

Work Life Balance Schemes

A number of family friendly schemes have been introduced to the local authority since the mid-eighties, both statutory and non-statutory. These schemes derive not only from the important policy aim of promoting equality between men and women but also to encourage recruitment and retention of staff, by allowing them to balance work and family life. The following outlines the basic elements of these schemes in order to ensure that all staff are aware of them. Further information on the schemes listed below is available on the Intranet or from the Human Resources Department.

I - FAMILY FRIENDLY/FLEXIBLE WORKING NON-STATUTORY POLICIES

WORK SHARING

The work sharing scheme allows staff to apply to work:

- mornings only;
- afternoons only;
- split week i.e. two days/three days;
- three day week; and
- four day week.
- week on - week off.

Galway City Council do not facilitate any leave applications less than ½ day, for administration and management purposes. While it is not a specific requirement of the worksharing scheme to have a partner, with complementing attendance or otherwise, it is acknowledged that the operating needs of a particular section in Galway City Council may require a suitable partner/suitable partners for some attendance patterns, with a complementing attendance, as a prerequisite to granting a request for worksharing. In considering an application to participate in the worksharing Scheme, it may be necessary to transfer an applicant to other duties that allow a more flexible attendance pattern than the applicant's current position. This will be recommended by line management in consultation with the staff member and approved by Human Resources Department/Section.

The City Council endeavours to facilitate alternative work-sharing arrangements, where this is possible.

MARRIAGE LEAVE

Marriage leave may be granted to an officer, on the occasion of their marriage, provided their annual leave complement and marriage leave entitlement during that year does not then exceed **24 DAYS**. For example a Clerical Officer with an annual leave allocation of 21days would be entitled to 3 additional days to bring their allocation up to 24 days.

UNPAID LEAVE – SPECIAL LEAVE

Staff may apply for special leave without pay. The period of special leave without pay may not exceed two months or in exceptional circumstances six months. For example: Special leave without pay may be used for urgent domestic affairs.

SHORTER WORKING YEAR SCHEME

The Shorter Working Year Scheme replaces the Term Time Scheme. The purpose of the scheme is to permit employees to balance their working arrangements with outside commitments, including the school holiday periods for children. This special leave is available as a period of 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 or 13 consecutive weeks, which may be taken as one continuous period, or as a maximum of 3 separate periods each consisting of not less than 2 weeks and not exceeding 13 weeks in total. This period of special leave is unpaid, however, an employee may make an application for payment of part of their basic salary during this leave by a certain date determined by Galway City Council.

Human Resources will notify all staff of the closing date for receipt of applications in the year prior to the leave been taken.

CAREER BREAKS

The Local Authority (Consolidated) Career Break Scheme came into effect from 1st August 2008. the total period of special leave for career break purposes has been extended to 3 career breaks over ten years. *A second and third career break may not be taken until the employee has served for a period equal to the duration of the initial or second break.* The total period of special leave shall not exceed ten years. All employees with two year's service are eligible to apply. A career break shall consist of special leave without pay for a period of not less than six months and not more than five years in any one period.

A career break may be granted for domestic responsibilities, further education, travel abroad or self-employment. A person is not allowed take up another permanent post in the public sector within the state while on career break.

COMPASSIONATE LEAVE

In accordance with the provisions of the Department of the Environment and Local Government circulars, special leave with pay may be granted under the following conditions:

- (a) Up to a maximum of three days may be granted on the death of an immediate relative, that is, father, mother, child, brother, sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law grand-mother or grand-father. In the case of death of a near relative, other than those listed above, the special leave shall be restricted to one day. In exceptional circumstances, compassionate leave may be granted on the death of a more distant relative where the employee has to take charge of funeral arrangements or has lived in the same house as the deceased.
- (b) On the death of a spouse or a child, the maximum number of days allowable may be increased to five. Extra days may be allowed where an immediate relative dies abroad and the employee has to go abroad to take care of the funeral arrangements.

FLEXITIME

The Flexitime Scheme operates between the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 and applies to most clerical/administrative employees up to and including Senior Staff Officer. Other individual cases will be considered on their merits.

Core Hours: 10:00 to 12:30 and 14:30 to 16:00
Flexible Hours: 08:00 to 10:00, 12:30 to 14:30 and 16:00 to 18:00.

The standard working day is 6 hours 36 minutes and the number of hours to be worked in an accounting period is 132 hours. Employees may avail of flexible working hours outside of core times, subject to adequate cover, and availability of work.

The availability of many of these schemes to staff is dependent on the circumstances in individual Departments and offices and on the need to ensure that the services being provided to the public can continue to be delivered.

II - STATUTORY ENTITLEMENTS

CARER'S LEAVE

Employees are entitled to avail of temporary unpaid leave to enable him/her to personally provide full-time care and attention for a person who is in need of such care, i.e. "relevant person". The period of leave to which an employee is entitled is subject to a maximum of 104 weeks in respect of any one "relevant person". The minimum statutory entitlement is 13 weeks. Carer's Leave is granted in accordance with the Carer's Leave Act, 2001.

MATERNITY LEAVE

All employed females are covered by the Maternity Protection Act, 1994, (Principal Act), and the Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004. Females who commence maternity leave on or after 1st March 2007 are entitled to 26 paid weeks leave and at the end of the maternity leave, an employee may, on application, be allowed up to 16 weeks special leave without pay. Employees must comply with all notification requirements laid down in the Maternity Protection Act, 1994, (Principal Act), and the Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act, 2004.

Information regarding the Maternity Protection Act, 1994 is available from the Human Resources Department. Details concerning maternity allowances are available from the Maternity Section, Department of Social Welfare, Gandon House, Amiens Street, Dublin 1.

ADOPTIVE LEAVE

All employed adopting mothers and sole male adopters who commence adoptive leave on or after the 1st March 2007 are entitled to a minimum period of adoptive leave of no less than 24 consecutive weeks, beginning on the day of placement. In addition to the minimum period of adoptive leave, an employee may avail of up to 16 consecutive weeks additional unpaid leave. Entitlement to adoptive leave, and additional adoptive leave, is subject to compliance with specified notification procedures as laid down in the Adoptive Leave Act, 1995. Details of the scheme should be sought from the Human Resources Department.

PATERNITY LEAVE

Three days special leave with pay is available to fathers of children born on or after 1 June 2000. The leave may be taken up to four weeks after the birth of the child. In the case of adoption, the leave may be taken within four weeks of the date of placement.

PARENTAL LEAVE

The Parental Leave Act 1998 as amended by the Parental Leave (Amendment) Act 2006 allows for the natural or adoptive parent of a child to 14 weeks unpaid parental leave, to enable him or her to take care of the child.

While parental leave is a statutory entitlement the manner in which it is permitted to be availed of is at the discretion of the employer. Galway City Council do not facilitate any leave applications less than ½ day for administration and management purposes.

FORCE MAJEURE LEAVE

Force Majeure Leave is granted to employees for family emergencies caused by accidents or illness. Force Majeure leave is paid leave, and must not exceed 3 working days in any period of 12 consecutive months or 5 working days in any period of 36 consecutive months.

Force Majeure Leave covers situations where, owing to an injury to or illness of a close family member, your immediate presence is indispensably required at the place where the family member is. Family member is defined as: child, spouse or a person with whom the employee is living as husband or wife, a person to whom the employee is in *loco parentis*, brother or sister, parent or grandparent.

If staff are availing of force majeure leave, they should notify their Supervisor, as soon as possible, thereafter, and on their return to work complete the Application Form for Force Majeure Leave. This form must be approved by their Supervisor and forwarded to Human Resources Department for recording.

Force Majeure is permitted to respond to an emergency situation and therefore is not available in planned circumstances
