

TradeChoice Carpet & Flooring



Attendance policies

Includes:

Holiday, TOIL and overtime
Sickness absence
Special leave policies

September 2023

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Version control

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Review/History

Issue	Date	Author	Change details	Next review
Version 2.0	Sept 2023	Jo Downes	Specified scope and everyone's responsibilities	Sept 2024
			Section 1: Ordinary leave	
			Expanded/clarified Holiday policy & procedure	
			Added TOIL/Overtime policy	
			Section 2: Sickness absence	
			Clarified sickness absence triggers	
			" short-term & long-term absence procedure	
			" formal & informal procedure	
			Section 3: Special leave	
			Separated compassionate & bereavement leave	
			Added parental bereavement leave	
			Clarified time off for dependants	
			Added carer's leave	
			Expanded time off for duties outside work	
			Clarified time off for medical & dental appointments	
			Added elective surgery/procedures	
			Added IVF/Fertility treatment	
			Added religious leave	

Statutory compliance

- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Employment Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010

Other linked policies

- Diversity and Equal Opportunities
- Disciplinary
- Capability

Purpose and scope

In this document we may refer to TradeChoice Distribution Ltd t/a TradeChoice Carpet & Flooring ("TradeChoice Carpet & Flooring" or "TradeChoice") as "we", "us", "our", "the Company" or "the business".

TradeChoice Carpet & Flooring recognises the importance of time off work to allow you to rest and recuperate and obtain a good balance of work and other responsibilities.

This policy sets out the entitlements to paid annual leave and the arrangements for taking time off. It **excludes** the 'family friendly' policies listed below. You can find these separate policy documents on ChoiceHub:

- Maternity leave
- Paternity leave
- Shared parental leave
- Adoption leave

We also recognise that there are other occasions, both planned and unplanned, when you may need time off work other than for annual holiday. The policy sets out rules and guidance for taking time off work, both paid and unpaid.

The policy applies to all TradeChoice colleagues. It does not apply to agency workers, third party or self-employed contractors working with us.

Responsibilities

Line managers are responsible for:

- Making decisions:
 - fairly – in the light of legislative requirements and the needs of the business
 - consistently – especially when the type of time off can be granted as either paid or unpaid.
 - equitably – when colleagues request 'discretionary' time off.
 - reasonably – in the context of the nature of the time off the colleague has asked for, how much time they want and whether annual leave is more appropriate.
- Following the procedures relating to sickness absence, including conducting return to work interviews on a colleague's first day back after work after each period of absence.
- Managing annual leave arrangements for their teams to make sure that business operations continue effectively during periods of annual leave.
- Reviewing team members' 'available' balances for holiday and, where applicable, TOIL, at regular intervals throughout the year to avoid too many staff holding on to their allowance, resulting in lots of clashing requests towards the end of the year.
- Approving or declining requests for time off promptly.
- Making sure that TradeChoice keeps records of all forms of time off and absence accurately and effectively.

Colleagues are responsible for:

- Being familiar with the content of this policy.
- Giving your manager appropriate notice of requests for time off wherever possible.
- Managing your annual holiday allowance in such a way that you take regular breaks from work throughout the year.
- Following the procedures outlined in this policy, including the absence notification and sickness absence reporting procedures.

HR (Human Resources) are responsible for:

- Supplying advice and guidance to managers and colleagues on the application of this policy.
- Making sure that managers act and make decisions about colleague time off in a fair, consistent and legally compliant way.
- Reviewing and updating this policy to reflect changes in UK legislation, good employment practice and TradeChoice company policies.

Support and wellbeing

There are some situations in these Attendance Policies that can be emotionally challenging experiences. We want to be able to offer all colleagues wellbeing assistance at what can often be difficult times in anyone's life.

If you feel at any point that you are struggling and could use some support, we encourage you to talk to your manager about any difficulties you may be experiencing if you feel comfortable doing so, so that they can offer further support. Where you feel you may benefit from emotional support, we have options for accessing counselling through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and other useful resources to support your wellbeing in the [Wellbeing Centre](#) on ChoiceHub.

Zurich also provide a supportive bereavement and probate services which included 8 counselling sessions and unlimited access to an additional confidential helpline for our colleagues going through a bereavement, as well as the support already available through our EAP.

Section 1 – Ordinary leave

1. Holiday

TradeChoice gives its colleagues paid annual leave that is more than the statutory minimum and we encourage you to use your full allowance to protect your health and welfare by making sure you have a good work-life balance.

1.1 Holiday entitlement

Everyone's holiday year runs from 1st January to 31st December. The maximum annual holiday entitlement is 33 days based on:

- the basic allowance of 25 days
- up to a maximum of 5 'Long Service' days awarded and
- up to a maximum of 3 days holiday bought.

1.2 Part-time colleagues

We pro rata holiday entitlement for colleagues who work part time and calculate it in days.

e.g. someone working 3 days a week gets an annual holiday entitlement of 15 days for the complete holiday year ($25 \div 5 \times 3$).

The amount of holiday purchase entitlement is based on weekly hours worked. Details of the pro rata entitlement and eligibility are set out in our benefits platform, ChoiceReward.

1.3 Requesting holiday

We are as accommodating as possible when granting time off for holidays but always need to balance individual requests with the operational and department needs of the business such as workloads and customer service requirements to maintain adequate staffing levels.

There may be more holiday requests than usual for times of the year that coincide with school holidays/half terms, and our peak periods, due to the number of colleagues with children of school age. During these peak periods it would be appropriate and encouraged to rotate on an annual basis so that everyone has an opportunity to take time at these times. We should not assume that as we have had it one year it will get approved every year. Although we will make every effort to accept as many of these requests as possible, we need to be mindful of business operations to make sure is sufficient cover for all work to be carried out - considerations which sometimes need to take priority over granting all these types of requests.

1.3.1 Requesting extended holiday

We do not normally allow more than 2 consecutive working weeks (10 days) of annual holiday. We may make an exception for a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity. As with all other requests for holiday, we must first consider the needs of the business and staffing levels. Our decision in this respect will be final.

1.3.2 Giving notice of holiday requests

To allow us to manage business and operational requirements effectively, you need to give:

Period of holiday asked for	Period of notice needed
A week or more (five days or more)	At least 4 weeks
Less than a week (two to four days)	At least 2 weeks
One day	At least 48 hours

NB giving the required period of notice for your holiday does not guarantee that your request will be approved if business/operational needs or working schedules cannot accommodate it.

We recognise that there may be extenuating circumstances where you need to request holiday at short notice and managers should consider any such requests on a case-by-case basis.

1.4 Booking holiday

Please send all requests for holiday through our Sage HR platform in line with the notice periods set out above. You must not book holidays without receiving prior authorisation. If you take holidays without authorisation, this may start a disciplinary investigation and could mean unpaid time off.

If we are unable to grant your request, e.g. due to operational/staffing requirements, TradeChoice is not liable for any loss you incur (lost deposits, etc.) if you incur costs and make commitments before receiving confirmation that your holiday request has been approved.

You can find details on [‘how to book holiday’](#) and [‘how to book holiday purchased’](#) in the guidance documents published on ChoiceHub.

1.5 Declined holiday requests

If your manager declines your request for holiday, for example due to operational requirements, they will let you know as soon as is reasonably possible and they will explain the reasons to you. Although you could explore with your manager whether there is any room for manoeuvre to reach a mutually acceptable alternative way forward, the manager’s decision is final.

If you call in sick on a date, or dates, where your manager has previously declined your request to take holiday on that date, or those dates, this may trigger a formal investigation and is unlikely to be covered by company sick pay unless proven with a fit note.

1.6 Carrying over untaken holiday

We believe that it is mutually beneficial and leads to a better work-life balance for you to take all your annual holiday entitlement in the current holiday year, so that you can rest.

Ordinarily, you cannot carry untaken leave from one holiday year into the next one, and you will lose it. The exception to this is if you have not been able to take your full allowance for the current holiday year because of either a period of sickness absence or statutory maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental, parental or parental bereavement leave. If sickness absence means that you cannot take your full holiday entitlement in a holiday year, you may be able to carry forward some of the holiday into the next holiday year. We will usually limit this to a maximum of four weeks’ holiday, minus any holiday you have already taken during the year that has just ended.

If, as a manager, you receive any requests to carry over holiday for colleagues in the circumstances set out above, please refer to the HR team for specific guidance.

You will only receive payment in lieu of unused holiday if you leave our employment under normal circumstances; please refer to your contract for exceptions.

1.7 Public holidays

In addition to the holiday entitlement set out above, you are entitled to the 8 usual public holidays in England and Wales. In Scotland, there may be variance to these days, and some may still be worked and accrued as TOIL (Time Off in Lieu). If you are absent due to sickness on a public holiday, you can only claim TOIL if you present a valid medical certificate (usually in the form of 'fit note') in a timely manner to the HR team (i.e. within five working days of returning to work).

1.8 Christmas shutdown

You may need to set aside up to 4 days out of your annual holiday entitlement to take them during the Christmas/New Year closure period. We will confirm the precise number of days and the dates on which you need to take them annually.

1.9 Holiday and sickness

If you fall ill before or during annual leave, you can ask us to 'convert' those days into sick leave and for your manager to agree to rearrange the period of annual leave during which you were ill. To do this, you need to follow the usual sickness absence notification procedure and supply some form of medical proof (e.g. from a GP/medical practitioner or a hospital) of your sickness. Where your manager has agreed to rearrange your holiday to a later date (you need to request this in the usual way), we will treat the original period as sick leave and will pay it in line with your sick pay entitlements. If this sickness absence hits one of the 'trigger' points, we will treat it in line with Section 2 of this policy document.

You should let us know of your illness as soon as possible, and do so personally or, otherwise, via a relative, friend or travelling companion. Please do this by telephone at the earliest opportunity. Email communication or sending a text message is not acceptable.

If you are on an overseas holiday when you fall sick, please contact your manager as soon as is practical, bearing in mind any time difference.

1.10 Holiday and long-term sickness absence

Even if you are on long-term sickness absence, you will continue to accrue holiday entitlement. This means that even if you have been off work for twenty weeks in a year due to sickness, you will continue to accrue holiday entitlement in the normal way.

Special rules apply if you have accrued holiday in the current year but have not taken it within this year due to sickness absence. This is an example of when we allow 'carry over' (see 1.6 above) to the following year. There are limits as to how much can be carried over in these circumstances, and when any carried over leave needs to be taken by, so for specific guidance please contact HR.

1.11 Starters and leavers

1.11.1 Starters

If you start working at TradeChoice during the holiday (i.e. calendar) year, we calculate your basic annual holiday entitlement on a pro-rata basis and round it up to the nearest half a day.

e.g. if you work 5 days a week, your holiday entitlement for the first year will be:

Start date	Basic annual entitlement	Calculation based on basic full time entitlement of 25 days a year
1 st June	15 days*	$25 \div 12$ (months in a year) x 7 (months left in the year) = 14.58
16 th October	5.5 days*	$25 \div 52.143$ (weeks in a year) x 11 (weeks left in the year) = 5.27

* We will take the Christmas shutdown days (see 1.8 above) from this entitlement.

When you were a 'prospective' colleague, we may have asked you during the recruitment process whether you had any leave booked that would take place after you started working for us. We normally allow you to take any such booked leave; please add these to the Sage HR system when joining.

1.11.2 Leavers

If you leave TradeChoice part way through the holiday year, we will recalculate your holiday allowance on a pro rata basis and round it up to the nearest half day. This will decide the number of days holiday you are entitled to based on your period of service during the holiday year up to that point. This will include any holiday you have purchased.

We will include payment in lieu of any holiday you have accrued in the holiday year to date, but not taken, in your final pay, unless in a period of 'garden leave', where the details in your contract will apply.

If you have exceeded your pro rata entitlement to holidays (e.g. if you leave halfway through the holiday year but have already used up three-quarters of your annual holiday allowance at the time you leave TradeChoice) we will be entitled to deduct those extra days of leave from your final pay.

2. TOIL (Time off in lieu) and overtime

2.1 Scope and eligibility

We expect our colleagues to work the hours necessary to fulfil their normal workplace duties. However, there may be times when there are extra duties when, with direction and approval from your manager, we grant time off in lieu (TOIL) or overtime. This policy applies to all those who are eligible. Managers and mid-level colleagues will only be eligible for TOIL in exceptional circumstances (stock take, weekend work) and not overtime. Senior roles in the business will not be eligible for formal TOIL or overtime.

2.2 General provisions and accrual

TOIL and overtime will be authorised by a manager if there is a business need for you to work the extra time – for example, an urgent order that needs working on, cover for absent colleagues, completing the annual stocktake and other business reasons that may arise from time to time.

Overtime and TOIL will often be at the manager's request. You must not work any added hours with the expectation of accruing TOIL or overtime, without getting your manager's agreement first.

We will not grant TOIL or overtime for any period which is less than 30 minutes. Any TOIL that would take you over your TOIL limit (see 2.5 below) would not be authorised.

Your manager will authorise the amount of time that you can work and will confirm whether you can take this TOIL or overtime later.

2.3 Payment of overtime

We normally pay overtime in the same salary as the month you accrue it in unless we have already passed that month's cut-off date for payroll processing, in which case you will receive it in your pay for the next month.

2.4 Contractual overtime

There will be occasions where overtime forms part of your employment contract (e.g. Saturday working). This is not discretionary, and we expect you to complete it as part of your employment contract.

2.5 Accruing and using TOIL

As you accrue TOIL, your manager will complete the [TOIL form](#) on ChoiceHub. HR will add the accrued TOIL to your TOIL bank on Sage HR and these hours then become bookable.

Key points

- Your TOIL bank may not exceed 5 days.
- The maximum amount of TOIL you can accrue during a rolling three-month period is 3 days.
- You should use TOIL before holiday and book it as a minimum and in multiples of 30 minutes.
- Ideally, you should use it:
 - within 6 months of accruing it; and
 - in the same calendar year in which you earned it.

We recognise that it's not always possible to take your TOIL in the same year that you earned it - especially if you did so during the last quarter of the year. To cover this situation, we allow you to take that TOIL time back at any point up the end of the first quarter in the following year.

Usage guidelines

Period in which you have accrued TOIL	When you need to use it by
Up to 30 th September	Before 31 st December that year
From 1 st October to 31 st December	By 31 st March the following year

The ethos behind TOIL is to cover situations when there is a business need for eligible colleagues to put in extra hours but where we encourage them to take that time back to recharge their batteries within a reasonable time of having worked those extra hours. An example is that, if you have worked over a weekend to complete the annual stock take, we would expect you to take that time off in the week or two immediately following stock take – purely in the interests of your health and wellbeing from a work/life balance point of view.

NB You will lose any TOIL you have accrued and not used/redeemed within these timescales, and you will not receive any monetary compensation as an alternative.

2.6 Requesting TOIL

If you want to redeem your TOIL hours as time off work, you need to submit your request at least 1 week before. You can only request TOIL for a minimum of 30 minutes.

Your manager will consider your request to redeem TOIL hours in the same way as they do a holiday request i.e. balancing it with business and department needs such as workloads, customer and client service requirements and available staffing.

They may suggest that you can redeem your TOIL hours as part of your request for any other special leave as set out in Section 3.

You can find details on '[how to book TOIL](#)' in the guidance document published on ChoiceHub.

2.7 Treatment of TOIL on leaving TradeChoice

If you leave with notice, you will need to redeem your full TOIL balance before you leave.

If you do not give or work notice for any reason, you will lose your untaken TOIL and you will not receive any payment in lieu.

2.8 Rates of overtime/TOIL

Hours	Rate
Monday – Friday	1 x base rate (time)
Saturday	1.5 x (time and a half)
Sunday	2 x (double time)

2.9 Legal

We reserve the right to change, modify or withdraw all or any section of this overtime and TOIL policy, at our sole discretion. We also have the final decision on all matters relating to this policy and its interpretation.

Section 2 – Sickness absence

1. Scope and key aims

We understand that our colleagues may need to be absent from work from time to time due to sickness absence and this can be disruptive. We will manage attendance and sickness absence effectively, sympathetically and sensitively, while bearing in mind the impact on the workloads of other colleagues and the effectiveness of the business.

Definition of sickness

“Sickness” is defined as an inability to carry out the duties and responsibilities which you are contractually obliged to do because of your illness or accident and resulting incapacity to work.

This policy therefore applies to absence caused by **your** personal illness or accident, not to the need to take time off work because of the illness or accident of others, e.g., children or partners. If it is someone else who is ill or has had an accident, for example, you will need to request time off under the ‘Time off for dependants’ policy on page 23.

2. Notification process

Please notify your manager, or if they are not available, another manager within the team on first day of absence, by phone call a minimum of 1 hour before the start of your shift. If you are due on an early shift, please notify your manager via email/text with a follow up call at the start of your shift.

In special circumstances, it may be acceptable for a member of your family to call on your behalf.

Your manager will ask you about your illness and how long you think you will be absent. If you are likely to be off for more than seven calendar days, your manager will agree with you a second date to contact you for an update.

For short-term sickness, please give intended/anticipated return date and call regularly to update of any changes.

It is your responsibility to follow the sickness reporting procedure. If you do not follow this, we will view your absence as unauthorised. This may result in us stopping your pay. In this situation we will record your absence as AWOL (absent without leave), and this may start the disciplinary process.

3. Sickness during annual leave

If you are unwell before or during annual leave, please see point 1.9 on page 9.

4. Certification

If you are off sick for 8 or more calendar days, you will need to supply a statement of fitness for work (fit note) from a UK GP/medical practitioner to cover all your sickness to the date you return to work. We need the original fit note. Please send this to your manager as soon as possible. Sending in a scanned copy whilst you send in the original is acceptable. In case of prolonged absence, please send a new fit note before the current one expires. There should be no gaps between fit notes.

We will not pay Company Sick Pay or Statutory Sick Pay if you have been off sick for more than 7 days and do not have a fit note. **Please note:** the 7 days includes those days on which you do not normally work, e.g. weekends and public holidays.

5. Sick pay arrangements

There are two elements to sick pay:

- **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)** is paid following Government rules. You get SSP for the days you would normally have worked. It is not paid for the first three days you are absent unless you have been paid SSP in the last eight weeks and are eligible for it again. The days will still count as sick for the purposes of sickness monitoring.
- **Company Sick Pay (CSP)** is paid in addition to SSP as set out below.

Period of service	Maximum CSP eligibility
During the settling in period	No eligibility for CSP
Less than 1 year but outside the settling in period	1 week (5 days) full pay
1 to 2 years	2 weeks (10 days) full pay in a rolling 12-month period
2 to 5 years	6 weeks (30 days) full pay in a rolling 12-month period
5 years+	10 weeks (50 days) full pay in a rolling 12-month period

Payment of Company sick pay is discretionary and conditional on you following the requirements of this policy, along with a view on whether your overall sickness absence gives us cause for concern. Please refer to the absence triggers point 6 below.

As we process sick pay in arrears, it is possible that we will not make any deductions until the month following your sick absence.

We try to make the workplace a safe place to work. Members of management, together with the Health and Safety department, will fully investigate any reported injury at work.

6. Sickness absence triggers

Absence triggers enable us to make sure we manage all sickness absences fairly and consistently.

We aim to apply these on a consistent basis but accept that there may be times when we need to adapt or extend these triggers e.g. in the case of pregnancy-related sickness absence.

The absence triggers are as follows:

Criteria	Trigger
Number of absence events	2 in a rolling 6-month period
Absence events totalling 10 days (pro rata for part-time colleagues) or more	10 days in a rolling 12-month period

Absence levels may also become a concern at the following points.

- A pattern or incidence of absence e.g.
 - repeated absence on a Monday or Friday.
 - absence just before or after a period of annual leave
 - absence taken where a request for annual leave had been declined.

7. Return to work

After each episode of sickness absence (even if only for 1 day), you should report to your manager (or, if they are unavailable, a suitable alternative manager) on your first day back before you start work. This is so that you can have a return to work conversation where they will ask about your illness and recovery. They will discuss the reasons for your absence and make sure that you are well enough to return to work. If applicable, they will also assess whether you need any support or reasonable adjustments to help your return. Your manager will record the meeting using the return to work form and you will receive a copy by email. HR will also receive a copy for processing.

Your manager will record your sickness absence, including the reason as accurately as possible, in your Sage HR 'time off' record.

8. Fit notes

You need a fit note (statement of fitness to work) to cover any period of absence of 8 or more calendar days. If your doctor (or other medical professional) supplies a fit note saying that you "may be fit for work" you should tell your manager immediately. Where a fit note says that you "may be fit for work", we would hope that the note sets out the possible alterations or amendments that we could make to support your return to work.

Your manager will discuss with you whether there are any extra measures that you might need to enable you to return to work, considering the doctor's advice. If it is not possible to take any such measures, you will stay on sick leave, and we will set a date to review the situation with you. We may ask for your consent to refer you to our Occupational Health provider to seek further professional, medical advice on supporting your return to work and/or any reasonable adjustments we could consider.

Adjustments to your work

If it is clear from that discussion that suitable adjustments are possible, we will confirm:

- the discussion and any agreed adjustments that we will put in place
- how long we expect them to last for, and
- a date for a review of the adjustment measures.

The changes should be temporary, and you should not consider them permanent changes to your terms and conditions of employment, unless we agree and state otherwise.

We will arrange a review before the end of the adjustment period to assess the continued suitability of the adjustments against your medical needs, and the needs of the business. It may be that we continue, amend or stop any adjustments and we will discuss this with you to confirm this.

Phased return

If either the medical professional recommends a phased return on your fit note, or if we consider it a suitable way to help you settle back into work, we will discuss this with you. We will put a return to work plan in place that sets out how we will manage your return and set review dates with a view to building you back to your full duties and hours.

We will confirm your return to work plan in writing. You should not see this as change to your terms and conditions of employment, and the plan may be subject to change depending on your medical

needs or the needs of the business.

9. Overview of the absence management procedure – short-term sickness

The table below summaries the stages in the procedure relating to short-term sickness absence and you need to read it with the detailed information set out in the following sections.

At each stage of the formal procedure we will invite you to an absence review meeting to:

- check on your wellbeing;
- discuss the reasons for your absence and why it is of concern; and
- explore whether there is any action we can take to help you improve your attendance.

Trigger	Procedure	Potential outcome	Duration of 'concern' or 'warning' letter
2 periods of absence in a rolling 6-month period or 10 days in a rolling 12-month period (pro rata if part-time)	Stage 1 (Informal) Extended Return to work Interview	Letter of Concern	6 months
1 further period of absence in a 6-month period	Stage 2 (Formal) Absence Review meeting	First written warning	6 months
1 further period of absence in a 6-month period	Stage 3 (Formal) Absence Review meeting	Final Written warning	12 months
1 further period of absence in a 12-month period	Stage 4 (Formal) Absence Review meeting	Dismissal with notice	N/A

10. Informal procedure (extended return to work interview)

When your level of sickness hits the triggers described in point 6 above, your manager will discuss this with you as part of the return to work discussion and explain how we will monitor and manage this. This is an informal meeting. As part of this discussion, your manager will encourage you to understand the concerns about your sickness levels and to agree ways, if possible, of improving your attendance.

If the reason for you having hit a sickness absence trigger relates to a disability, they will discuss with you any reasonable adjustments that you might need to help you improve your attendance. If during this informal discussion the manager finds out that there is an underlying medical condition, they may need to take advice from HR as to the best course of action to take. If this happens, your manager will arrange a further meeting with you to discuss the outcome their reference to HR. Disciplinary procedures may not be necessary or appropriate in those circumstances.

Your manager may, if they think it appropriate, discuss a referral to Occupational Health with you or signpost you to the Colleague Assistance Programme (EAP). More information about the EAP is available on ChoiceReward.

You will receive a Letter of Concern summarising the main points of the extended Return to Work Interview as well as potential next steps should any further absence occur during a 6-month period.

11. Escalation to the formal procedure

Following the informal process, if there is no improvement in your sickness absence and a further trigger point is reached, your manager will invite you to a formal Absence Review meeting.

12. Formal procedure – Short-term sickness

We define short-term sickness as any period of absence which lasts less than four continuous weeks. The exception to this is if the reason for sickness absence relates to mental health, in which 'short-term' is defined as less than two continuous weeks.

At all formal stages of the procedure, we will invite you to formal absence review meeting. Your manager will chair the meeting and either another manager or HR may be there in support. You will have the right to bring a trade union representative or TradeChoice colleague with you to the meeting. We will make reasonable adjustments to allow you to attend the meeting if you have a disability.

There are three stages under the formal procedure as set out in the table on page 16.

We will give you 48 hours' notice of any formal meeting date, together with copies of any relevant paperwork e.g. all earlier return to work interview records.

At the meeting, your manager will confirm your sickness record with you and outline why it is of concern, including the impact it has on the department or team. We will give you the opportunity to put forward any explanation or medical evidence in mitigation. Your manager will explore with you anything that either you, or we, could do to help improve your level of attendance.

We will send you a letter confirming the outcome within seven calendar days of the meeting. The letter will confirm any formal warnings we have issued, details of any action that we have agreed to help alleviate the reasons for the continued sickness, as well as your right to appeal. It will also set out the consequences if you do not achieve the necessary improvement in attendance.

If your sickness absence continues to cause concern and you reach the final trigger (please see table on page 16), another manager who has not been involved in the process at earlier stages will chair the final, formal absence review meeting. In all cases, dismissal will be with notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Your manager reserves the right, even following a reasonable period after the formal sanction has elapsed, or your attendance has returned to satisfactory level (without a formal sanction being issued), to start the procedure again at the last stage it reached if your absence becomes a concern again in the future.

13. Long-term sickness

We define long-term sickness as continuous absence due to serious or significant illness lasting four or more weeks. The exception to this is if the reason for sickness absence relates to mental health, in which 'long-term' is defined as more than two continuous weeks.

14. Overview of the absence management procedure – long-term sickness (LTS)

The table on the next page summaries the stages in the procedure relating to long-term sickness absence and you need to read it with the detailed information set out in the following sections. It may be appropriate to move through the stages more quickly or slowly depending on the circumstances and this is a general guide only. Each specific case will be treated on an individual/case-by-case basis.

At each stage of the procedure we will write to you in advance inviting you to attend the meetings as set out in the table on the next page. The meetings will take place at your workplace, home or a

neutral location; however, on occasion it may be appropriate to carry out meetings over Microsoft Teams or the telephone.

Absence period	Procedure	Outcome
4 weeks (2 weeks where it is mental health related)	Stage 1 Informal Welfare meeting	Summary letter and agreed review date
Between 2 and 5 months (This may include more than 1 meeting)	Stage 2 Long-term Sickness (LTS) Formal Absence Review Meeting	Summary letter and agreed review date. Potential referral to Occupational Health. Review of possible redeployment opportunities
6 months	Stage 3 Formal Capability Meeting	Dismissal with notice on the grounds of ill health capability

15. LTS procedure

15.1 Stage 1: Welfare meeting (Informal procedure)

If you are absent from work for 4 continuous weeks (or 2 continuous weeks where your absence is mental health related), your manager will contact you to arrange a welfare meeting. This is an informal meeting to further understand the cause of your absence, check on your wellbeing and to explore how we may be able to support your return to work. During the meeting the discussion may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Discussing the reason(s) for the absence.
- Determining how long the absence is likely to last.
- Considering whether medical advice is required.
- Where medical advice has been obtained, considering the recommendations, if any.
- Considering what, if any, measures might improve your health and/or ability to return to work.
- Considering the effect of continued absence on team performance and service delivery.
- Signposting to the Colleague Assistance Programme (EAP) and the Health Assured app.

Following the meeting, we will send you a letter confirming the main points of the discussion and any actions agreed, including a review date should you remain absent from work.

If the sickness absence continues and there is no expected return to work date, a LTS Formal Absence Meeting will be arranged in line with stage 2 in the process.

15.2 Stage 2 – LTS Formal Absence Review Meeting

If a return date within a reasonable time period is not identified, a formal absence review meeting will be arranged. Your manager, or such other appropriate person will chair the meeting and you have the right to be accompanied.

The purpose of the meeting is to review the sickness history to date including, but not limited to:

- Discussing the reasons for and impact of your ongoing absence.
- Discussing how long the absence is likely to last.
- If it has not already been obtained, considering whether medical advice is required. If it has been obtained, considering the advice that has been given and whether further advice is required.

- Considering your capability to return/remain in your role in view both of your capabilities and the business needs and any adjustments that can reasonably be made to your role to enable you to return.
- Considering possible redeployment opportunities and whether any adjustments can reasonably be made to assist in redeploying you.
- Where you are able to return from long-term sickness absence, whether to your role or a redeployed role, agreeing a return to work programme.
- Agreeing a way forward, action that will be taken and a timescale for review and/or a further meeting(s). This may, depending on steps we have already taken, include warning you that you are at risk of dismissal.

The key points of the discussion and the outcome of the meeting will be confirmed to you in writing. Subject to the facts, the next stage may be to move to the final stage of the procedure in which case you will be advised that this could lead to your dismissal on the grounds of capability.

15.3 Stage 3 – Formal Capability Meeting

Following a review of your absence history and the facts established during stages 1 & 2 of the long-term sickness absence management process, you will receive an invitation to a formal capability meeting where you will have the right to be accompanied, if you wish. A manager not previously involved in the management of sickness absence will chair the meeting. A member of HR may also be present.

The purpose of the meeting will be to:

- review the meetings that have taken place and matters discussed with you.
- consider whether there have been any changes since the last meeting under stage 2 of the procedure, either as regards to a possible return to work date or redeployment opportunities.
- consider any further matters that you may wish to raise.
- consider whether there is a reasonable likelihood of the colleague returning to work in a reasonable time.
- consider the possible termination of your employment on the grounds of capability.

The outcome of the meeting may be termination of your employment. Termination will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice. The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in writing to you and will include the right to appeal the decision.

15.4 Reasonable adjustments

At each stage of the long term sickness process, your manager will explore whether any adjustments are required to support with your return to work, and whether these can reasonably be accommodated.

There are a number of reasonable adjustments that might be recommended either by Occupational Health or a GP. Those listed below are the most recommended:

- A temporary or permanent change to working hours (e.g. a later start time to accommodate medication causing drowsiness in the morning).
- A temporary or permanent change to work duties or location (e.g. no heavy lifting or work location nearer support/personal facilities).

- Provision of adapted equipment (e.g. adapted chair, keyboard, lowered desk, large screen monitor, speech recognition software).
- Changes to the work environment (e.g. handrails, ramps, accessible entrances/doors).
- Redeployment (e.g. desk based role instead of manual work).

Your GP/Occupational Health might recommend that you return to work on a 'phased' basis (part-time work). To avoid being financially disadvantaged, you can use your holiday to compensate for periods when you are not at work during the phased return. However, if this is not possible, it will be unpaid.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to consider making reasonable adjustments on a permanent basis. Some adjustments may affect your salary (e.g. reduced hours).

Your manager will assess the feasibility of making the required adjustments, taking advice from Occupational Health, HR and in some circumstances the Health and Safety department.

Section 3 – Special leave

1. Special leave principles

We recognise the need for special leave and where necessary we will consider each case on an individual basis. We may grant special leave in addition to normal holiday entitlement for reasons outlined in this policy. We may also consider special leave for other activities or duties not outlined in this policy, on individual merit.

Where the activity or duty attracts some kind of payment, we will take this into account when granting paid or unpaid special leave.

As with holiday requests, we will take the operational requirements of the business into account when considering requests time off for special leave.

If you need any advice or guidance on any of the special leave policies, please contact the HR team.

Time off because of the people in your life outside work

We understand that there may be occasions when you need to take time off work for personal reasons related to the people in your life outside work that are out of your control.

If you ever face a situation like this, whether it calls for leave or not, it is especially important you talk to your manager about your individual circumstances. They will then be aware of any pressures you are under so that they can agree the right way forward. We will view each case sympathetically, and the amount of leave granted will depend on individual circumstances.

2. Definitions

Immediate family member: your spouse, civil partner, partner, parent, child or sibling.

Non-immediate family member: grandparent, cousin, aunt/uncle.

Dependant: your spouse, civil partner, child, parent and any person who lives at the same house as you (other than a lodger, tenant or boarder) or who would rely on you for help or arrangements for care in case of illness or injury.

Eligibility

All permanent and fixed-term colleagues are eligible to take reasonable time off because of situations relating to the people in their life outside work - regardless of length of service. Self-employed, independent contractors and people working on a freelance basis for TradeChoice are not eligible for these types leave.

Process

You must speak to your manager as soon as is practical if you need time off for any of the types of leave in this section. You must keep your manager informed of the situation and how long you expect to be absent. Your manager will consider the following factors when reviewing your time off request:

- Your relationship with the individual; and
- Your domestic responsibilities i.e. carer

We will review each request for time off relating to the people in your life outside work based on the circumstances of your individual situation, whilst making sure that we respond to such requests fairly and consistently across TradeChoice.

We will treat any attempt to obtain time off through any special leave policies dishonestly as a serious matter and this may result in disciplinary proceedings.

3. Bereavement leave

If you are facing a sudden need to be absent from work due to a death in your family, you may be eligible for paid bereavement leave.

For an immediate family member we will normally grant you 5 days paid bereavement leave, with one additional day for the funeral. Any request which exceeds this entitlement should be raised with your manager in the first instance.

For non-immediate family members you will be entitled to 1 day's paid bereavement for the day of the funeral.

You should request any additional leave you need in these circumstances as compassionate leave.

4. Parental bereavement leave

We are committed to supporting colleagues who experience loss in their lives and, in particular, understand that the death of a child, or a stillbirth, can be one of the most harrowing experiences of someone's life.

4.1 Eligibility

Parental bereavement leave is available to colleagues on the death of a child under the age of 18. A 'bereaved parent' includes parents whose child (under the age of 18) dies and parents whose baby is stillborn (after 24 weeks).

4.2 Length of leave and how it can be taken

A total of two weeks may be taken as parental bereavement leave and you may choose to take leave as:

- A single block of one week;
- A single block of two weeks; or
- Two separate blocks of one week.

Leave may start on any day of the week and must be taken in whole weeks. It may be taken at any time in the 56-week period following the death.

If you have suffered a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy, you are still entitled to take your full entitlement to maternity and paternity leave, provided you were eligible to take maternity or paternity leave in the first place, in addition to parental bereavement leave. Parental bereavement leave cannot be taken at the same time as maternity or paternity leave.

Where more than one child dies or is stillborn, you are entitled to two weeks of parental bereavement leave in relation to each child.

4.3 Pay

If you have at least 26 weeks' service, you are entitled to statutory pay, paid at the same rate as other family friendly leave, such as statutory maternity pay i.e. the statutory rate or 90% of earnings, whichever is lower.

5. Compassionate leave

Compassionate leave is available for colleagues to come to terms with severe personal problems, injury, or a critical illness of an immediate family member. You should tell your manager that you need to take compassionate leave, so that they can agree the best way forward.

This is a difficult area, and the situation can vary dependent on circumstances. You may be able to receive paid compassionate leave, at management's discretion, in case of the death of other close relatives such as a stepparent, (step) brother or sister, grandparent, grandchild, and in laws.

We will also consider giving time off with pay for you to attend the funeral of all other relatives, close friends or work associates, but again this is at management discretion.

Compassionate leave may include paid and unpaid leave and leave as part of your annual holiday entitlement. Depending on the circumstances, you and your manager may come to a solution to include some reduced hours or even some working from home for a limited time. Paid compassionate leave would typically be no longer than 3 days.

Any other leave for dependants should be considered under time off for dependants.

6. Time off for dependants (separate from compassionate leave)

Time off for dependants is available if you need to take time off work to deal incidents involving a dependant. You will be entitled to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during working hours or time off in lieu, where available, to deal with issues, such as:

- Planning for the provision of care for a dependant who is ill or injured.
- Helping a dependant who falls ill or has been involved in an accident or assaulted, including where the victim is mentally ill or injured (e.g. anxiety attacks) rather than injured physically.
- Dealing with unexpected incidents involving a child, which occur during school hours or on a school trip or at any other time when the school has responsibility for the child.
- Care arrangements unexpectedly breaking down.

Time off for dependants may include leave as part of your annual holiday entitlement.

7. Carer's leave

If you have caring responsibilities, you are entitled to a week of flexible unpaid leave in any 12-month period to care for a dependant with a long-term care need. You can take this as a block of 5 days or individual half-days.

The Carers Leave Act defines who qualifies as a 'dependant' i.e. someone that:

- Is your spouse, civil partner, child, or parent.
- Lives in the same household as you (not in the role of your boarder, colleague, lodger, or tenant); or
- Reasonably relies on you to provide or arrange care.

Additionally, the Act sets out what is a 'long-term care need'. This is when that dependant:

- has an illness or injury (whether physical or mental) that requires, or is likely to require, care for more than three months.
- has a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010; or
- requires care for a reason connected with their old age.

8. Exceptional circumstances

There may be occasions when you need to deal with immediate, short-term domestic or family responsibilities, which are particularly serious or exceptional in their nature, but which are not covered by the 'time off for dependants' policy and where you do not have sufficient unused holiday or TOIL time to cover the time off. We recognise that in such situations it may not always be possible for you to give notice of the need for time off in advance. However, it is a condition of taking time off that you must give your manager notice as soon as reasonably practicable, and if possible, give an estimate of how long you expect to be absent.

In such exceptional cases we undertake to respond sympathetically and flexibly to requests for additional assistance, including granting reasonable periods of paid or unpaid leave or rearrangement of working time.

Examples of exceptional circumstances where you may need emergency leave include dealing with:

- the sudden illness, birth, injury or accident of a member of your family or household, or someone such as a lone elderly next-door neighbour who relies on you in such circumstances and hence is dependant.
- a crisis relating to a member of your family requiring your immediate attendance, for example, to deal with a fracas at school in which your child has been involved.
- a domestic crisis such as unavoidable severe damage or disruption to property, like flooding, fire or burglary.

Time off because of duties or activities outside work

We recognise that from time to time, colleagues will have commitments and responsibilities outside of work to carry out public and civic duties, either in a professional capacity, or on a mandatory or voluntary basis.

9. Time off for public duties

You should contact HR if you need further guidance on what constitutes public service.

Before taking on such duties, you should discuss with your manager the level of time and commitment needed and how this we might accommodate this alongside the demands of your work role.

If you hold a public position that gives a statutory right to request time off, we are committed to granting you a 'reasonable' amount of time off work so that you can perform the duties associated with that position.

You will not have to make up any such time off by working additional hours at another time.

You can get a 'reasonable' amount of time off if you are:

- a magistrate (also known as a justice of the peace)

- a local councillor
- a school governor
- a member of any statutory tribunal (for example an employment tribunal)
- a member of the managing or governing body of an educational establishment.

You should discuss the amount of time off with your manager beforehand, based on:

- how long the duties might take
- the amount of time you have already had off for public duties
- how the time off will affect the business.

Although you have a statutory right to request time off for the public duties listed above, you do not have a statutory right to be paid for that time off. However, subject to the needs of the business, we may allow you to take up to 3 days a year as paid time off on a discretionary basis where the duties meet TradeChoice's corporate and social responsibility objectives.

10. Other community or civic duties

There may be other types of 'public' activities that you want time off for, but where there is no statutory right to request time off. Examples include:

- Being a special constable
- Being a blood or platelet donor
- Performing electoral duties in local or parliamentary elections.

We understand the importance of these commitments and will always try to be supportive in these situations where it is not possible for you to fulfil them outside your normal business hours. We will balance the needs of the business against any request for time off for these reasons. Any time off for these reasons is unpaid but your manager will discuss opportunities to make the time up.

11. Statutory right to paid time off

In some instances, you have statutory rights to time off work including time off:

- to carry out trade union duties
- to carry out the duties of occupational pension-scheme trustees
- after being declared redundant, e.g. to look for work or arrange training
- for safety and first aid representatives
- for ante-natal appointments
- for adoption appointments once you have been matched with your child.

Statutory restrictions apply depending upon the type of time off you want to ask for. We will limit time to that which is reasonable or necessary in the circumstances, and the relevant legislation will also say whether there is any right to be paid for the time off.

12. Jury service

If you are summoned to attend court for jury service, you need to inform your manager as soon as possible to request time off. You will need to supply a copy of the court summons. You have a statutory right to time off for jury service, and we will look to always grant you the time off.

However, you may be able to apply to the court to be excused from jury service. You can only defer your jury service legitimate reasons, and these are set out in the [government guidance](#). We will support this request where your proposed time off would result in a serious impact on, or cause substantial difficulty for, the business.

Under such circumstances, your manager will need to put this in writing for you to provide as evidence to the court.

Please note that you can only defer jury service once.

12.1 How you will be paid

Where your attendance at court on jury service has been agreed, you will need to complete a 'Certificate of Loss of Earnings' (available from the court) and submit it to payroll@tradechoice.com. Payroll will complete and return this form to you which you will need to provide to the court on your first day of jury service.

Jury service typically lasts 10 working days, though it can last longer. You will be able to claim expenses through the court for food, travel and loss of earnings. The court will tell you what expenses and loss of earnings you can claim. We will pay basic pay less any amounts you can claim from the court for lost earnings for up to 10 working days. We may pay you for time off beyond this at our discretion.

Although we have no legal obligation to pay colleagues during jury service, we will make sure that you are not at any monetary loss. We will do this by making up the shortfall between your claimable "loss of earnings" through the court, and your normal basic pay.

As you will claim all expenses through the court retrospectively, you will continue to receive your normal basic pay for the duration of the jury service to avoid any financial hardship.

After your jury service is complete, you can apply for reimbursement for travel and food expenses, as well as loss of earnings from the court for the days you were in attendance.

It usually takes up to 10 days for the courts to process this reimbursement. Once complete, you will also receive a reimbursement receipt.

You should provide Payroll with this reimbursement receipt for them to apply the right deductions to your pay. It is important that you provide this to Payroll, as the final number of days may vary from the original estimates provided in the certificate of loss of earnings form issued prior to the jury service.

Once you been reimbursement by the court in line with your Certificate of Loss of Earnings, we will retrospectively deduct this same amount from your salary. You must provide Payroll with proof of compensation paid by the court. If you do not do so, this may result in Payroll automatically deducting the maximum potential compensation from your pay.

12.2 Changes during jury service

Where the dates and times you need to be in court change from the original arrangements, you and your manager should approach the situation flexibly.

If the court does not need you for jury service on any day, we expect you to return to work for that day. Similarly, if the court dismisses you from jury duty part way through the day, we expect you to return to work for the rest of the day. Where travel arrangements make this difficult, you need to discuss this

with your manager.

Please refer to www.gov.uk/jury-service for further details on arrangements with the court.

13. Attending court as a witness

If you are summoned or ordered by the courts to attend as a witness, we will always grant you that time off. You must tell your manager as soon as possible so that they can accommodate the request and arrange cover. You should give them details of the dates and duration you will need to be in court, and supply a copy of the Court Order, Summons or letter detailing the need for your presence. Paid time off for this reason will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

13.1 How you will be paid

There is no right to be paid for time off to give witness evidence under any circumstances.

It may be possible for you to claim loss of earnings from the court. In criminal cases, this is a low payment calculated on hours of attendance. In civil courts and tribunals, the court has the power to order the losing party to reimburse the successful party for those costs, but they rarely apply this to witnesses.

13.2 Voluntary attendance

If the court has asked you to give evidence as a potential witness voluntarily, and you wish to do so, you will need to take this time off from your holiday allowance, as authorised unpaid absence or in your personal time.

14. Reserve forces

If you are a member of the reserve armed forces, you have no statutory right to time off unless you receive a 'call up notice' (mobilisation). In all other circumstances, where you cannot cover your reservist commitments or obligations from within your annual holiday allowance, we may grant the time off as authorised unpaid leave to you enable you discharge those obligations. Although we will help reservists as far as possible, we need to remain mindful of the needs of the business.

We will expect you to attend any training sessions or other events in your own time. We may allow you to attend annual training but expect you to take this time through a combination of your annual holiday entitlement and unpaid leave.

Although in most cases you will receive 28 days' notice of mobilisation, you must contact HR straight away if you receive your call up notice as it may be necessary to delay or cancel your mobilisation.

Time off for other types of special leave

15. Medical and dental appointments

Whilst there is no automatic entitlement to paid time off during working hours to attend medical and dental appointments, we recognise that there may be occasions when there is no other alternative.

NB

We will make sure that we take all reasonable measures to support disabled colleagues and appreciate that colleagues with disabilities may need, at times, time off specifically for treatment, assessment or rehabilitation related to their disability. We will give you a reasonable period of paid time off if you have a disability and cannot make appointments outside your working hours. We would see this as a reasonable adjustment and you should agree the time off with your manager, considering the need to balance your individual circumstances with the needs of the business.

Where you need a course of treatment, you must get the time off authorised in advance and payment will be at the manager's discretion.

You and your manager can consider the following options when you need to attend any medical or dental appointments:

- Using your annual leave (if your appointment will last for a full or half day, we could normally expect you to use holiday)
- Using time off in lieu (TOIL)
- Making up the time by working extra hours or
- Taking it as unpaid leave.

15.1 Routine appointment

Where you have a planned or non-urgent medical or dental appointment (e.g. a check-up), you should always try to book it outside of working hours to minimise any disruption your absence could cause to business operations. However, we understand this may not always be possible to achieve, particularly when you have to book an appointment at short notice. In these circumstances you should book your appointment at either the very start or the very end of your working day or during your lunch break to minimise disruption as much as possible.

Please note that you need to have your manager's approval first for any time off you need for appointments you need in work time.

We would normally allow up to 1.5 hours away from work to attend routine medical or dental appointments, but for any time longer than that would expect you to make up the time. The exact timescale and method for doing so is something that you will agree with your manager.

Unlike appointments with the doctor or dentist, we recognise that colleagues have less control over arrangements for routine hospital appointments. If you give sufficient notice, your manager will normally grant paid time off during working hours to attend a hospital appointment, providing you are able to produce the appointment letter.

15.2 Emergency appointment

If you have an emergency medical or dental problem that needs urgent treatment, we recognise that you may need time off during working hours to seek medical attention with minimal notice. We would normally grant paid time off in these circumstances, on the understanding that you get your manager's permission before you leave work to attend the hospital or medical or dental surgery for urgent treatment.

Any time taken exceeding one working day would be classed as normal sickness absence and eligibility for company sick pay would be subject to conditions set out in point 5 on page 14.

15.3 Time off for dependants' medical or dental appointments

Where you know in advance about the need to support a dependant e.g. going with a child to a planned dental/hospital appointment, then you should use one of the options for time off listed in the bulleted list on the previous page. If it is an emergency appointment, you should apply for time off under the 'Time off for dependants' policy set out on page 23.

15.4 Elective surgery/procedures

You will only qualify for sickness absence for elective surgery / procedures if you supply evidence from your GP that you meet the criteria for having such treatment on the NHS (though treatment may be given privately) i.e. that the surgery is necessary for your physical, psychological and wellbeing.

In these circumstances, you need to tell your manager of any planned absence at the earliest opportunity. You will also need to supply the GP's evidence.

In all other cases of elective surgery / procedures, you need to ask your manager for the time off using other means (see the bulleted list on the previous page).

16. IVF/Fertility treatment

We understand that undergoing IVF/fertility treatment is stressful and has practical implications such as needing time off work whilst undergoing treatment, including investigation/diagnosis, treatment and/or counselling, sometimes at short notice.

If you are having IVF/fertility treatment, we will give you up to 3 paid days time off per cycle. You can take the days singly or together according to circumstances. If you need more than 3 days, you should take this as either unpaid leave or out of your holiday entitlement.

If you are the partner of someone who is undergoing IVF/fertility treatment, you can take paid time off to attend up to 3 appointments (up to 10 hours out of the business in total) per cycle.

You must support your request for time off in relation to IVF/fertility treatment with documentary evidence from a relevant general practitioner or specialist.

If a doctor signs you off at any stage during the process because of the treatment, this will be subject to the normal Sickness Absence Policy & Procedure as set out in Section 2. You must supply the right medical certificates.

17. Study leave

Where we have sponsored or endorsed your study towards a qualification relevant to your role, we may give you study leave. This is at your manager's discretion as we need to balance your request with business needs.

We will consider giving you regular time off to attend a course during normal working hours where alternative study arrangements are not available or are impractical. We may ask you to make up time away from work. You may take up to 3 days as study leave (to allow you to prepare for or attend exams) in any 12-month period. If you need more than 3 days, you should book this as annual leave.

18. Sabbatical

If you have more than two years' continuous service in TradeChoice, you may ask to take a sabbatical. A sabbatical will normally be no longer than **six** months long.

A sabbatical will amount to unpaid special leave. You will maintain your continuous employment. You will return to the same job, or unless this is not practical, a suitable alternative post under substantially the same terms and conditions.

During a sabbatical, you will not keep any contractual benefits or allowances, including company car, private medical insurance or income protection. Life assurance will continue at a maximum of 3 x annual salary, and you will accrue statutory holiday entitlement for the sabbatical term. We reserve the right to refuse a request for a sabbatical on any reasonable grounds.

19. Religious leave

Reasonable unpaid leave may be granted for religious observance, if you choose not to take annual leave. We will consider a request for this type of leave on a case by case basis and whether we grant it or not will depend on the needs of the business at that time.