Inclusive Bereavement Policy & Guidance

1. Introduction

1.1. This policy is intended as guidance for any employee who is dealing with bereavement. We understand that this can be an incredibly difficult period and wish to be as supportive as possible to all our employees, no matter the circumstances.

1.2. We acknowledge that grief is a personal experience and aim to have a policy that is flexible to fit any employee's needs during this time. We recognise that grief does not follow a fixed timeline, and experiences vary depending on personal, cultural, spiritual, and social circumstances.

2. Scope

2.1. This policy applies to all employees impacted by bereavement.

2.2. We recognise that "family" is defined in many ways, and bereavement is not restricted to legally recognised relationships. This policy applies equally to:

- **immediate and extended family members**
- **chosen family**
- **unmarried or same-sex partners**
- **close friends or others who play a significant role in an employee's life**

3. Legislative Compliance

3.1. This policy is made in line with the following legislation:

3.1.1. Equality Act 2010: We prohibit discrimination against those with protected characteristics (e.g., race, faith, maternity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability). If an employee needs adjustments linked to a protected characteristic, these will be made wherever possible.

3.1.2. Jack's Law: Any employee who loses a child aged under 18, or whose child is stillborn after 24 weeks, is entitled to two weeks' statutory bereavement leave.

3.1.3. Employment Rights Act 1996: Employees have the right to a 'reasonable' amount of unpaid time off to manage unforeseen family matters. We aim to go beyond this by providing reasonable *paid* time off wherever possible.

4. Aims

4.1 Our aims are to:

- **Create a workplace where employees feel supported and safe while dealing with any bereavement.**
- **Implement an inclusive policy that recognises the many ways grief may be experienced.**
- **Support open communication, without forcing disclosure of personal details.**
- **Educate management about bereavement, inclusive practices, and sensitive language.**
- **Ensure employees are not penalised for grief-related absences or reduced capacity.**

5. Guidance for Conversations

- **Employees can speak to a trusted manager or HR, not just their direct line manager.**
- **There is no obligation to disclose personal details (cause of death, nature of relationship, etc.).**
- **Conversations will be handled confidentially and sensitively, respecting the employee's pace.**
- **Managers must avoid imposing rigid timelines and instead agree arrangements based on the employee's needs.**
- **Neurodivergent or disabled employees may request adjustments to communication (e.g., written follow-ups, additional processing time).**

6. Bereavement Leave

- **Bereavement leave is paid time off that allows employees to grieve and make necessary arrangements.**
- **A minimum of 7 working days paid leave will be granted for the death of a dependent, family member, chosen family member, or significant other. Extensions can be requested.**
- **Employees affected by the death of someone outside these categories (e.g., a close friend or mentor) are also entitled to support and leave, to be agreed with management.**
- **Bereavement leave may be taken flexibly (not all at once) to support anniversaries, memorials, or cultural/religious observances.**
- **Employees may also request phased returns, hybrid working, or flexible hours after bereavement leave.**
- **Pets are included within this policy, recognising their importance to many employees' wellbeing.**
- **Employees may request additional time for cultural, spiritual, or religious practices. No one will be disadvantaged or discriminated against for observing their practices.**

7. Miscarriage & Pregnancy Loss

- **We recognise pregnancy loss (including miscarriage under 24 weeks) as bereavement.**
- **A minimum of 7 working days paid leave will be provided.**
- **This applies equally to mothers, fathers, partners, adoptive parents, and surrogates.**
- **Employees may also take paid absence for follow-up medical appointments and recovery.**
- **Additional flexibility is offered for the return of menstruation and related physical recovery.**

- **If a miscarriage happens at work, employees may leave immediately and do not need to disclose details if uncomfortable doing so.**
- **Professional counselling, occupational health, or wellbeing support will be made available if requested.**

8. Workplace Support

- **Managers will check in regularly and review agreed adjustments.**
- **Employees may access quiet or private spaces when needed.**
- **Adjustments may include reduced workloads, flexible hours, or reassignment of tasks.**
- **Access to resources (e.g., counselling, support groups, employee assistance programmes) will be provided.**
- **Managers and HR will undertake bereavement and inclusive language training to ensure sensitive handling.**

9. Mental Health, Disability & Intersectionality

- **Bereavement can impact mental health (e.g., anxiety, depression, PTSD). Employees can request adjustments such as hybrid working, flexible hours, or reduced demands.**
- **Disabled and neurodivergent employees may experience grief differently, requiring specific adjustments (e.g., extended timelines, reduced sensory exposure, written communication).**
- **We recognise that identity factors such as faith, culture, gender identity, and sexuality can influence grief. Managers must not make assumptions and should ask what support is needed.**

10. Bullying, Harassment & Discrimination

- **Zero tolerance for any bullying, harassment, or discrimination relating to bereavement, identity, or cultural practices.**
- **Breaches will be investigated and may result in disciplinary action.**
- **Employees can report concerns confidentially or anonymously.**

11. Roles & Responsibilities

Employees: Communicate needs where comfortable, support colleagues, and report breaches of this policy.
Managers: Model inclusive behaviour, respect confidentiality, and make adjustments.
HR: Provide training, monitor compliance, review policy annually, and support investigations.

12. Breach of Policy

Any breach of this policy will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action. Employees can report breaches confidentially or anonymously.

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