

Maternity & Paternity / Partner Leave Policy

Our approach

Having a baby, or welcoming a child into your family, is one of the biggest moments of your life. We want to make sure you feel supported - before, during and after.

This policy covers maternity leave, paternity/partner leave, and the pay you will receive. We go beyond the statutory minimum because we believe the first weeks and months with your child matter.

The practical details - notice periods, paperwork, pay calculations - are all set out below. But the most important thing is this: speak to your manager as early as you feel comfortable, and we will guide you through everything.

Maternity leave

Your entitlement

You can take up to 52 weeks of maternity leave. This is made up of 26 weeks of Ordinary Maternity Leave and 26 weeks of Additional Maternity Leave.

You are entitled to maternity leave from your first day with us. It does not matter how long you have been here.

By law, you must take at least two weeks off immediately after the birth. If you work in a factory environment, this is four weeks.

When maternity leave can start

You can start your maternity leave at any point from 11 weeks before your expected week of childbirth (EWC).

If you are off work because of a pregnancy-related illness in the four weeks before your EWC, your maternity leave will start automatically from the first day of that absence.

Letting us know

We need to know three things, by the end of the 15th week before your EWC:

- That you are pregnant
- Your expected week of childbirth
- When you would like your maternity leave to start

You will also need to give us your MATB1 certificate from your midwife or GP when it is available.

Once we have this information, we will write to you within 28 days to confirm your expected return date. If you want to change your start date, just give us 28 days' notice.

Changing your mind about when to start or return

If you want to change your leave start date, let us know at least 28 days before either the original date or the new date - whichever is earlier.

If you want to come back earlier than planned, give us at least eight weeks' notice. We will always do our best to accommodate you, but we may need the notice period to arrange things.

Maternity pay

Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)

You will receive SMP if you:

- Have at least 26 weeks of continuous service with us by the 15th week before your EWC
- Earn at least the lower earnings limit for National Insurance

SMP is paid for up to 39 weeks:

- The first 6 weeks: 90% of your average weekly earnings
- The remaining 33 weeks: the statutory flat rate (or 90% of your average weekly earnings if that is lower)

If you do not qualify for SMP, you may be able to claim Maternity Allowance from the Government. We will let you know if this applies to you.

Enhanced Maternity Pay

We offer enhanced maternity pay because we believe statutory payments do not always reflect the reality of family life.

If you have at least one year of continuous service by the 15th week before your EWC, you will receive:

- 13 weeks at 100% of your normal pay
- 13 weeks at 50% of your normal pay
- The remaining weeks at SMP (or 90% of average weekly earnings if lower)

Enhanced maternity pay is inclusive of SMP. It is paid through normal payroll and subject to tax and National Insurance.

If you do not have one year's service, you will receive SMP only (if you meet the eligibility criteria above).

While you are on leave

Your terms and conditions

While you are on maternity leave, all your normal terms and conditions continue - apart from pay, which is covered above. This includes your contractual benefits, annual leave accrual, and pension contributions (on actual pay received).

Keeping in touch

You can work up to 10 Keeping in Touch (KIT) days during your maternity leave if you and your manager both agree. KIT days are completely optional - nobody can pressure you into working one, and you will not be penalised for saying no.

KIT days can be useful for training, team events, or just staying connected. They allow you to work without ending your leave or losing your pay. You will receive your full contractual pay for the hours worked, topping up any statutory maternity pay. If you would like to use them, agree the purpose and pay arrangements with your manager and the People Team in advance.

Outside of KIT days, we will stay in touch on your terms. Some people want regular updates. Some prefer space. Let your manager know what works for you.

Annual leave

You continue to accrue annual leave while you are on maternity leave. If you are unable to take it during the current leave year, we will work with you to carry it forward or take it before or after your leave.

Coming back to work

You have the right to return to the same job, on the same terms and conditions, if you take 26 weeks of maternity leave or less.

If you take more than 26 weeks, you still have the right to return to the same job - unless it is genuinely not reasonably practicable, in which case we will offer you a suitable alternative on terms no less favourable.

You do not need to give formal notice of your return if you are coming back on the expected date we confirmed. If you want to come back earlier, please give us at least eight weeks' notice.

If you decide not to return

If you decide during your maternity leave that you do not want to come back, please let us know as soon as you can. You will need to give your contractual notice period. Your maternity leave and pay are not affected by your decision - you are entitled to them regardless.

Health and safety during pregnancy

Once you tell us you are pregnant, we will carry out a risk assessment of your role. If there are any risks to you or your baby, we will take steps to remove or reduce them - this might mean adjusting your duties, changing your working conditions, or offering you suitable alternative work.

You are entitled to reasonable paid time off for antenatal appointments. This is a day-one right. Just let your manager know in advance.

Paternity / partner leave

This section applies if your partner is having a baby, or if you are the partner of someone who is adopting. It does not matter whether you are the father, the mother's partner, or a same-sex partner - if you expect to have responsibility for the child's upbringing, this leave is for you.

Your entitlement

You can take up to two weeks of paternity/partner leave. You can take it as one block of two weeks, or as two separate blocks of one week.

This leave is available from your first day with us. You do not need any minimum length of service.

Leave must be taken within 52 weeks of the birth or placement.

Letting us know

For a birth: let us know by the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

For an adoption: let us know within seven days of the official matching notification, or as soon as reasonably practicable.

Paternity / partner pay

Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) is paid at the statutory flat rate (or 90% of your average weekly earnings if lower) for up to two weeks. You need 26 weeks of continuous service by the 15th week before the EWC to qualify.

We offer enhanced paternity/partner pay to eligible employees:

- Up to 4 weeks at 100% of your normal pay (inclusive of any SPP)

To be eligible for enhanced pay, you will need at least one year of continuous service by the 15th week before the EWC or the matching notification date.

Your right to return

You have the right to return to the same job, on the same terms and conditions.

Shared parental leave

If you and your partner want to share the leave between you, you may be able to use shared parental leave. This allows the mother or primary adopter to end their maternity or adoption leave early and share the remaining weeks with their partner.

Shared parental leave is complex and the rules depend on your circumstances. More information is in our Shared Parental leave policy. If you are interested, please speak to the People Team and we will talk you through how it works and what you are entitled to.

Questions

If anything in this policy is unclear, or if you want to talk through your options, please speak to your manager in the first instance. We are here to help - and we would always rather you asked than worried.

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