

M I L B A N K G R O U P

Family Leave

A Guide for Managers

Maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental leave and more. What you need to know when a colleague tells you they are starting or growing their family.

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Why this guide exists

When someone in your team tells you they are pregnant, adopting, or about to become a parent, your reaction matters. It sets the tone for the whole experience.

Family leave can feel complicated - there are different types, different pay rates, different notice periods, and different rules depending on the situation. You do not need to memorise all of this. You just need to know the key things to say and do, and where to point people for the detail.

This guide covers maternity, paternity/partner, adoption, shared parental leave, and the additional support Milbank offers. It is designed to give you confidence, not turn you into a policy expert.

What Milbank offers - at a glance

Leave type	Time off - statutory	Enhanced pay (eligible employees)
Maternity	Up to 52 weeks	13 weeks at 100% + 13 weeks at 50% + remainder at SMP
Paternity / partner	Up to 2 weeks	Up to 4 weeks at 100% pay
Adoption / surrogacy	Up to 52 weeks	13 weeks at 100% + 13 weeks at 50% + remainder at SAP
Shared parental	Up to 50 weeks shared	Statutory rate (ShPP)
Antenatal (partner)	Up to 2 appointments	2 appointments paid (statutory is unpaid - Milbank enhancement)

The full detail - including eligibility, notice requirements and pay calculations - is in the relevant policy.

When a colleague tells you

The first conversation is the most important one. It does not need to be long. It does need to be warm.

Step by step - the first conversation

1. **Congratulate them.** Be genuinely pleased for them. This is good news.
2. **Ask how they are feeling.** Some people are excited. Some are anxious. Some are both. Let them lead.
3. **Reassure them.** Their job is safe. Their career is not affected. They will be supported.
4. **Ask about confidentiality.** When would they like the team to know? Let them decide the timing.

5. Point them to your local contact. They will walk them through entitlements, pay, and paperwork. You do not need to do this yourself.
6. Start thinking about cover. Not now, not in this conversation - but in the weeks ahead. Plan early so it does not fall on their shoulders.

What to say - and what not to say

These apply whether the colleague is pregnant, their partner is pregnant, or they are adopting.

Say this	Not this
<i>Congratulations! That is wonderful news.</i>	<i>Are you sure you can afford to take that much time off?</i>
<i>Take whatever time you need to get things sorted.</i>	<i>We are really going to struggle without you.</i>
<i>Your job will be here when you get back.</i>	<i>I hope you are not planning to go part-time when you come back.</i>
<i>Let me know when you are ready to talk about how we manage coverage.</i>	<i>Was it planned?</i>
<i>How are you feeling about everything?</i>	<i>You will need to train your replacement before you go.</i>
<i>The People Team can walk you through all the details.</i>	<i>So when are you coming back?</i>

While they are away

Keeping in touch

Colleagues on maternity or adoption leave can work up to 10 Keeping in Touch (KIT) days by agreement. These are optional - for both sides. Nobody can be pressured into working a KIT day, and nobody should be penalised for declining.

KIT days can be useful for training, team events, or just staying connected. Agree the purpose in advance and confirm pay arrangements with your payroll team.

Outside of KIT days, agree what kind of contact works. Some people want to stay in the loop. Some want space. Ask, and follow their lead.

Things to watch for

Do not make assumptions about their return. They may come back full-time, part-time, or request flexible working. Wait for them to tell you.

Do not restructure them out. If you are reorganising while they are on leave, they have specific legal protections.

Keep them informed about big changes. Redundancy consultations, site moves, team restructures - they have a right to know.

Treat all types of family leave equally. Paternity, adoption and surrogacy leave deserve the same respect and support as maternity. Do not treat any leave type as less important.

Supporting the return to work

Coming back after family leave is a big adjustment. Your colleague may be sleep-deprived, anxious, or emotional. They may also be excited to be back. Probably all of these at once.

Conversation starters for the return

"How are you doing? Is there anything I can do to make the first few weeks easier?"

"Would you like a catch-up before your first day back to go through what has changed?"

"Is there anything about your hours or workload we should look at for now?"

"If you need to express milk during the day, we can sort out a private space and break times."

Practical things to think about

Risk assessment: if the colleague is returning from maternity leave, check whether a new or returning parent risk assessment is needed for their role.

Breastfeeding: colleagues who are breastfeeding or expressing are entitled to a suitable, private space (not a toilet) and reasonable break times. Arrange this before they return.

Flexible working: they may request flexible working on their return. This is a day-one right. Treat the request seriously and discuss it with the People Team.

Childcare emergencies: in the early months, last-minute childcare issues will happen. Be understanding. Time off for dependants applies.

Looking after yourself

Managing a team member's family leave - covering their work, fielding questions from the team, handling the paperwork - can be stressful. That is normal.

If you are finding it difficult, talk to your own manager. You do not have to carry this alone.

Quick reference - when it happens

Keep this page somewhere you can find it quickly.

Your checklist

1. Congratulate them. Be warm. Be pleased.
2. Ask about confidentiality - when do they want the team to know?
3. Point to your local contact for entitlements, pay and paperwork.
4. Start planning cover early. Do not leave it on their shoulders.
5. Agree KIT days if they want them. Do not pressure.
6. Stay in touch during leave - on their terms.
7. Before they return: arrange a catch-up, check risk assessments, sort breastfeeding space if needed.
8. On return: be patient, be flexible, check in regularly.
9. If you are unsure about anything please ask

Policies referenced: Maternity & Paternity/Partner Leave / Enhanced Adoption Leave / Shared Parental Leave / Antenatal Appointments (Partners/Fathers) / Flexible Working / Neo-natal Leave