NIHR guidance for family related leave (maternity, paternity, adoption) and sick leave for Research Training Awards

Introduction

This document outlines NIHR’s position on how periods of family related leave and sick leave within NIHR research training awards should be managed, including the responsibilities for covering the costs incurred. For clarity all these types of leave are collectively referred to as leave in the rest of this document, note this does not include annual leave. This guidance covers all NIHR personal training awards as well Academic Clinical Fellowship (ACF) and Clinical Lectureship (CL) posts funded by the NIHR Integrated Academic Training (IAT) programme.

Extending award duration

If during the course of undertaking a NIHR research training award a trainee has a period of required leave, the award will be paused for the period of time the trainee is on leave. This includes any periods of accrued annual leave which are tagged onto the end or start of a period of leave. Guidance on how to inform NIHR of a period of leave, for trainees undertaking a personal training award e.g. a Fellowship, should be sought from NIHR via tccawards@nihr.ac.uk. Once a trainee returns from a period of leave the end date of the award will be extended by the period of time the trainee was on leave (including any accrued annual leave taken as part of the period of maternity leave). The guidance highlighted above explains the process for doing this. ACF and CL trainees should contact their Health Education England (HEE) local office in the first instance.

Leave Related Pay including Maternity Pay

An NIHR training award covers the salary of the trainee (in addition to other costs depending on the type of award) for a set period time. As stated above if a trainee has a period of leave (e.g. maternity leave), the end date of the award will be changed to reflect this, to ensure the total time spent on a particular award totals the period of time originally awarded.

Pay associated with leave is the responsibility of the Host Organisation. HEIs can draw on indirect costs, and NHS bodies on Research Capability Funding (RCF), to cover the costs of leave pay for NIHR trainees.

Whilst pay itself is the responsibility of Host Organisations, if total salary costs increase compared to the costs originally budgeted for (as a result of the end date changing and hence additional increments and pay awards being incurred), NIHR will cover the difference. This doesn't cover the scenario of a trainee gaining a promotion during the course of an award, where the resulting salary increase must be covered by the Host Organisation.
Any other additional pay or salary costs incurred as a result of a trainee taking a period of leave, that can't be covered from the budget of the award, may be claimed from NIHR, provided the Host Organisation can demonstrate that it can't meet these costs from any other sources. For example, from indirect costs, RCF or the allocated budget for ACF and CL posts managed at the HEE local office in the case of IAT posts. This includes any additional costs which may be incurred as a result of implementing NIHR’s principle on the retention of occupational benefits for clinical academics moving between the NHS and a HEI or vice versa, further details of which can be found here (https://wellcome.ac.uk/sites/default/files/ClinicalPrinciples_and_Obligations_170112.pdf) and within clause 7.7 of the NIHR contract https://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding-and-support/funding-for-training-and-career-development/training-programmes/useful-information-for-applicants/). In this particular case the Host Organisation, or IAT Partnership, would need to fully demonstrate to NIHR the impact of implementing this principle on the costs they are incurring, compared to the costs they would normally expect to incur.

**Additional research costs**

Where a period of leave has resulted in an increase in research costs over and above the total amount originally budgeted for, NIHR will consider covering these additional costs on a case by case basis.

**Support post costs**

As with the trainee, the costs of leave pay for any support post on a research training award is the responsibility of the Host Organisation. Unlike the case with a trainee, should a support post undertake a period of maternity leave the end date of the training award will not be changed. Back fill for the support post can be covered from the award budget provided the total costs incurred for support staff doesn't exceed the values stipulated in the award contract. In cases where the support post contract exceeds the length of the training award, due to the support post having been on maternity leave, then the continuing salary costs incurred beyond the end of the training award are the responsibility of the Host Organisation. Host Organisations are able to draw on RCF or indirect costs to cover these costs.