



## Staff Entitlement Policy

### Policy statement:

EKC Group (the Group) recognises the increasing importance of wellbeing in the workplace and the impact and pressures that modern life has, both inside and outside of work. Employee wellbeing at work is important for many reasons including creating a positive, healthy environment in which to work is key to productivity, as well as employee retention and happiness.

There is an increased focus on the employers' duty of care to offer a more proactive wellbeing support, as well effective pathways in the event of absence. Whilst this needs to be embedded within an organisation's people management activities in order to promote employee wellbeing and improve engagement, retention and performance, it should be considered as an equal responsibility between employer and employee.

Wellbeing is about lifestyle issues and choices and includes diet, exercise, financial and mental wellbeing as well as being about the choices we make in life about the way we live.

Work can have a positive impact on our health and wellbeing. Healthy and well-motivated employees can have an equally positive impact on the productivity and effectiveness of a business.

The Group engenders a culture where we recognise a commitment to work life balance is important and we have developed this policy to support staff in promoting this ethos, providing a suite of benefits to support staff with their all-round wellbeing.

The policy also incorporates the following:

- Subpoenaed Witnesses and Jurors
- Trade union conferences
- Training of Employees with Assistance dogs
- Interviews
- Leave for examinations
- Volunteers
- Service in Non-regular forces
- Reservists
- Time off for Medical Screening
- Medical appointments
- Gender reassignment
- Examiners/Internal Verifiers
- Part-time Inspectors
- Moving house
- My Ten Days

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

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**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 1 of 13**



- Compassionate leave
- Fertility treatment
- Child's first day at school
- Parental leave
- Bereavement leave
- Flexible working
- Working from Home
- Career Breaks
- Relocation
- Flu jabs
- Occupational Health
- Menopause Policy
- Enhanced leave
- Carer unpaid leave
- As well as an enhanced package of lifestyle benefits to promote a healthy work life balance for all staff and accommodate wherever possible whilst considering regards to the business needs of the Group.

## **Procedures:**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to define the Group's commitment towards all staff achieving a healthy work life balance. All additional leave other than annual, maternity, paternity, parental or adoption is outlined in this Policy.
- 1.2 The Policy recognises that employees may occasionally require time away from work in order to deal with personal situations and time off will be given when it is practicable to do so. All leave is at the discretion of the Group and needs of the business will be taken into account as the service to students and customers must not be detrimentally affected. However, time off will not be unreasonably withheld.
- 1.3 The Group's Policy is to encourage managers to support where possible, all requests made under the Policy guidance and all requests should go to the line manager in the first instance although guidance maybe obtained from People Services if required to ensure consistency in approach.
- 1.4 The Policy covers all employees of the Group regardless of service and People Services should be notified by the authorising manager to ensure accurate records are maintained.

### **2 General Principles**

- 2.1 Agreements should be reviewed at regular intervals and will usually be time limited.

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

**Approving Body: Policy Development Group / Group Leadership Board**

**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 2 of 13**



- 2.2 All employees will work together to support each other, and managers have a duty of care to ensure that staff take appropriate breaks as described by the Working Time Directive, including a rest break of 20 minutes after or during a period of 6 hours work.
- 2.3 All staff are entitled to the holiday entitlement commensurate with their role plus accrued bank holiday entitlement.
- 2.4 Staff are encouraged and expected to use their entire annual leave entitlement to ensure they receive adequate rest. A maximum of 5 days are permitted to be carried over into the next holiday year, with the authorisation of the line manager.
- 2.5 Enhanced leave will be granted where applicable after the completion of 5 years of continuous service. Employees will be entitled to the enhanced leave entitlement at the 1st August of the following year.
- 2.6 Staff should not be granted annual leave on development, improvement days or celebration days as these activities are designed to support employees in their development and wellbeing.
- 2.7 All employees will receive monthly MyProgress reviews with their manager. This is the opportunity for the employee and line manager to review career plans, development opportunities and general wellbeing. Please refer to the People Performance and Development Policy for further details.

### **3 Paid Leave of Absence**

- 3.1 Paid leave of absence should not exceed, in any period of twelve months, an aggregate total of 18 days, unless otherwise stated here. This would be pro-rata for staff working less than full time. And 3.5 hours of work in any one day will be deemed as a half day. Exclusions to this total are Statutory and Company Sick leave as detailed in the Sickness Policy and leave as detailed in the Maternity, Paternity, Parental and Adoption leave Policy.
- 3.2 Salary will only be paid where the employee does not receive and is not entitled to claim for their salary from any other source. Duties covered for payment of full salary will be granted for, but not limited to, extraneous duties such as:-
  - Justice of the peace
  - Persons appointed or nominated by a Minister, Association of Local Authorities or a Local Authority to serve on a Committee, Tribunal Panel, Board of Prison Visitors or other similar body
  - Persons appointed as members of their Associations' or Union's national Executive to attend meetings of the Executive
  - School Governors
  - Local councillors

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

**Approving Body: Policy Development Group / Group Leadership Board**

**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 3 of 13**



#### **4 Subpoenaed Witnesses and Jurors**

4.1 Employees who undertake jury service or act as witnesses for a court or tribunal are required to claim from the court an allowance for loss of earnings that should be notified to payroll on receipt. This claim amount is deducted from their salary. This does not however apply where an individual attends a court or tribunal in a professional capacity as an employee of the Group.

#### **5 Other Special Leave**

5.1 Trade Union Conferences - An employee may be granted, subject to the exigencies of the services, leave with pay to attend the Annual/Biennial Conference of the Trade Union (UCU) recognised by the Group subject to:

- the employee being properly nominated by the Trade Union concerned as its representative to the Conference;
- the total leave given to any employee who is sent by their Trade Union to its Annual Conference not exceeding five consecutive working days in any year;
- agreement by the Senior Manager that the work of the Section will not be detrimentally affected, where more than two people wish to attend a particular Conference from any one Section; and
- the total number of employees of the Group attending the Conference being no more than the number to which the Branch is entitled to send under the Union rules.
- attendance of employees at annual conferences of professional organisations and societies remains entirely subject to the Group's discretion in individual cases and therefore outside the scope of the above rules.

5.2 Training of Employees with Assistance dogs - Special leave with pay may be granted to employees for the duration (not exceeding 18 days?) of any special training they may be required to undertake with Assistance dogs.

5.3 Interviews - Special leave with pay may be granted to employees attending interviews for up to 2 days in any 12 month period.

5.4 Leave for Examinations - Leave of absence without loss of salary to be granted to employees for the purpose of sitting an examination supported by the Group. In addition, for Group supported training, up to 5 days without loss of salary may be granted for the purpose of final revision in the period preceding the examination.

5.5 Volunteers - Part-time fire-fighters, volunteer Special Constables and Life-boat volunteers will be granted paid leave in order to support their work in these areas. Those who volunteer with cadets may request additional

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

**Approving Body: Policy Development Group / Group Leadership Board**

**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 4 of 13**



special leave or 'extended weekend leave' to support with weekend camps. Extended weekend leave would include permission to leave early on a Friday and start work late on a Monday. Additional leave will be agreed on the basis it does not impact on students and their lessons.

- 5.6 Service in Non-Regular Forces - The Group endorses the principle that volunteer members of the Non-Regular Forces who attend summer camp should be granted leave additional to their normal annual leave. Two weeks will be granted for camp, as additional leave with pay.
- 5.7 Reservists - The following time for Army, Naval and Air-force Reservists will be agreed:
- Training days - consecutive of 16 for Army, 14 for Maritime and 15 for Air-force during the working week, with additional weekend time. The Group will allow an additional ten days paid leave\* for reservists to support the annual two week Summer camp training.
  - Mobilisation of up to 12 months, following agreed notice periods of a minimum of 25 days, for additional training, deployment of up to 6 months and recuperation.
- \*All other remuneration and benefits in these circumstances are paid by the Ministry of Defence.
- 5.8 Additional Support - Reservists, Ex-Forces and those serving in Non-regular Forces - It is recognised that there may be a need for special leave for those staff who have seen combat in order for them to attend support groups or reunions and extra leave of up to five days a year can be taken for this. The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) can be contacted for further support at <http://www.ssafa.org.uk/>
- 5.9 Time off for Medical Screening - Necessary paid time off shall be granted to employees for the purpose of being screened for serious medical conditions. Further time will also be allowed for appointments following treatment for serious medical conditions where ongoing check-ups are deemed necessary and are advised by medical practitioners.
- 5.10 Medical Appointments - The Group will make every endeavour to support staff in enabling them to attend Hospital and Doctor appointments whenever possible when these cannot be taken outside of working hours. This may include flexing of working hours to encourage staff to maintain their wellbeing.
- 5.11 Gender reassignment - The law recognises that someone under medical supervision who is transitioning may require substantial periods of time off work to undergo medical procedures. A trans person under medical supervision who has time off work relating to their transition has the right to be treated in the same way as someone who is absent from work for reasons of sickness or injury. There may also be possible side-effects of



medication which may adversely affect work performance and trans people may need reduced hours or duties for a temporary period when they return to work following surgery. Time off needed by the member of staff for medical appointments or procedures and/or the possible side effects of medication will be paid as per the absence policy.

- 5.12 Duties as Examiners or Internal Verifiers - Up to 5 days paid leave of absence shall be granted at the discretion of the appropriate Senior manager to enable employees appointed as examiners or internal verifiers for Universities or similar examining boards or bodies. If this duty is carried out as voluntary, the Group will pay normal salary for this leave. Additional leave may also be supported, but will need to be taken as leave.
- 5.13 Part time Inspectors – Staff wishing to apply to be a part-time Ofsted Inspector must get permission from the Group Leadership Team. Staff who are employed as Associate Inspectors will be given paid leave of absence for the contractual amount as specified by Ofsted, up to a total of 16 days in addition to the remuneration received from Ofsted. Any further inspection days would be taken as unpaid leave or taken from annual leave entitlement.
- 5.14 Moving house - Managers can grant one day off on the day of the move, with pay for any staff member moving home, limited to one day per year per member of staff.
- 5.15 Time off to participate in faith events – The Group will consider giving time off when an employee wishes to undertake activities related to their faith e.g. a pilgrimage. The employee should take annual leave or unpaid leave in all cases.
- 5.16 My Ten Days - There may be a possibility on an annual basis for an employee to apply for the 'My Ten Days' initiative. This enables employees to apply for ten days additional paid leave to undertake an opportunity to contribute to communities both at home and further afield. A maximum of 50 days (10 per person) may be awarded each year by the panel and special consideration would need to be made regarding when the ten days could be taken – in or out of term depending on the role of the individual as their day to day tasks would need covering/rescheduling in some cases, or the Ten days should be taken outside of term time to reduce the impact on students. Applications should be sent to the Head of People Services who will arrange for the employee to make their application to a panel, who can award up to Ten Days to More details can be obtained from the Head of People Services regarding scheme rules.

## **6 Good Mental Health**

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

**Approving Body: Policy Development Group / Group Leadership Board**

**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 6 of 13**



- 6.1 The Group is a Mindful Employer and works to increase awareness of mental health and making it healthier to talk about mental health. It is completely voluntary to be a Mindful Employer and enables us to recruit and retain valued and talented members of staff.
- 6.2 The Group offers counselling to staff. Counselling aims to help deal with and overcome issues that are causing emotional pain or making someone feel uncomfortable. It can provide a safe and regular space to talk and explore difficult feelings. Counselling can help someone:
- cope with a bereavement or relationship breakdown
  - cope with redundancy or work-related stress
  - explore issues such as sexual identity
  - deal with issues preventing someone achieve their ambitions
  - deal with feelings of depression or sadness, and have a more positive outlook on life
  - deal with feelings of anxiety and reducing worry
  - understand problems better
  - feel more confident
  - develop a better understanding of other people's points of view
- 6.3 Counselling can often involve talking about difficult or painful feelings and in most cases, it takes a number of sessions before the counselling starts to make a difference. A regular commitment is required to make the best use of the therapy. Employees can self-refer to the counselling service, please check the People Services intranet page for further details.
- 6.4 The Staff Attendance Policy provides support to staff who are unwell and unable to attend work and a phased return process is available to support staff returning from long term sickness.

## **7 Compassionate Leave**

- 7.1 Line managers have authority to grant up to five working days paid leave of absence on compassionate grounds in the event of bereavement or serious illness of a close relative, in any one year regardless of length of service. A further 5 days may be granted at the discretion of Senior Managers. A year is recognised as a rolling 12 month period.
- 7.2 Any period in excess of ten days would normally be without pay and considered on a case by case basis by the relevant Leader in consultation with People Services. If leave with pay is not granted, consideration will be given to leave of absence without pay.

## **8. Time off and Support for Parents and Parents to be**

- 8.1 Time off for fertility treatment - Reasonable time off will be granted for staff to attend fertility treatment where this cannot be taken outside of normal

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

**Approving Body: Policy Development Group / Group Leadership Board**

**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 7 of 13**





working hours. The first round of treatment will be supported with paid time off.

- 8.2 Child's first day at school - Staff who have a child starting nursery or school for the first time, can request the morning or afternoon of the first day off, to enable them to take their child in on their first day at that establishment.
- 8.3 Parental Leave – including maternity, paternity, parental leave, shared parental leave and adoption leave - Please refer to the Parental Rights and Leave Policy for details on the leave and pay arrangements for these.
- 8.4 Bereavement Leave - Parents will be able to take two weeks paid leave following the death of their child. Bereaved parents will be able to take leave as a single two-week period or as two separate periods of a week. They will have 56 weeks from their child's death to take the leave.
- 8.5 Parental buddies - Staff expecting or who have just had or adopted a baby or child may wish to talk to someone who has recently experienced similar events. Paternity and Maternity buddies are available for employees to connect to and meet, enabling them to gain support with regards to becoming a parent and returning to work.

## **9 Time off for Looking After Dependents**

- 9.1 A dependent includes any family member who is dependent on your support, and could include parents and siblings as well as children.
- 9.2 Employees are entitled to take short amounts of unpaid time off during working hours when it is reasonable for them to do so to look after their dependents. To this end the Group will consider granting leave in the following circumstances:
- If a dependent falls ill, is injured or gives birth
  - Where a child is involved in a serious incident during school hours
  - Where care for dependents or other arrangements break down at short notice
- 9.3 Dependent leave should be for unforeseen circumstances and the Group does not expect any particular case to require more than two days leave. In recognising this, the Group is prepared to grant up to two days paid leave in the above circumstances in any academic year. Any additional leave under this category will be unpaid.
- 9.4 If you know in advance that you are going to need time off, or you need a longer period off, you should make arrangements to book annual leave, or you may be entitled to take Parental Leave – please see the maternity, Paternity, Parental and Adoption leave Policy for more information, or compassionate leave, details of which are at point 7 of this policy.

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

**Approving Body: Policy Development Group / Group Leadership Board**

**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 8 of 13**





9.5 Employees who are care givers to a dependent are entitled to take 1 week's unpaid leave during a period of 12 months to attend to their caring responsibilities. Where possible employees should give one month's notice to their line manager to allow cover plans to be put in place. In this context, a care giver is someone who provides care to a dependent with a long term physical or mental injury or illness.

## **10 Flexible Working**

10.1 All staff may put forward applications to vary their terms of employment by following the Flexible Working guidance.

10.2 These applications can be with regard to, but not limited to:

- A change to the hours they work
- A change to the times when they are required to work
- To work from home for part of the working week

10.3 Applications made by staff who meet one or more of the following criteria will be given priority under this scheme:

- have a child under 16, or under 18 in the case of a disabled child and
- who have been employed continuously for 26 weeks at the date the application is made
- Have or expect to have responsibility for the child's upbringing
- Be making the application to enable them to care for the child
- Carers of certain adults (spouse, partner, civil partner or relative\*\*or live at the same address as the adult in need of care)

\*\*Relative for this purpose is a mother, father, adopter, special guardian, parent-in law, son, son-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, brother, brother-in-law, sister, sister-in-law, uncle, aunt or grandparent. Step and half blood relatives are also included.

10.4 To accommodate requests there may be a resulting need to ask other staff to change their working hours and therefore details may need to be shared with them. Written authorisation would be gained in these instances.

10.5 A meeting will be held with the employee, their manager and People Services as soon as possible after the request is made. Notice will be given to allow the employee to bring a workplace colleague along to their meeting(s). The request will then be considered carefully, weighing the benefits of the requested changes for the employee and the business against any adverse business impact of implementing the changes. All applications will be considered by the relevant Leader in consultation with People Services and decisions will be communicated as soon as possible.

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

**Approving Body: Policy Development Group / Group Leadership Board**

**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 9 of 13**



- 10.6 Applications must be dealt with in a reasonable manner and the employee must be notified of the final decision (including any appeal decision) within 3 months, unless mutual agreement is gained to extend this period.
- 10.7 The Group may wish to consider a specified trial period, the timescale for review to be agreed at the time.
- 10.8 Applications can be refused if proposed changes have one or more of the following consequences:
- The burden for additional costs
  - Detrimental to students
  - Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
  - Inability to re-organise work amongst existing staff or recruit additional staff
  - Detrimental impact on quality or performance
  - Insufficient work during periods the employee proposes to work
  - Planned structural changes to the business
- 10.9 If a request is not granted, the employee may appeal within 10 days of notification of the final outcome and should write to the Head of People Services outlining their grounds for appeal and the flexible working appeal process would then be instigated, which would include a further meeting. Further applications cannot be made within 12 months.

## **11 Home Working**

- 11.1 The Group has home working policy in place. If staff wish to undertake home working (up to 14 hours per week), they must seek agreement from their line manager. All requests above 14 hours should be made via an application, details of which can be found in the home working policy.

## **12 Career Breaks (returnships)**

- 12.1 Staff with 5 years or more service may request up to two years unpaid leave from their role. This may be additional time to look after children or other dependents, take time out to undertake personal study, training or development or other purposes agreed with the Group, such as overseas travel or volunteer work.
- 12.2 Applicants applying for this benefit will have performed well in their role, i.e not be under Support for Improvement and have no live disciplinarys on file. The leave request will also be authorised with the line manager and the Senior Leadership Team. An application should be completed a minimum of six months in advance of the proposed start date. It is,

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

**Approving Body: Policy Development Group / Group Leadership Board**

**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 10 of 13**



however, recognised that there may be circumstances beyond an employee's control which prevent an employee from adhering to this timescale (e.g. a sudden change in personal circumstances) and managers should consider requests accordingly.

- 12.3 Providing that the terms and conditions of the career break policy and any subsequent agreement between the employee and the Group are met, the Group will guarantee the employee the opportunity to return to work at the end of the career break.
- 12.4 On receipt of the application, the Line Manager will arrange a meeting with the employee and People Services to discuss the request. The actual start date and duration of a career break will be subject to mutual agreement between the employee, line manager and the Senior Leadership Team, and the decision confirmed in writing, with reasons should the career break be refused.
- 12.5 The Group will seek as far as possible to place an employee returning from a career break of one year or less, into their former post. Where this is not possible, the employee will be offered suitable employment on terms and conditions not less favourable, and induction and ongoing training will be provided as necessary. Alternative work offered may be at any Group location. Should the career break be longer than a year, it may not be possible to provide a position on equivalent terms.
- 12.6 A career break will not be regarded as a break in service for the purposes of statutory employment provisions. However, the period of the career break will not count towards any service-related benefits e.g. occupational sickness payments, occupational maternity provisions and occupational redundancy payments. For these purposes service before the career break will be aggregated with service after the career break. There will be no entitlement to sick pay or to holiday pay whilst on a career break and the employee will not accrue annual leave. Any annual leave owing must be taken before commencement of the career break. There will be no payment in lieu for any leave outstanding.
- 12.7 Consent must be obtained from the Group for any paid work undertaken during the career break, to avoid any conflicts of interest. Providing that paid work is not the primary reason for the career break, consent will not usually be withheld.

### **13 Relocation, disturbance allowance**

- 13.1 This allowance is in place in order to support new employees to move nearer to a College in the Group. Details of the scheme are available within the scheme policy.

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

**Approving Body: Policy Development Group / Group Leadership Board**

**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 11 of 13**



## 14 Other wellbeing support

- 14.1 Free flu jabs - The Group will offer free flu jab vouchers to employees each year and encourage employees who are not entitled to free flu jabs with their GP to accept these. Employees will be informed when these are available for collection.
- 14.2 Occupational health - where an employee or line manager feels it would be beneficial to seek medical advice from an Occupational Health Specialist, the line manager will make a referral to a member of the People Services Team and an appointment may be made. Consent to share employee information will be sought prior to any communications being made with All Health Matters Occupational Health Service.
- 14.6 Gym membership and activities - Discounted Gym membership is available to all staff at the Canterbury College site and this is open to all staff in the Group. For more details please contact [canterburysports.centre@eastkent.ac.uk](mailto:canterburysports.centre@eastkent.ac.uk). Activities take place weekly at a concessionary rate. These are advertised on a monthly basis and more details can be obtained from [canterburysports.centre@eastkent.ac.uk](mailto:canterburysports.centre@eastkent.ac.uk)
- 14.7 Cycle to work - The Group supports the Cycle to work initiative and staff can purchase bikes through the salary sacrifice scheme. For more details, please contact People Services via TOPdesk or information is also available via [www.myrewardsbuddy.co.uk](http://www.myrewardsbuddy.co.uk)
- 14.8 Eye care - The Group is working with EyeMed UK to enable you to get your eyesight checked regularly. Regular eye tests for vision are important to maintain good eyesight and may also help to diagnose illness. When visiting the Opticians and before seeing the optometrist an eye health screening is performed which will include a check for any underlying eye conditions, as well as broader conditions, such as high blood pressure, risk of stroke, diabetes, some cancers and glaucoma. Diagnosing these issues early enables early treatment helping to ensure an improved prognosis and preventing other long term affects which can lead to further ill health, absence and mental ill health. In order to get a free eyetest, please follow this link and order your Eye care voucher which will cover the costs of your eye test and towards one pair of glasses if you need them for PC use at work:  
<https://gw.eyecareplans.co.uk/Account/Login/east36d22d4487c>  
Please note, this process now replaces any previous processes we offered to repay the costs of eyecare and glasses.
- 14.9 Wellbeing portal - Staff can access a host of support for mindfulness, healthy eating, financial wellbeing and keeping fit ideas through the wellbeing portal on the My Reward Buddy website found here

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

**Approving Body: Policy Development Group / Group Leadership Board**

**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 12 of 13**



[www.myrewardsbuddy.co.uk](http://www.myrewardsbuddy.co.uk) including hints and tips and short, helpful videos

- 14.10 Staff returning from a long absence - Whether due to health, family, career break or any other reason, will be supported in their return to work to integrate back into their department and catch up on any changes that have occurred whilst they have been away.

Women going through the menopause – the Group has a Menopause policy which lays out the support in place for women who are going through the menopause. Menopause champions are also available to provide support and guidance. 15 Management Guidance

## **15 Management Guidance**

- 15.1 Management guidance is available from the People Services intranet page on a range of subjects to support staff including:
- Supporting staff who are experiencing domestic abuse
  - Supporting staff who are transgender
  - Supporting staff who are HIV positive
  - Supporting grieving staff and students
  - Menopause and the workplace
  - Where to find financial advice for staff
  - Support for parents of premature or sick babies

## **16 Health and Wellbeing Day**

- 16.1 A Wellbeing Day will take place annually to promote wellbeing and provide staff with an opportunity to attend wellbeing sessions. This will normally form part of the Group Celebration day.

## **17 People & Culture Development Group**

- 17.1 Representatives from all staff groups has been formed to focus on our culture and values and to challenge whether our policies, procedures and practices are in keeping with these.

Associated policies:

- Working from Home Policy
- Staff Attendance
- People Performance and Development Policy
- Parental Leave Policy
- Flexible Working Guidance
- Relocation Scheme
- Menopause Policy

**Policy Owner: Director of Business Support**

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**Stage of approval: Approved**

**Date of approval: March 2023**

**Page 13 of 13**