

## LYPFT COVID-19 Childcare Guiding Principles

Updated 8 January 2021

We understand the pressure parents are again facing with childcare. As you will be aware the Government has given an assurance that children of key or 'critical' workers, as well as 'vulnerable children', can continue to access childcare, schools or educational settings.

### What support and options are available to staff?

Where you are experiencing potential difficulties with childcare arrangements the points below should be considered and discussed with your manager.

#### 1. Making up of hours

It may be possible that any unworked hours could be made up through working additional hours at another time when the situation has settled down. This would need to be within a three month period and ensure that this doesn't impact on your own health and wellbeing.

#### 2. Use of Annual Leave

In usual circumstances, most staff will use some of their annual leave to support their child care arrangements over school holidays and therefore, it is expected that staff will request and **book annual leave as usual** during these periods. Where a member of staff has not taken a proportionate amount of leave so far into the leave year (i.e. half of the leave entitlement by the end of September) then it may be possible to agree a longer period of leave, however, this is subject to managers' approval. All requests will need to take into account the need for leave to be shared fairly across all staff in the team, and to ensure we have got sufficient cover in our teams/services.

#### 3. Unpaid Leave

If a longer period of time is required to manage child care or Special/Carers Leave has been exhausted, staff can request a period of unpaid leave and this will need to be in agreement with the Manager and any unpaid period could be deducted over an agreed period of time.

#### 4. Flexibility/Flexible Working

Staff should discuss with their manager what temporary adjustments or flexibility can be offered to support child care arrangements – some examples of this may include changing shift patterns, redeployment, time to allow pick up and drop off from child care arrangements, supporting different shift patterns where both carers are employed by the Trust to support care over the week, or extending work over a longer working day. All these need to be agreed by the Manager.

## **5. Reduction in hours**

On a short-term/temporary basis a reduction in hours (with a resultant drop in pay) could be considered to ensure a work/life balance is managed.

## **6. Special Leave/Carers Leave/Emergency Leave**

Where staff have a short-term gap in their child care arrangements, or their arrangements fall down, or your child is sent home from school or other child care provision to self-isolate at very short notice then staff can request a period of Special/ Carers/Emergency Leave in accordance with the current Healthy Working Procedures.

Currently the allowance is up to 5 days or equivalent hours of a full shift per calendar year pro rata for part-time workers. As a result of the Covid-19 special circumstances where this initial 5 day allocation has been exhausted and all other options fully considered/utilised we have increased our special leave provision by a further 3 days for all COVID related instances (temporary arrangement throughout the response to the COVID-19 pandemic until the end of March 2021).

During school holiday periods this option should not be used as an alternative to taking annual leave when supporting child care arrangements, therefore, there is an expectation that at least 2 weeks annual leave is taken before Carers or Special Leave is considered.

## **7. Working from home**

Many staff are currently working from home and managing child care which does support greater flexibility. Where the job role allows managers should support staff working from home.

The rules on leave also apply to staff working from home. Managers should agree with their staff how their work and hours will be organised and managed whilst caring for children. This may include working early in the morning or in the evening.

We know that not all job roles can be done from home and we need staff in work to provide care to service users so this will be a very limited option for most of our inpatient and 24/7 services, however, we encourage managers to consider the option of redeployment to services where this can be accommodated.

## **8. Planning ahead together**

We appreciate staff will have sought to develop the best possible plan and arrangements for looking after their children. However, where this is proving to be a challenge, you should notify your manager as soon as possible. It is essential that we plan together as early as possible, given the need to maintain safe staffing levels.

Managers should then discuss what support can be offered using all the above options and any combination of those. Where any arrangements have a potential impact on service delivery, managers should seek support from their line manager or relevant Head of Operations (and specifically in relation to any new requests to work from home within our inpatient or 24/7 services).