Time Off For Medical / Dental Appointments During Normal Working Hours Policy

Policy information

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Classification:
Employment

Supersedes:
Previous Versions

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6

Date of Equality Impact Assessment:
30/11/2023

Approval information

Approved by:
People, Organisational Development & Culture Committee
Date of approval: 11.12.2023
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Extended by PODCC 10.11.2026 until 31.05.2027

Summary of document:
This Policy sets out guidance for dealing with requests for time off for medical and dental appointments.

Scope:
This policy applies to all employees of the Health Board. This policy does not apply to employees who require time off to take dependents to medical appointments as this may be covered under Special Leave, Parental Leave, Flexi-Time or Annual Leave policies, as appropriate

To be read in conjunction with:
768 – Managing Attendance at Work All Wales Policy (opens in a new tab)

122 – Special Leave Policy (opens in a new tab)
511 – Carers Policy (opens in a new tab)

Patient information:
N/A

Owning group:
Workforce and Organisational Team

Executive Director job title:
Lisa Gostling – Director of Workforce and OD

Reviews and updates:
Version 1 – New Policy – September 2011
Version 2 – No Changes, Extend Review Date For 3 Years – 05/02/2015
Version 3 – Amendment to paragraph 5. 4, reference to the DDA & Equality Act & amended chart – January 2016
Version 4 – Amended in line with the All Wales Sickness Policy – 18/05/2017
Version 5 – No Changes, extend review date for 3 years – 19/03/2019
Minor amendment page 5 – referral to FAQ section removed as no longer have this – 18/06/2019
Carers Policy (opens in a new tab) Reuploaded with reference to the 511 Carers Policy in the to be read in conjunction with section – 18/02/2021
PODCC – extended whilst review is being undertaken – 31/03/2023
Version 6 – full review 11.12.2023

Keywords
Medical appointment, Dental appointment, appointment, Time off.

Glossary of terms
UHB – University Health Board

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Introduction

The Hywel Dda University Health Board (Health Board) recognises that employees will need to make occasional visits to a dentist, GP or other health professional or may be required to attend a hospital appointment or clinic for investigation and/or treatment. Levels of flexibility may vary according to the needs of the service but the Health Board will strive to apply consistency in the application of this policy across all departments.

Appointments should be scheduled wherever possible outside an employee's normal working hours. Whilst there is no legal or contractual obligation to time off during working hours to attend medical appointments it is recognised that the nature of some medical conditions sometimes require that appointments are scheduled during normal working hours.

Policy Statement

This policy provides guidance for dealing with requests for time off work to attend medical or dental appointments to ensure requests are considered fairly, consistently and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Health Board. This policy does not apply to employees who require time off to take dependents to medical appointments as this may be covered under Special Leave, Parental Leave, Flexi-Time or Annual Leave policies, as appropriate.

Aim

The aim of this document is to establish agreed principles which deal effectively with requests for time off for medical and dental appointments.

Objectives

The aim of this document is to achieve consistent and fair practice in the application of time off for medical and dental appointments.

TIME OFF ARRANGEMENTS

Authorisation, approval and recording time off

Employees are expected to request time off by providing as much notice of the appointment as possible to their manager. The manager is responsible for considering the request in accordance with this policy and recording the amount of time off taken. The amount of time off required will depend on the type of appointment, distance to be travelled etc.

Staff should not be refused permission to attend a pre-arranged appointment as long as reasonable notice has been given. The Manager must keep a record of any such appointments and may ask to see documentary confirmation of the appointment where this is available.

Making up time off

Where staff need to attend routine appointments during work time they will be required to make up the time taken at the earliest opportunity. Employees must discuss and agree with their manager how this will be achieved. The following are options that can be agreed:

- Arriving early or leaving later on the day of the appointment
- A temporary increase in hours (without pay) over a short period

- Unpaid leave
- Annual leave
- Time in lieu/Flexi Time
- Any other arrangement agreed with the manager

Managers have discretion when agreeing arrangements with individual members of staff to ensure the personal circumstances of the individual are taken into consideration as well as the needs of the department. There may be occasions where the individual, due to work/life balance arrangements, is unable to make up the time off and in this situation, advice should be sought from the Workforce & OD Department.

Disability or long-term health conditions

Not all requests for time to attend a medical appointment may be related to a disability. However, where the request for time off is related to a disability or long-term health condition, the Health Board has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments – time off for such appointments may be a reasonable adjustment to make under this duty within the Equality Act 2010.

Where the appointment forms part of an ongoing treatment programme for a serious health condition, or is related to a disability or long term health condition, the manager must discuss such appointments with the employee to plan any necessary support to be offered. In some circumstances staff will be given a reasonable amount of paid time off to attend such appointments as part of their programme of care and support.

Managers should seek advice from the Workforce & OD Department or Occupational Health Department if they are unsure whether the appointment could be related to a disability.

The Act says that a person has a disability "if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a long-term and substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".

Physical or mental impairment includes sensory impairments such as those affecting sight or hearing. Long-term means that the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months or for the rest of the affected person's life. Substantial means more than minor or trivial.

If you are in doubt if someone is covered by the Equality Act 2010 you can contact the Disability Rights Commission or phone its helpline on **08457 622 633**. Advice is also available from the Occupational Health Department.

Medical Appointments recorded as Sickness Absence

Where a medical appointment involves treatment which results in an employee being unfit for work afterwards, the period of absence will be recorded as sick leave.

Sickness absence can be planned where it is known that a member of staff will be undertaking a programme of clinical treatment that will be debilitating for a recognised period of time.

Where an employee has a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010 or long term health condition which requires treatment on a regular basis for a prolonged period, daily treatment over the course of a week or more, weekly treatment over the course of a month or more, monthly treatment over the course of five months or more, (these are examples only) and it is certified through a hospital letter or medical practitioner letter, this will not be recorded as sickness absence. If a spell of absence for recovery of the on-going treatment is required then this period of time will be recorded as sick absence.

Medical Appointments – family members or dependants

Planned Appointments

Employees are expected to make every effort to make arrangements for dependants to attend to medical appointments at times to minimise the time required for them to be away from work during normal working hours. If the manager is satisfied that such efforts have been made, then time off work may be granted subject to the needs of the service. It is expected that this time is made up by agreement or is unpaid.

Emergency Appointments

The Health Board's Special Leave Policy applies in circumstances where an employee is required to attend a medical appointment with a dependant in an emergency.

TRAINING

Training may be provided at HR training sessions which all staff will be informed of via internal communication channels or their line manager in advance or via newsletters.

EQUALITY

The Hywel Dda University Health Board recognises and values the diversity of its workforce. Our aim is provide a safe environment where all employees are treated fairly and equally and with dignity and respect. The Hywel Dda University Health Board recognised that the promotion of equality and human rights is central to its work both as a provider of healthcare and as an employer. This policy has been impact assessed using the Health Board integrated impact assessment tool.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Employees

Employees are expected to:

- arrange appointments at a time they are not scheduled to work or, if this is not possible, as near to the beginning or end of the working period as possible so as to minimise the absence from work and disruption to the service
- seek authorisation for the time off from work from their manager, wherever possible in advance of making the appointment or in the case of an emergency on the day of the appointment. In cases where you are issued with an appointment, you are required to inform your manager as soon as possible
- attend work or return to work after any appointment if time remains within their normal working hours and you are fit to do so
- explore options to make up time taken off work to attend appointments (see section making up time off)

Managers

Managers are expected to:

- authorise requests reasonably, equitably and consistently in accordance with the policy and not unreasonably refuse requests for time off work during normal working hours
- monitor the frequency of requests and seek advice from the Workforce & OD Department and Occupational Health Department if necessary
- explore options to accommodate requests by mutual agreement where appropriate.

APPENDIX 1 – SUMMARY OF TIME OFF ARRANGEMENTS

Medical circumstances:

Nature of Appointment	Recorded as Sickness Absence Y/N	Time off from Work to be made up Y/N
Occupational Health Department appointment	N	N
Staff Psychological Wellbeing Department appointment	N	N
Hospital, GP or Dentist appointment.	N	Y Managers have the discretion to discuss and agree arrangements with individual members of staff to ensure the personal circumstances of the individual are taken into consideration as well as the needs of the department.
Medical appointment related to a disability or long-term health condition	N	Dependent on the type and number of appointments see section 5.3
Where a medical appointment involves treatment which results in an employee being unfit for work afterwards	Y	N
Medical condition which requires treatment that will be debilitating for a recognised period of time	Y	N
Disability or long-term health condition which requires	N if this is treatment as an outpatient.	Dependent on the type and number of

treatment on a regular basis for a prolonged period of time.	Y if the treatment then requires a spell of absence after the treatment is carried out	appointments see section 5.3
Fertility treatment	N	N Refer to s.7.2.5 of the All Wales Special Leave Policy
Reported Industrial Injury/Disease related to Health Board employment	N	Refer to section 5.2

Other circumstances:

Nature of Appointment	**Recorded as Sickness Absence Y/N**	**Time off from Work to be made up Y/N**
Dependents – planned	N	Y
Dependents – emergency	N	Y Alternatively, the Special Leave Policy may apply