

Leave Of Absence Policy

1. Homes for Change recognises that from time to time individual members may face circumstances that merit a mutually agreed period of leave from membership responsibilities. This is known as a "Leave Of Absence".
2. Meeting membership requirements is a prerequisite to, and an integral part of a member's tenancy agreement. Members must take adequate steps to make time for Co-op responsibilities and prioritise accordingly. An approved Leave Of Absence allows for exceptional circumstances and is a time limited break from duties. Membership and Training Groups will seek to assist members to overcome barriers to activity within the Co-op (e.g. child care responsibilities, skills difficulties) by offering solutions like job shares and/or training.
3. Authorised Leave is appropriate for periods greater than 1 month and less than 6 months and may be necessary for a variety of reasons such as:
 - ill health (mental or physical), hospitalisation or stress related conditions;
 - exceptional work or study commitments;
 - family commitments e.g. pregnancy, caring for family or partners, adoption or new born children, etc.;
 - short break from Co-op duties following a sustained period of Co-op work;
 - bereavement;
 - other exceptional circumstances.
4. Leave may not normally be granted for the following:
 - periods greater than 6 months;
 - personal opposition to Homes for Change ethos and practices and/or subsequent inactivity;
 - failure to give adequate grounds for leave.
5. "Other exceptional circumstances", circumstances warranting indefinite periods of leave (e.g. critical long term health problems), and extensions to existing Leaves Of Absence will be considered by the closed session of the General Meeting or Management Committee Meeting.
6. In all cases members will be encouraged to re-engage with the Co-op at the earliest opportunity.

Procedure

1. Applications for Leave Of Absence must be put in writing to Membership Group at the earliest opportunity stating the dates of and the reasons for the requested leave. Retrospective leave periods will be accepted only in exceptional circumstances.
2. Membership Group may request evidence of grounds for Leave (e.g. medical evidence). Failure to provide relevant evidence may be taken into account.
3. Membership Group will make a decision according to the Policy and inform the member of the outcome in writing.

4. Members will be asked to make alternative arrangements for their Co-op responsibilities with their respective coordinator during the agreed leave period. Membership and Training Groups can assist.
5. If the application is for "other exceptional circumstances", for a period greater than 6 months or for an extension to an existing Leave Of Absence, Membership Group will make a recommendation but the final decision is taken at the closed session of the General Meeting or Management Committee Meeting.
6. If a Leave Of Absence is declined by Membership Group the applicant may submit an appeal to Membership Group. This will be dealt with by the closed session of the following General Meeting or Management Committee Meeting.
7. If the appeal is not successful the member will be expected to meet membership requirements. Failure to meet membership requirements will lead to normal measures to ensure full participation.
8. Members must make contact with Homes for Change when the period of Leave is due to end in order to restart participation in the Co-op. Failure to re-engage in the running of the Co-op following the end of a Leave period will be treated as a breach of membership requirements. This may result in expulsion from membership and termination of your tenancy (if applicable).