Family Leave Policy

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Distribution	All Staff, Volunteers, Directors, Sessional Workers

1. Purpose

This policy sets out South Cumbria Skills Exchange (SCSE)'s, operated by Whamos Training and Development CIC, approach to leave for family-related reasons. It covers time off for medical and personal appointments, maternity, paternity, adoption, parental, shared parental, time off for dependants, and bereavement.

SCSE recognises that work and family responsibilities are linked, and that supporting members of staff through significant life events benefits both the individual and the organisation. SCSE will meet its statutory obligations as a minimum and, where operationally possible, will be flexible.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees. Statutory rights are determined by length of service and other qualifying criteria; eligibility for each type of leave is set by current legislation and will be confirmed at the point of need. Sessional workers and volunteers are not generally entitled to the leave types covered by this policy but should discuss any family-related need for time off with a Director.

3. General principles

All staff are encouraged to raise family-related leave needs with a Director at the earliest reasonable opportunity. SCSE will:

- Explain entitlements, processes and any pay implications clearly and in writing where requested.
- Treat such conversations as confidential.
- Not discriminate against any member of staff who exercises a family-related right.
- Make reasonable arrangements for cover so the member of staff can take leave without concern about colleagues.

Where SCSE's small size means that cover is operationally challenging, this will be discussed openly, but operational pressure will never be used as a reason to deny a statutory right.

4. Time off for appointments

Circumstances may arise where you need time off for medical or dental appointments, or for other personal reasons. Where possible, such appointments should be made outside normal working hours.

If this is not possible, time off required for these purposes may be granted at the discretion of a Director and will normally be without pay. Time off for ante-natal appointments is a statutory right and is paid at the normal rate.

5. Maternity leave and pay

You may be entitled to maternity leave and pay in accordance with current statutory provisions. If you become pregnant, you should notify a Director at an early stage so that:

- A health and safety risk assessment for your role can be carried out and any reasonable adjustments agreed.
- Your entitlements and notification obligations can be explained.
- Cover arrangements can be planned with you.

Statutory maternity leave is up to 52 weeks (26 weeks Ordinary Maternity Leave plus 26 weeks Additional Maternity Leave). Statutory Maternity Pay is paid for up to 39 weeks where eligibility is met. You retain all your contractual rights during maternity leave, except for remuneration which is replaced by maternity pay.

6. Paternity leave and pay

You may be entitled to paternity leave and pay in accordance with current statutory provisions. Paternity leave is normally up to two weeks, to be taken within 52 weeks of birth or placement. To qualify, you must notify a Director by the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth, or within 7 days of being matched with a child for adoption.

7. Adoption leave and pay

You may be entitled to adoption leave and pay in accordance with current statutory provisions. The structure mirrors maternity leave: up to 52 weeks' leave with Statutory Adoption Pay for up to 39 weeks where eligibility is met. Notify a Director within 7 days of being matched with a child.

8. Shared parental leave

If you are entitled to take shared parental leave under current statutory provisions, you should discuss your needs with a Director. SCSE will work with you to identify your entitlements and to look at the proposed leave periods, taking account of your family's circumstances and the operational needs of the organisation.

9. Parental leave

Eligible employees with at least one year's service may take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave per child up to the child's 18th birthday, with a usual maximum of 4 weeks per year per child. To request parental leave, give a Director at least 21 days' notice in writing.

10. Time off for dependants

You are entitled to a reasonable amount of unpaid time off during working hours to take action that is necessary to provide help to a dependant. A dependant is a spouse, partner, child, parent, or someone who lives in your household (but is not your tenant, lodger or employee), or someone who reasonably relies on you for care.

This right covers unexpected emergencies such as a dependant falling ill, being injured, being assaulted, giving birth, or where existing care arrangements unexpectedly break down. The time off is for dealing with the immediate problem and arranging longer-term care, not for providing long-term care yourself.

Notify a Director as soon as is reasonably practicable. The amount of time considered reasonable will depend on the circumstances.

11. Bereavement leave

Reactions to bereavement vary greatly and setting fixed rules is not appropriate. If you suffer a bereavement, contact a Director as early as you are able to. SCSE will agree appropriate time off with you, taking account of your relationship to the person who has died, any cultural or religious considerations, your role in funeral and estate arrangements, and your wellbeing.

For the death of a child under 18 or stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy, statutory parental bereavement leave of up to 2 weeks applies, with statutory parental bereavement pay where eligibility is met. This is in addition to any other leave to which you may be entitled.

Where leave needs to extend beyond an initial agreed period because of the impact of the bereavement on your wellbeing, the matter will be discussed under the Capability provisions of the Disciplinary and Grievance Policy and may be supported by access to occupational health.

12. Return to work

Where leave under this policy lasts more than four weeks, SCSE will arrange a return-to-work meeting before or shortly after the return. The purpose is to ensure that any updates affecting your role, any changes you wish to discuss (such as flexible working requests), and any wellbeing considerations are addressed.

13. Requests for flexible working

Members of staff returning from family leave often wish to discuss flexible working. SCSE handles flexible working requests under the statutory framework and will give every reasonable request fair consideration, including job-share, reduced hours, compressed hours and remote working where compatible with the role.

14. Records

Records of family-related leave are held in line with the Secure Data Handling and Data Protection Policy and retained for the periods set out in the Records Retention provisions.

15. Related policies

This policy should be read alongside:

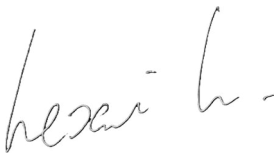
- Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Secure Data Handling and Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

16. Policy review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Directors, or sooner in response to any change in employment law, statutory guidance, or significant operational learning.

Approval & Review

This policy has been approved on behalf of the Directors:

Elizabeth Amos-Milburn *Co-Director*	**Alexandra Gager-Liebhart** *Co-Director*
	

Date of approval: 18th May 2026

Next review: 18th May 2027

Schedule 1 — Record of Changes

Version	Date	Nature of Change
001	18th May 2026	Initial published version included in the Combined Policies and Procedures 2026 edition.