

# 'Duvet Days' To Be Piloted In Insurance

**F**irst introduced in the Bank by Telephony, 'Duvet Days' is an American idea that provides a limited number of staff the opportunity each day to take a day's leave rather than go into work. It was introduced in Telephony in an attempt to reduce absence rates and now Insurance wants to pilot similar arrangements. The scheme, which will be piloted for a two-month period in Property Admin, will operate as follows:

- **Duvet Days will be available on a first come first served basis and can be taken for any purpose whatsoever "no questions asked"**
- **it will be open to all front line staff, including Team Leaders**
- **up to two Duvet Days can be taken in a three month period**
- **Duvet Days have to be taken as leave. However, if an individual's leave entitlement has been exhausted the day can still be taken, but the time has to be worked back within 5 working days**
- **the number of Duvet Days available to each team and grade will be limited to ensure adequate cover remains and absence does not put extra pressure on the remaining staff**
- **if a Duvet Day request is not granted because the day's quota has already been met staff will be expected to attend work as normal**

- **the arrangement will not be available to staff being dealt with under the formal stages of the Bank's absence management or performance improvement policies**
- **Duvet Days will not be available after Bank Holidays, Saturdays and other key business dates.**

**Whilst we have been broadly supportive of the introduction of Duvet Days it is important that it does not send out the wrong message and actually encourages the wrong sort of behaviours, or is simply a way of excusing absence and massaging the figures. It is also important that this arrangement does not remove management's ability to grant leave at short notice as currently exists, or that it is used to avoid the Bank's obligations and responsibility under existing agreements, such as leave in Emergency or Compassionate situations.**

The Bank is to reiterate these points to Team Leaders and Managers to ensure that this does not happen and overleaf I explain the agreed policy on Emergency & Compassionate Leave to ensure members understand how they should be dealt with in these circumstances.

**Members requiring any advice or assistance should contact the Union's 24 Hour Advice Line on 01234 262868 to speak to a full-time official for independent, professional advice and guidance.**

# Compassionate & Emergency Leave

UK legislation requires employers to give time to their staff to look after dependants. The Bank's Compassionate and Emergency Leave policy, which is designed to meet the requirements of legislation but which goes much further than the legislation demands, also fits in with the Bank's aim of helping staff maintain a sensible work / life balance.

## When is time off allowed?

In general the Bank allows paid (and unpaid) time off for compassionate or emergency situations that arise in relation to either dependants or family members. Examples of what the Bank itself believes should be treated as reasons for granting time off under this rule include;

- **Your child is too ill to go nursery and alternative childcare arrangements cannot be made until the next day**
- **An elderly neighbour who lives alone breaks his leg and you are closest on hand at the time**
- **A family bereavement occurs and you need to attend the funeral or help with funeral arrangements**
- **Your elderly mother is rushed to hospital after injuring herself and you need to go and discuss treatment with the hospital staff.**

Clearly this list is not exhaustive and other similar situations will arise which will require time off at short notice. The policy also provides wide scope for interpretation of what the Bank views both as dependants as well as family members.

- **Dependants include not only close family members but also other people who may rely on you in an emergency situation.**

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- **Family members are stated as including wider family such as cousins, aunts and uncles.**

Bank policy, therefore, is wide ranging and should cover most situations where time off is required at short notice or for compassionate reasons.

## What time off is allowed?

Bank policy goes further than is required by legislation by allowing paid time off for compassionate and emergency leave. General guidance is that the first day or two should be paid. It is also important to understand that this is the first day or two on each occasion and is not added up during the year or the quarter or whatever. The Bank is also clear that if further time off is required in relation to the same event then this too should be allowed. For example, time off may be needed at the time of the death of a close relative; further time off will then normally be appropriate to arrange and/or attend the funeral.

Time off after the first day or two should be allowed when needed but may or may not be paid. After the initial emergency has been dealt with further time off may be granted using a mix of:

- **further paid leave,**
- **unpaid leave,**
- **annual holiday or**
- **additional Parental Leave (only in cases involving dependant children).**

Decisions over how much further paid leave is appropriate will be at the discretion of the manager involved.

Only in cases of long-term illness requiring regular and frequent time off (the Bank suggests periods over six months) will it be appropriate to look at any change to an individual's contracted work pattern.

## LTU Advice

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**NICK HOLT**

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