

# **Parents' Contracts**

## **Working Time and Flexible Working**

## Contents

Overview .....	3
Audience .....	3
Responsibilities .....	3
Policy.....	3
Guidance.....	3
Handling an application for a parent's contract in a current job .....	3
Refusing an application for a parent's contract.....	4
Handling an application for a parent's contract in a vacant job.....	4
Procedures.....	4
When a parent's contract has been agreed .....	4
Ending a parent's contract .....	4
When operational needs change .....	5

## Overview

This section describes the British Council parents' contracts, designed to allow staff who are parents to work a special agreed pattern of hours each year so that they can care for their children during school or college holidays. Parents' contracts incorporate unpaid leave or part-time working; staff work standard hours during term-time. Pay can be spread over the whole year if desired.

## Audience

This policy applies to UK-appointed staff. It can provide good practice guidance for country/territory TACOS.

## Responsibilities

Line managers and recruiting managers are responsible for carrying out the procedures in this document, and for ensuring a fair and practicable allocation of work for the particular member of staff and for his or her colleagues.

## Policy

- Any member of staff who is a parent is eligible to apply for a parent's contract.
- Parents' contracts can be used in cases where the job can be split into separate functions which can be carried out at times which fit in with the arrangement.
- If a member of staff asks for a parent's contract, the line manager must make every effort to arrange it.
- Staff who opt for a parent's contract continue to be employed under the terms and conditions of their full-time or part-time contract.
- A parent's contract is not a right.

## Guidance

Staff on parents' contracts are paid at the standard rate of pay for the job except when taking up the unpaid leave option made available in the parent's contract. Where possible, it is advisable to use annual leave to cover the shorter breaks such as half-term holidays. This makes the administration easier and avoids possible problems with pay.

### Handling an application for a parent's contract in a current job

The line manager must discuss with the member of staff how much time off is needed. It may only be two weeks in summer, or two months spread over the year. Or part-time working for an agreed period might suit the member of staff better.

To cover any absence, you must consider:

- temporary promotion of a junior member of staff
- temporary employment of a member of staff returning from unpaid leave (ask Human Resources (HR) Services if they know of anyone)
- temporary assistance charged to your department.

Do not refuse a request without first discussing it with HR Services.

Before you agree to a parent's contract, remember that it is your responsibility to ensure a fair and practicable allocation of work for the member of staff and for his or her colleagues.

The line manager and the member of staff must agree when the hours will be worked and the normal working pattern. If the line manager or the member of staff wants to change the pattern, either party is normally required to give two weeks' notice.

### **Refusing an application for a parent's contract**

If you are unable to agree to a request for a parent's contract, you must consider whether there are any compromise solutions, such as extended flexible working hours (see Working Time and Flexible Working), although this may not carry with it any formal approval to a regular absence each year. The member of staff may decide to appeal against your decision if he or she cannot agree to your compromise solution.

If the job cannot accommodate a suitable parent's contract, and if the member of staff still wants such an arrangement, encourage the person to look for another post which can accommodate such a contract. It may be that the member of staff has to wait some time before being accepted for a post which can meet the individual needs.

### **Handling an application for a parent's contract in a vacant job**

A member of staff who requires a parent's contract can apply for an advertised post, whether full-time or part-time. The outcome of the recruitment process may result in the recruiting manager deciding that this particular member of staff is the best person for the job. In this case, the member of staff and the recruiting manager must discuss and investigate the practicalities of the proposed work pattern.

As the recruiting manager, you must make an offer of appointment conditional on the outcome of these discussions. To safeguard the member of staff in his or her current post, you must delay transfer arrangements until you and the individual are both happy that the job can successfully accommodate a parent's contract.

## **Procedures**

### **When a parent's contract has been agreed**

1. Agree an annual pattern of work with the member of staff.
2. Write a letter to confirm the details (see Specimen Parent's Contract), with a copy for the staff file in the HR registry.
3. Each time the member of staff confirms the exact dates for unpaid leave or for a change to part-time work, to cover a school holiday, tell HR Services who inform Rebus on the appropriate form (Change to Salary or Contract Group form CP16, for unpaid leave, or the Change of Employment Details form CP4, for part-time work, both available on the GTI desktop), at least six weeks in advance.  
*The form must show the proposed date of return to the member of staff's standard working pattern.*
4. When the member of staff returns to the standard work pattern, HR Services confirm this to Rebus on the Change of Employment Details form CP4.
5. Revise the member of staff's annual leave entitlements.  
*Do this annually, at the start of each year, using an estimate of likely absence or periods of part-time work.*
6. Review the annual leave entitlement each time HR Services complete a payroll form.

### **Ending a parent's contract**

If a member of staff wants to cancel the parent's contract and return to standard hours:

- Ask for confirmation in writing, with at least six weeks' notice before the next likely absence.
- Acknowledge receipt of the letter.
- The member of staff's return to standard working should be immediate.

We cannot guarantee to accommodate a specific parent's contract indefinitely. However, as line manager, you must make every effort to maintain the agreed pattern of the contract, or a similar acceptable pattern.

**When operational needs change**

1. Discuss the changes and implications with the jobholder to see if new duties can be carried out as the contract stands.
2. If the new duties entail a change in the work pattern which the member of staff cannot comply with, proceed as described in Refusing an application for a parent's contract and Handling an application for a parent's contract in a current job above.
3. If the outcome of Step 2 is that the post is unacceptable to the member of staff because of his or her work pattern, write formally to the member of staff to:
  - offer the member of staff the revised job
  - explain that, if this is unacceptable, the current post will come to an end six months from the date of your letter (see Specimen Letter Cancelling a Parent's Contract).
4. During this time, help the person find an alternative post which can accommodate the required work pattern.
5. If, six months from the date of writing, no alternative employment has been found for the individual, and the current job after the change is still unacceptable, ask HR and Head Pay and Employment Relations for agreement to terminate the employment contract.  
*The contract is terminated with six months' notice, unless a career break has been requested and approved (see Career Breaks).*