



Bereavement Policy

Swillington Village Council acknowledges the personal nature of bereavement and grief and is committed to supporting employees in practical and reasonable ways.

This policy provides an overview of employee entitlements and the associated requirements; however, employees should contact the Clerk in the first instance to discuss their individual circumstances. The Clerk will provide further guidance to ensure that all statutory requirements are understood and followed.

Paid bereavement leave

Bereavement leave is paid leave that allows an employee time off to deal with their personal grief and related practical arrangements, primarily, but not limited to, when a family member dies.

Swillington Village Council acknowledges that bereavement impacts all individuals differently and the guidelines below are intended to show the minimum paid leave an employee is entitled to in different circumstances.

Swillington Village Council acknowledges that not all employees will need to take the full allowance, and some employees will need additional time, depending on their relationship with the person who has died and the circumstances of the death. Additional time off can include paid annual leave and unpaid leave. Employees should check the organisation's policies on annual leave.

If a dependant dies

2 weeks of paid leave will be granted in the event of the death of a dependant.

A dependant could be a:

- spouse, partner or civil partner (including same sex partners)*
- child**
- parent
- step-parent
- sibling
- person who lives in the employee's household (not tenants, lodgers or employees)
- person who would rely on the employee for help in the event of an accident, illness or injury, such as an elderly neighbour
- person who relies on the employee to make care arrangements

*Partner includes someone the employee is cohabiting with but is not the employee's spouse or civil partner.

**Child includes children the employee is the adoptive parent, legal guardian or carer for. If the child dies under the age of 18 or is stillborn the employee may be entitled to additional leave.

Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave

This applies in relation to a child whose primary carer dies on or after 6 April 2026.

This provides eligible employees with the right to take time off work following the death of the mother or primary adopter of their child within the first year of the child's life or placement for adoption. This is a day one right, meaning employees are eligible from the first day of employment.

An employee qualifies where:

- Their child is under one year old, or within the first year following adoption; and
- The child's mother or primary adopter has died; and
- The employee has responsibility for the upbringing of the child.

Eligible employees may take up to 52 weeks of leave until the child's first birthday or the first anniversary of the adoption placement.

In order to take Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave, the employee must give the following notice to the Clerk:

- if within 8 weeks of the bereavement – notice must be given before the employee would usually start work on the first day of leave, orally or in writing
- if more than 8 weeks after the bereavement – notice must be given at least 1 week before the start of the planned leave, in writing

There is no statutory pay requirement for Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave. In this circumstance, Swillington Village Council provides pay at the current Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) rate, which is currently paid at the rate of £187.18 a week or 90% of your average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.

If a non-dependant dies

In these circumstances, up to 1 week unpaid leave may be granted on the death of someone who is not a child or dependant. These circumstances would include (but are not limited to) situations where the employee is responsible for funeral arrangements or has to travel abroad to attend the funeral.

Giving notice for bereavement leave

An employee should notify their line manager of their need to take leave as soon as possible or, at the latest, on the first day of absence. An employee's next of kin or family member can notify the employee's line manager on their behalf.

In exceptional circumstances, applications for leave will be considered after the first day of absence. Line managers have the right to exercise discretion in exceptional circumstances as outlined above. Leave days do not have to be taken consecutively.

Additional time off

Annual leave

In the event of a bereavement, an employee will be able to take annual leave at short notice to supplement their bereavement leave. Requests should be directed to the employee's line manager.

An employee who experiences a family bereavement while on annual leave can convert their annual leave into bereavement leave and take their annual leave at a future date.

Unpaid leave

Unpaid leave on compassionate grounds may be granted after bereavement. An employee must consult with their line manager before starting unpaid leave.

Parental Bereavement Leave

Employees are entitled to 2 weeks Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave if their child:

- dies under the age of 18
- is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy

Employees can claim this leave if they are the:

- birth parent
- natural parent (the person who gave birth to the child who has since been adopted, but has a court order to allow them to continue having access to the child)
- adoptive parent, if the child was living with them
- person who lived with the child and had responsibility for them, for at least 4 weeks before they died
- 'intended parent' – due to become the legal parent through surrogacy
- partner of the child's parent, if they live with the child and the child's parent in an enduring family relationship

Parental Bereavement Leave can be used within 56 weeks of the date of the death or stillbirth. It can be taken as either:

- 2 consecutive weeks
- 2 separate weeks
- 1 week only

In order to take Parental Bereavement Leave, an employee should tell their line manager:

- when they want their Parental Bereavement Leave to start
- whether they want to take 1 or 2 weeks' leave
- the date of their child's death

To take or cancel Parental Bereavement Leave, an employee should also give their line manager the correct notice:

- if within 8 weeks of the bereavement – notice must be given before the employee would usually start work on the first day of leave
- if more than 8 weeks after the bereavement – notice must be given at least 1 week before the start of the planned leave

Parental Bereavement Pay

All employees will be entitled to Parental Bereavement Pay if all of the following apply:

- their child dies under the age of 18 or is stillborn after 24 weeks of pregnancy
- they were employed when their child died

To enable Swillington Village Council to pay the employee for this time off, the employee must ask in writing (give 'notice') for Parental Bereavement Pay within 28 days of taking Statutory Parental Bereavement Leave, starting from the first day of the week they're claiming the payment for.

The notice should state the employee is entitled to Parental Bereavement Pay and include:

- their name
- the start and end dates of the leave they want to claim the pay for
- the date of their child's death
- their relationship with the child

Swillington Village Council will grant a total of 2 weeks' paid leave paid at the employee's usual rate of pay.

Miscarriage leave

If an employee or their partner has a miscarriage in the first 24 weeks of pregnancy, Swillington Village Council recognises many people will consider this a bereavement.

In these circumstances, Swillington Village Council provides 1 week's leave. This time off will be paid at the employee's usual rate of pay.

Up to 2 weeks sickness absence related to a miscarriage will be recorded as 'pregnancy related sickness'. This absence will be kept separate to other types of sickness and Swillington Village Council will not count these absences towards any review or trigger points set out in the organisation's absence policy.

Return to work

In certain circumstances a full return to work may not be possible for an employee following a bereavement. For example, when the employee's grief is likely to impact on their ability to perform their role, or where new child care arrangements have to be sourced or responsibility for the care of an elderly parent has transferred to the employee.

In such instances Swillington Village Council will allow a phased return to work on a part-time or reduced hours basis where practicable. Alternative duties may also be considered. Any such arrangement would need to be agreed in advance by the line manager. It would be subject to an agreed maximum number of days and would be managed in line with Swillington Village Council's contractual arrangements with employees.

Employee support

Swillington Village Council acknowledges that bereavement leave is intended to support employees in the immediate period around the death of a relative. However, the process of grief, the natural reaction and adjustment to loss and change may take a significant time and will be personal to each individual.

An employee with any concerns about the grieving process impacting on their work performance should discuss this in confidence with either their line manager, a member of the Staffing Committee, or the Clerk to the Council. This is to ensure that:

- any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary are discussed and put in place
- the employee is supported in their return to the full range of duties and responsibilities that they had prior to the bereavement
- the employee's duties and responsibilities are adjusted (as necessary) with the prior agreement of line manager

Swillington Village Council recognises that people may not require counselling to cope effectively with their grief. However, for employees wishing to seek professional help in coming to terms with a death, the organisation will cover the cost of up to 6 counselling sessions with an independent counselling practice. This is a confidential service and can be accessed directly through HR or the employee assistance programme.

Health and safety

Bereavement can have an impact on concentration, sleep and decision making. The health and safety assessment of the workplace will include consideration of the impact of bereavement on employees, their duties and responsibilities, and the context in which they are working.

Any employee who is concerned about their ability to conduct their duties safely in the weeks following a bereavement must discuss this with their line manager.

Swillington Village Council reserves the right to request an employee to provide a fit to work note from their doctor before resuming full duties.

Culture and diversity

Swillington Village Council recognises that different cultures respond to death in significantly different ways.

Line managers will check whether the employee's religion, belief or culture requires them to observe any particular practices or make special arrangements which would require them being off work at a particular time. Employees should not assume that their line manager is aware of any such requirements and should draw this to their line manager's attention as soon as possible.

This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.

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