to complete the section "why you support this request"in the form. Say how long they've been with us, how they perform, their last two appraisal ratings, and any other information that may be relevant.
* Give the form to the senior manager for your department to sign and date in support of the request.
* Give the completed form to HR support who'll pass it on to the executive team.
* HR support will then let you know whether it's been approved or rejected.

medical appointments

People should arrange medical appointments outside of normal working hours. If that's not possible, they should get approval from you to book it during work time - and it should be arranged in a way that causes minimal disruption to work. In most cases, they'll need to make the time up - but make sure you're being consistent with other people, unless this is to go to an antenatal appointment. Women going to antenatal classes don't need to make up the time. Men can take unpaid leave to go to antenatal appointments.

summary of key steps - medical appointments

* Find out how often the appointments are - and agree how best to fit them around work.
* Ask for as much notice as possible - and for appointments to be scheduled either at the beginning or the end of the working day.
* Depending on the type of appointment, you may need to ask the person to make up the time.
* Typically, a medical appointment would be between one and two hours - if it's likely to be longer it should be taken as holiday, unless there's a medical need.
* In certain circumstances, you can ask for evidence of the appointment.

time off for dependants

We offer two days' paid time off to deal with certain unexpected or sudden emergencies, and to make any necessary longer-term arrangements.

summary of key steps - time off for dependants

* Make sure you know what family or carer responsibilities the person has - and how this may impact their work.
* The person should tell you as early as possible if they're unable to come to work - this follows the same rules as sickness absence.
* Once they've used up their two days, talk to them about what arrangements they've made to deal with any future emergencies.
* You should record any further leave as unpaid leave or holiday - and let the person know this will be the case.

things to keep in mind

* Make sure you understand the details behind requests, so that you can make an informed decision.
* Speak to your HR business partner to make sure you're being consistent in applying our policies.
* Agree with the person how you're going to keep in touch while they're on leave.
* In certain circumstances, you may need to consider unpaid leave for the person. This is discretionary and should be used as a last resort - for example when they've used up their annual leave or compassionate leave.