

Paid Leave to Grieve Employer Pack



C.P.J. Field.

More than a funeral director since 1690.

Dear Sir / Madam,

CPJ Field are a family-owned and managed funeral directors with more than 300 years' experience of caring for the living and working with those suffering a bereavement. In our experience, the initial bereavement is just the beginning of the transition towards a life without the person who has died.

As part of our work with local communities, we've identified a need within the UK for an official employer bereavement policy, to broaden the offering of compassionate leave and to offer paid leave to all workers when it's needed most. Recent research* we conducted showed that nearly three-quarters (74%) of Brits believe this should exist, and based on their experiences of grief, 94% think that an official employer bereavement policy should be flexible.

That's why we've worked with Stacey Heale and Flora Baker to produce a film about their experiences of grief and why we've developed a Government petition to ask all political parties to include a commitment to work towards an official Bereavement Law as part of their 2024 manifestos.

It's estimated that employees coming to terms with a bereavement cost the UK economy £23bn a year through reduced tax revenue and increased use of NHS and social care services.** Most of the negative economic impact arises from grieving employees being unable to work at their normal levels of productivity while they deal with the mental, physical and financial impacts of a bereavement. Despite initial short-term costs, investing in appropriate bereavement leave and support for all employees could lead to a significant long-term saving for the UK economy, through reduced absence, higher productivity and a reduced reliance on the health and social care system post-bereavement.

Included within this pack you'll find an employment contract annex page, with suggested wording for an amendment which reflects the nationwide need for an official flexible bereavement policy.

Also included is a conversation guide for all workers, especially managers and HR professionals, to help guide and navigate you through discussing the difficult topic of grief with sensitivity and humanity.

Our aim is to help everyone experiencing bereavement.

Jeremy Field
Managing Director, CPJ Field



* CPJ Field research, conducted by Censurwide in April 2022 surveying 2,000 working age adults.

** Sue Ryder commissioned an economist in September 2020 to conduct a literature review of current research.

NEW BEREAVEMENT POLICY CONTRACT ANNEX



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Compassionate Paid Leave To Grieve

The company will consider all requests from anyone classed as an 'employee' for compassionate leave and time off following a bereavement.

Employees have this right from the day they start their job.

If you need to take compassionate leave or time off following a bereavement, you should raise the matter with your line manager as soon as possible and that person will consider your request.

Parental Bereavement Leave became a Statutory Right in 2020.

In the case of bereavement of an otherwise close family member, spouse or partner, there is a contractual entitlement to Paid Leave To Grieve for absences for a period of two weeks.

- 'Close family member' is defined as: a parent, stepparent, grandparent or great-grandparent; an aunt, grandaunt or great-grand aunt; an uncle, granduncle or great-granduncle; a brother, sister, stepbrother or stepsister; a first cousin; a spouse you were previously married to
- 'Spouse' is defined as: someone you are currently married to
- 'Partner' is defined as: someone you live with as a couple, but are not married to

If a combination of more than one close family, spouse or partner dies, the employee is entitled to Paid Leave To Grieve for a period of two weeks for each person who has died.

This period [can/must*] be taken in one whole block, or 10 days in total, [or taken flexibly within the first 180 days following the attention and approval of your line manager*]. This period [will start before the actual bereavement upon approval, to include pre-grief/will start from the first working day following the bereavement occurring*].

Anyone classed as a 'worker' is not entitled to Paid Leave To Grieve. But they might still be offered it at the Employer's discretion.

* delete as applicable to reflect your policy.



LET'S TALK ABOUT GRIEF

A CONVERSATION GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING BEREAVEMENT AT WORK



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Introduction

In a recent survey we conducted, nearly a quarter of UK workers (24%) felt that they didn't receive the right level of support from their employer when they were bereaved. This guide aims to help you as a business navigate the difficult conversations that arise when someone's grieving, in ways that show support and empathy. It's important that anyone experiencing a bereavement is made aware of your position and expectations as a business, but also that you understand what they're going through is complex and as such, you will be flexible with regards to their needs for time off.

Grieving is not a straight line

Every relationship is unique and every grieving process is too. There's no right or wrong way and there's no timeline. Grief is up and down and so making it clear that you understand the need for flexibility around a griever's expected work commitments is crucial. Just offering your support to be flexible as a business can be enough, as the practicalities of work can be the last things they want to worry about. It's unfair to expect everyone to feel the same way and so offering them the chance to grieve on their terms can be the best approach.

Say something

Even when it's a close friend, it's easy to feel overwhelmed when faced with someone who's grieving. As a business, it can be even harder. As a manager or a colleague, what do you say? It's easy to think you need to cheer them up or to somehow try to alleviate their suffering. But in your role as an employer, you shouldn't be afraid to speak out, even if it's just to acknowledge a colleague's feelings.

Simple is good

Stick with what you know and don't worry if it feels like it falls short. "I'm really sorry to hear about [name]" is probably the easiest thing to say, especially if you're struggling for words. It's important never to minimise the person's grief experience, even in a professional setting. Euphemisms and comparisons might seem softer and kinder but they're not always helpful. Even fairly tried and tested terms like 'loss' can fail to capture what someone might be going through. We never truly know how someone's feeling, especially when grieving. We can however always empathise with the feeling of emptiness and heartbreak and offer them the chance to take the time off they need on a flexible basis, to work around their own personal experience of grief.

You, sincerely

With nothing 'good' to say, sincerity and honesty can be the best option. You'll likely feel that there are no words, but people will appreciate that you're thinking about them even if the relationship you have is mainly professional, and rehearsed words of comfort are better than silence. Grief is difficult and personal and isolating, so acknowledge this. Being genuine in any way you feel comfortable is itself a show of compassion and that can really matter to someone experiencing a bereavement. Regardless of the exact words, offering the person your support as an employer the chance to take the time they need, on their terms, can go a long way.

Active listening

Take your cues from the person grieving, as their needs and emotions will fluctuate hugely. Make sure they know you're not holding them to any particular timeline, but if they feel like talking, then being present and listening can be very assuring. Grief can be confusing, especially in a business environment, so sometimes people need a bit of help along the path, even if it's their own stories and experiences.

Change of scenery

If it's clear that the bereaved person is struggling in an office environment, taking a break and getting away can help recentre them. Suggest they go outside, take a walk or have a cup of tea elsewhere. All of these 'normal' activities can help with the grieving process. It may not be appropriate for you to go with them but providing the emotional support and space they need can make a big difference.

Be proactive (when appropriate)

In certain situations if you feel they might be lonely, taking the time to seek out the bereaved person to ask how they're doing can have a hugely positive impact. It's easy to become isolated in grief, especially at work, when they might feel that other people don't understand. By simply checking in from time to time, you can do a lot to help reintegrate someone, especially in an office where there can already be a bit of a distance between personal lives.

Make note of key dates

Furthermore, logging important dates such as anniversaries and birthdays can show an extra layer of sensitivity that will bring much comfort to the bereaved person. Approach these dates in advance and let them know the business understands if they wish to take time off. Be mindful in advance of any notes in the office or over email around potentially sensitive times like Valentine's Day, Mother's Day or Father's Day too.

Wider support structure

Remember to remind the person about other help available; their local GP, for example and grief counselling services (especially if this is something you can offer through the company). Cruse Bereavement Care is also a fantastic charity that can help.

