



Special Leave Policy

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1. Aims and Objectives

- 1.1. South East Coast Ambulance Service is committed to developing a work culture that supports the work-life balance and wellbeing of its staff. As part of this commitment, the Trust recognises that there may be occasions when colleagues need to take time off work to fulfil other responsibilities.
- 1.2. This policy, along with the Flexible Working and Family Friendly policies, provides wherever possible a level of flexibility for colleagues in their working arrangements.
- 1.3. The policy provides a framework for managers to take a sensitive, fair and reasonable approach in the consideration of special leave requests, balancing the individual's circumstances with the needs of the business.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to all colleagues directly employed by the Trust.
- 2.2. This policy covers the following leave requests:
 - Domestic Emergencies
 - Public Duties and Activities.
 - Jury Service, Court, Tribunal or Hearing Attendance.
 - Emergency Service Volunteer Leave
 - Safe Leave (relating to Domestic Violence)

3. Principles

- 3.1. This policy contributes to a working environment in which staff have access to a clear set of leave options for a range of non-standard and unexpected scenarios.
- 3.2. Time off under this policy may be paid or unpaid, depending on the type of leave. Where provisions in this policy refer to a specific number of days leave, they will be pro-rated for part-time staff. There may also be further flexibility to extend this with annual leave, toil etc.
- 3.3. All requests will be considered and not be unreasonably refused or postponed without sound business grounds.
- 3.4. Colleagues are entitled to an appropriate level of confidentiality concerning their lives outside work. Any confidential information provided through completion of the Special Leave Request Form will be shared on a strictly 'need to know' basis.



4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1. Colleagues

- Inform their Line Manager as soon as is practicable of their requirement to take a period of special leave and complete any relevant paperwork.
- During any period of leave taken under this policy, colleagues should keep in touch with their line manager and let them know when they expect to return to work, including if anything changes to affect their return date.

4.2. Managers

- Where a colleague wishes to take time off under this policy, the line manager should be mindful of confidentiality and about what information is shared.
- Accurately record special leave requests on to GRS.
- Be aware of the total amount of special leave/ time off being taken by each individual.
- Complete staff changes form to confirm any period of unpaid special leave.
- Provide written reasons for exceptionally refusing a request for special leave, seeking guidance from Human Resources where necessary.

4.3. Human Resources

- Ensuring consistent application of the policy.
- Providing advice, guidance and clarification of this policy as required.

5. Domestic Reasons

- 5.1. Domestic leave covers genuine unforeseen emergencies relating to domestic incidents and is granted according to the circumstances.

Examples of situations which may be considered an emergency are:

- Burglary
- Vehicle theft
- Vehicle accident
- Emergency repairs to home or services arising from or to avoid flooding or fire
- Other similar circumstances

- 5.2. If an employee requires additional time off, alternative leave arrangements should be agreed with their line manager. This may include, for example, annual leave, toil or unpaid leave. See [Family Friendly Policy](#) for emergencies involving dependants.



- 5.3. Paid leave for domestic reasons can be given in any one instance up to a maximum of 1 day.
- 5.3. Colleagues must notify their Line Manager at the earliest opportunity advising of the circumstances and how long they expect to be absent from work.

6. Public Duties

- 6.1. Colleagues may be required to be absent from work in order to carry out public duties. Where possible these duties should be undertaken outside of working hours. Where this is not possible, colleagues are entitled to reasonable time off as detailed below.
- Justice of the Peace/Magistrate - up to 6 days or 12 half days paid in any 12-month period.
 - Educational or school governor, member of the local authority, environment agency, housing association, health authority, general teaching council, police authority, prison monitoring board or statutory tribunal panel - up to 3 days with pay in any 12-month period.
- 6.2. Colleagues should discuss their expected involvement throughout the year with their manager before making any commitments.
- 6.3. Authorisation to take leave for any forthcoming commitments should be requested as far in advance as possible and in any case at least 1 week before the event. If adequate notice is not given, this may result in leave not being granted. Requests should be recorded on the Special Leave Request Form.
- 6.4. Where paid leave has been granted and a daily fee is paid to the individual for carrying out a public duty the fee should be remitted to the Trust.

7. Jury Service

- 7.1. Colleagues who are called for Jury Service will be entitled to paid leave to attend court. Therefore, fees must not be claimed from the court other than allowances for travelling and subsistence. For more information visit [Jury service: How jury service works - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- 7.2. As soon as an individual receives notification that they are required to undertake jury service, they should advise their manager in writing using the Special Leave Request Form and provide a copy of their jury summons letter/email.



7.3. The Trust may request that colleagues have their jury service deferred if attendance would cause critical service difficulties.

7.4. Colleagues are expected to attend work on any full day when not required in court. If colleagues are not required to attend court for part of a day, they will be expected to attend work if it is reasonably practicable to do so, e.g. if travel time from court to work allows it.

8. **Court, Tribunal or Hearing Attendance** (which includes attendance at Professional Tribunal, Employment Tribunal or a Fitness to Practice Hearing)

8.1. Any colleague summoned to attend court, tribunals, or hearings which is confirmed to be on behalf of the Trust, is eligible for paid leave.

8.2. Where the colleague has been the victim of, or witness to a crime and is required to give a statement to the police they will be eligible for paid leave if this cannot be arranged outside of working hours. Any witness fee received (except for travel and subsistence) must be reimbursed to the Trust.

8.3. As soon as an individual receives notification that they are required to undertake court, tribunal or hearing attendance, they should advise their manager in writing using the Special Leave Request Form and provide a copy of their letter of notification.

9. **Emergency Service Volunteer Leave**

9.1. Volunteering leave supports activities of Fire-fighters, Special Constables, RNLI, Search and Rescue or other similar emergency response activities and services.

9.2. Employees should declare voluntary duties in accordance with the Declaration of Interest Policy. They can request a reasonable amount of unpaid leave where their voluntary duties cannot be undertaken outside of their normal working hours, in advance via the Special Leave Request Form.

9.3. Alternatively, colleagues may wish to take toil or apply for annual leave or flexible working. Consideration may also be given to the changing of shifts.

10. **Safe Leave**

10.1. For those Colleagues experiencing domestic abuse, the Trust recognises the need to take time off from work to flee the abusive relationship, make arrangements or attend relevant appointments, including attending medical appointments and counselling, attending legal proceedings and

arranging housing or childcare. Further information is available in the [Domestic Abuse Workforce Policy](#).

- 10.2. The Trust supports a reasonable time off, but requests that colleagues endeavour to arrange appointments outside of normal working hours, where appropriate to do so. Line Managers are encouraged to first explore paid leave options to help the employee cope with the situation. Depending on circumstances, leave options may include arranging flexible work hours and using emergency dependant leave (see [Family Friendly Policy](#)). Unpaid leave should also be considered where other leave options have been exhausted.
- 10.3. Wherever possible, agreement will be reached in advance in respect of the amount of time off to be granted. Where appropriate, the manager can request evidence of an appointment.

11. False Declarations

- 11.1. If a colleague is found to have abused their right to time off under the conditions listed in any of the types of leave listed in this policy, they may be referred for investigation under the Trust's Disciplinary Procedure. If the breach is so serious as to amount to a dishonest act and cause a financial loss to the Trust the matter may be referred to the Local Counter Fraud Specialist for investigation, which may lead to a criminal sanction.

12. Monitoring Compliance

- 12.1. The HR SLT is responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy. Human Resources (HR) will monitor the application of the policy and procedure through feedback from staff and managers. Feedback, legislature and changes to terms and conditions will be used to inform and improve policies, as well as provide recommendations for improving working practices. HR will provide relevant reports, based on this data, as required.

13. Audit and Review (evaluating effectiveness)

- 13.1. All policies have their effectiveness audited by the HR SLT at regular intervals, and initially six months after a new policy is approved and disseminated.
- 13.2. Effectiveness will be reviewed using the tools set out in the Trust's Policy and Procedure for the Development and Management of Trust Policies and Procedures (also known as the Policy on Policies).
- 13.3. This document will be reviewed in its entirety every three years or sooner if new legislation, codes of practice or national standards are introduced,

or if feedback from employees indicates that the policy is not working effectively.

- 13.4. All changes made to this policy will go through the governance route for development and approval as set out in the Policy on Policies.

14. Associated Trust Documentation

- [Annual Leave Policy](#)
- [Family Friendly Policy](#)
- [Flexible Working Policy](#)
- [Declaration of Interests \(including Gifts, Hospitality, Sponsorship and Secondary Employment\)](#)
- [Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Workforce Policy](#)

15. Financial Checkpoint

- 15.1. To ensure that any financial implications of changes in policy or procedure are considered in advance of document approval, document authors are required to seek approval from the Finance Team before submitting their document for final approval.
- 15.2. This document has been confirmed by Finance to have no unbudgeted financial implications.

16. Equality Analysis

- 16.1. The Trust believes in fairness and equality, and values diversity in its role as both a provider of services and as an employer. The Trust aims to provide accessible services that respect the needs of each individual and exclude no-one. It is committed to comply with the Human Rights Act and to meeting the Equality Act 2010, which identifies the following nine protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Belief, Gender Reassignment, Sexual Orientation, Sex, Marriage and Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity
- 16.2. Compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty: If a contractor carries out functions of a public nature, then for the duration of the contract, the contractor or supplier would itself be considered a public authority and have the duty to comply with the equalities duties when carrying out those functions.