

Time Off for Dependants

Policy · UK · Updated 2026-07-11 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

A time off for dependants policy is the written statement of how your organisation handles the statutory right to take reasonable time off work to deal with an emergency involving a dependant — a child taken ill at school, a care arrangement that collapses, an elderly parent's fall, or the death of a dependant.

This is the right managers meet most often and know least about. Because the emergencies arrive without warning, the decisions get made on the phone at 7am, and without a policy those decisions are inconsistent — one manager pays, one docks, one quietly resents. A short written policy makes the 7am call easy.

This template gives you a ready-to-edit policy covering who counts as a dependant, what counts as an emergency, how much time off is reasonable, pay, and how to notify.

Purpose and scope

This policy explains how [Your company] handles time off to deal with emergencies involving a dependant. It applies to all employees from their first day, in every role and on every contract type.

Policy statement

[Your company] will never penalise an employee for taking necessary time off to deal with a genuine emergency involving a dependant. Equally, this leave exists for emergencies — it is not an alternative to annual leave, parental leave, or agreed flexible arrangements for foreseeable care needs.

Who counts as a dependant

- Your spouse, civil partner, or partner.
- Your child or your parent.
- Someone who lives in your household as part of the family (not a lodger, tenant, or employee).
- Someone who reasonably relies on you for help in an emergency or to arrange care — for example an elderly neighbour you are the primary contact for.

What this leave covers

- A dependant falls ill, gives birth, is injured, or is assaulted.
- You need to arrange care for a dependant who is ill or injured.
- Care arrangements break down unexpectedly — the childminder cancels, the care home calls, the school closes at short notice.
- A dependant dies and you need to make arrangements or attend the funeral (see also our bereavement leave policy).
- An unexpected incident involving your child during school hours.

What this leave does not cover

This leave is for dealing with the emergency and putting arrangements in place — typically hours or a day or two — not for providing ongoing care yourself. Foreseeable events (a planned hospital appointment, a school holiday you have known about for months) should be covered by annual leave, parental leave, or a flexible working arrangement. If a situation looks like becoming ongoing, talk to [name/role] about the longer-term options rather than stretching this policy.

Pay and how much time off is reasonable

The statutory right is to unpaid time off. At [Your company], [state your position: e.g. the first [number] days of dependant leave in any [period] are paid at normal pay; further time is unpaid / all dependant leave is unpaid; annual leave may be used instead by agreement].

What is reasonable depends on the emergency — most events need less than a day or two to stabilise. There is no fixed annual cap, but repeated absences for the same underlying problem are a signal to move to a planned arrangement, and [name/role] will raise that conversation supportively.

Telling us and record keeping

- Tell [your manager or name/role] as soon as reasonably practical — a call or message on the day is fine; the emergency comes first.
- Say why you need the time and roughly how long you expect to be away, and update us if that changes.
- On return, confirm the absence in [system] so the record is accurate; no medical or other documentary evidence is needed for short dependant emergencies.
- Absences under this policy are recorded separately from sickness and do not count towards absence-management triggers.

Review

This policy is reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually] by [name/role], alongside our absence management and bereavement leave policies, and whenever official guidance changes. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Decide your pay position first — paid, unpaid, or paid up to a limit — and write it in plainly; ambiguity here is what generates resentment.
2. Check the leave-recording system has a dependant-leave category separate from sickness before you publish.
3. Brief managers that the day-of conversation is "go, we will sort the details later", not an interrogation.
4. Cross-reference your bereavement and absence management policies so a death or a recurring care issue has an obvious next step.
5. Revisit real cases after six months and adjust the paid-days placeholder to match what actually happens.

Official guidance

- › [GOV.UK — Time off for family and dependants](#)
- › [ACAS — Absence from work](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/time-off-for-dependants-policy> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.