

To note amendments to Staff Handbook in response to recent legislative changes

The staff handbook has been updated to reflect a number of changes to employment law which took effect from 6th April 2024. The following summary is taken from the House of Commons Library website - <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/what-employment-laws-are-changing-from-april-2024/#:~:text=New%20legislation%20has%20expanded%20rights,effect%20from%206%20April%202024.>

These changes come from several pieces of legislation passed in the last two years, mostly Private Members' Bills which have passed with Government support and related secondary legislation.

Changes to flexible working

Employees can now make two rather than one request a year for flexible working, and the deadline for employers to respond to requests has been reduced from three to two months.

Employers will also have to explain the reasons for denying any request, and employees no longer have to explain the impact of their request. However, the list of reasons employers can use to deny requests is remaining the same, including factors such as cost to the business or impact on quality, performance or ability to meet customer demand.

These changes were made through the [Employment Rights \(Flexible Working\) Act 2023](#). Through a [separate piece of secondary legislation](#), employees will also be able to make such requests from their first day of employment, without having to wait the 26-week qualifying period.

For more information about this legislation, see the [Library briefing on the Employment Relations \(Flexible Working\) Bill 2022-23](#).

Carer's leave

Employees are now entitled to take one week of unpaid leave a year if they have caring responsibilities.

This applies to any employees who are caring for a spouse, civil partner, child, parent or other dependant who needs care because of a disability, old age or any illness or injury likely to require at least three months of care. The leave entitlement is available from the first day of employment with no qualifying period.

This entitlement was created by the [Carer's Leave Act 2023](#) and the associated [Carer's Leave Regulations 2024](#). For more information about this legislation, see the [Library briefing on the Carer's Leave Bill 2022-23](#).

More flexibility for paternity leave

Employees taking statutory paternity leave (and pay, if they are eligible) can now split their two weeks' entitlement into two separate one-week blocks, rather than having to take them

both together. They can also take their two weeks at any time within the first year after their child's birth, rather than within only the first eight weeks after birth as previously required.

Employees now have to give employers 28 days' notice for each week of leave, down from 15-weeks' notice previously, before taking leave. However, they still need to give notice of their upcoming entitlement 15 weeks before the expected date of birth.

These changes were made by the [Paternity Leave \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024](#).

Other matters

Following the agreement of a new Members and Officers Protocol in September 2022 and a revised Bullying and Harassment Policy in March 2024, revisions to these documents have been incorporated into the Staff Handbook.

For completeness the Council's Social Media Policy has also been included in the Staff Handbook for the first time.

Martin Ayres
Town Clerk

April 2024