

**From:** Brian Collins – Deputy Leader of the Council

Ben Watts – Deputy Chief Executive

**To:** Personnel Committee – 25 March 2026

**Subject:** Fostering Friendly Leave

**Classification:** Unrestricted

---

**Summary:** This paper sets out a proposal to introduce a paid special leave entitlement for eligible employees who foster for Kent Fostering, including approved kinship (connected persons) foster carers.

**Recommendation:** Personnel Committee is asked to APPROVE the proposal described in section 4, which introduces a special leave entitlement for eligible employees who foster with Kent Fostering, effective from 1st April 2026.

---

## 1. Background

1.1. Kent County Council is a Corporate Parent, meaning all KCC employees share a statutory responsibility for the children and young people in the Council's care.

1.2. Children, Young People and Education lead KCC's corporate parenting approach, with employees across all services contributing to this responsibility. Providing a stable and supportive home environment through in-house fostering is central to meeting these duties.

1.3. Kent continues to experience a reduction in the number of in-house foster carers since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

1.4. In response to this reduction, one of the initiatives explored is how KCC can better encourage employees to consider fostering by enhancing the support available to those who foster. This includes reviewing the employment offer to reduce barriers related to attending assessments, training, panels and early caring responsibilities.

1.5. To support this, CMT has agreed that KCC should adopt the relevant principles of The Fostering Network's Fostering Friendly Employers scheme ([Fostering Friendly Employers Scheme | The Fostering Network](#)).

1.6. A principle of The Fostering Friendly Employers scheme is that employers commit to supporting employees who foster, including through flexible working and a minimum of five days paid time off for training, assessment and helping a child settle into their home (Appendix A).

## 2. Current Employment Offer

2.1. KCC promotes flexible working as a core part of its employment offer, and staff survey results indicate that flexibility is consistently valued by employees.

2.2. At present, there is no dedicated special leave entitlement for employees who are foster carers. Foster carers must rely on personal leave, annual leave, flexi

time or unpaid leave to attend assessments, mandatory training, panel meetings and review meetings, depending on operational pressures.

2.3. These existing provisions do not cover the known time commitments during the fostering assessment and approval process. They also provide no allowance for any additional caring responsibilities once a child has been placed. As a result, employees may find it difficult to balance these responsibilities alongside their work commitments without enhanced provision.

### **3. Rationale for Change**

3.1. Strengthening KCC's in-house fostering offer directly supports the Council's responsibilities as a Corporate Parent. Increasing the number of Kent Fostering carers enables more children to remain within stable, supportive family environments, aligning with KCC's commitment to promoting their wellbeing, providing continuity and improving their long-term outcomes.

3.2. Increasing the number of inhouse foster carers will reduce the Council's reliance on higher cost Independent Fostering Agencies and residential placements for children in care.

3.3. While employees can use flexible working and personal leave to manage fostering commitments, these arrangements do not cover the time required for the assessment and approval process. Personal leave may also be exhausted before a child is placed, leaving no provision to support future caring responsibilities.

3.4. Introducing a dedicated special leave entitlement would provide structured support for employees who foster. This reinforces the commitment all KCC employees have as Corporate Parents, recognising the vital role foster carers play in providing high quality inhouse placements. It also strengthens KCC's employment offer, supporting the recruitment and retention of foster carers and enabling employees to meet their fostering responsibilities alongside work commitments.

3.5. This approach aligns with The Fostering Network's Fostering Friendly Employers scheme and reinforces KCC's commitment as a Corporate Parent by formally recognising the support provided to employees who foster, while also encouraging more employees to consider fostering.

### **4. Proposal**

4.1. It is proposed that KCC introduces a special leave entitlement as part of the employment offer for eligible employees who foster for Kent Fostering.

4.2. Employees would be eligible if they are:

- Applying to foster to be a Local Authority foster carer with Kent Fostering
- An approved Kent Fostering foster carer and have a child in their care (or have had a child in their care for 75% of the previous twelve months)
- An approved kinship foster carer with Kent Fostering

4.3. The recommended entitlement for new foster carers is up to 8.5 days paid special leave in their first year only, and would be applied in the following way:

- Up to 3 days for: assessment and training prior to approval as a Kent Local Authority foster carer
- A half day for: Attendance at panel for approval
- Up to 5 days for: attendance at children's review meetings, annual foster carer review meeting and training.

4.4. The recommended entitlement for approved foster carers thereafter is, up to 5 days paid special leave per leave year, and would be applied in the following way:

- Up to 5 days for: attendance at children's review meetings, annual foster carer review meeting and training.

4.5. In order to use the entitlement, employees would be required to provide their Line Manager with evidence of the application to become a foster carer for Kent Fostering or proof of existing registration.

## **5. Recommendation**

5.1. Personnel Committee is asked to APPROVE the proposal described in section 4, which introduces a special leave entitlement for eligible employees who foster with Kent Fostering, effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026.

Report Author: Susie Hunter-Jones

People Policy Manager

Email address: [Susie.Hunter-Jones@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Susie.Hunter-Jones@kent.gov.uk)

Relevant Director: Ben Watts

Deputy Chief Executive

Email address: [Benjamin.Watts@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Benjamin.Watts@kent.gov.uk)

## **Appendices**

Appendix A - *The Fostering Network's* Fostering Friendly Employers scheme