



October 2021

Maternity Policy

Policy Statement

The organisation's policy is to comply with both the letter and spirit of the law on maternity leave and statutory maternity pay. To this end its aim is to inform all female employees of their entitlement to statutory maternity rights and to ensure that those rights are understood by employees who qualify.

Procedure

Maternity Leave

1. A pregnant employee is entitled to 52 weeks' maternity leave, regardless of her length of service, consisting of 26 weeks' ordinary maternity leave followed by 26 weeks' additional maternity leave provided that she complies with the notification requirements set out below.
2. An employee must notify the line manager of her pregnancy no later than the end of the 15th week before her baby is due if this is reasonably practicable. She should state her expected week of childbirth and the date on which she intends to start her maternity leave. It is advisable to do this as early as possible, however, so that any potential health and safety issues can be considered.
3. Pregnant employees are entitled to paid time off for antenatal care as advised by a doctor, midwife or health visitor. The organisation may ask to see an appointment card after the first appointment. Employees whose partners are pregnant are also entitled to time off work (unpaid) to accompany the pregnant woman to two antenatal appointments (each of no more than 6.5 hours).
4. Once a manager has been informed about or has become aware of an employee's pregnancy, the employee should be referred to Laura Foster who will check her entitlement. Laura Foster will reply to the employee in writing within 28 days and confirm her expected return-to-work date if she takes the full entitlement to maternity leave (ie 52 weeks).
5. The employee must provide medical evidence of her expected week of childbirth in the form of a maternity certificate, form MAT B1, available from the employee's doctor or midwife after the 20th week of pregnancy. It must be forwarded to Laura Foster as soon as possible, but no later than three weeks after the start of the maternity pay period (MPP). No statutory maternity pay (SMP) will be payable without this certificate.
6. A pregnant employee may continue working as close to her EWC as she wishes provided she continues to be in good health and capable of doing her job. If, however, a pregnant employee is absent from work for a reason connected with pregnancy within four weeks of the EWC, the organisation has the right to trigger her maternity leave immediately.

7. The organisation will carry out risk assessments to assess any possible risks to new and expectant mothers. Where the organisation feels there may be a risk, it will take all reasonable steps to eliminate that risk and to warn the employee of the potential dangers. This may include changing the employee's working conditions, or providing suitable alternative work on substantially similar terms, where possible.
8. To qualify for statutory maternity leave and statutory maternity pay (SMP) the employee must:
 - a. tell Julie Partridge and Laura Foster that she is pregnant
 - b. inform Laura Foster of her expected week of childbirth
 - c. give notice to Laura Foster of when she intends to start her maternity leave by the end of the 15th week before the EWC. If the employee changes her mind at a later date, she is entitled to do so, but must inform Laura Foster of the revised start date at least 28 days before that date.
 - d. in the case of a premature birth, she must advise Laura Foster of that fact as soon as is reasonably practicable and produce a MAT B2 form, obtainable from her doctor or midwife.
 - e. to qualify for SMP, she must have at least 26 weeks' continuous service (regardless of number of hours worked per week) by the end of the qualifying week (which is the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (EWC)). Her average weekly earnings over the eight-week period up to the end of the qualifying week must be over the lower earnings limit for National Insurance purposes.

If the above criteria are not met the organisation can refuse to pay the employee's SMP. In this instance, Laura Foster will provide a written statement outlining the decision and the reasons supporting the decision.

9. The maximum entitlement to SMP is 39 weeks' pay. Employees will receive higher rate SMP in respect of the first six weeks (90% of average earnings) and the lower flat rate of SMP for the remaining entitlement (or 90% of average earnings where this is lower).
10. During both ordinary and additional maternity leave the contract of employment continues as normal, except for any terms relating to remuneration.
11. During maternity leave, the employer will maintain contact with the employee in order to keep her informed of developments in the workplace and to discuss (at an appropriate time) her plans to return to work.
12. The employer may, at its discretion, offer an employee on maternity leave the opportunity to work for up to 10 "keeping in touch" (KIT) days. These days may be either separate days or one or more blocks of several days. Examples include the opportunity to attend a relevant training course or to attend a departmental meeting. An employee offered such work is under no obligation to agree to do it. If, however, she does agree, her manager will discuss with her the terms of the work assignment including what she will be paid. Agreeing to work for up to 10 KIT days will not affect the employee's SMP entitlement, nor her entitlement to continue on maternity leave until the due return date.
13. In the event that an employee suffers a miscarriage before 24 weeks of pregnancy, there will no longer be a right to take maternity leave. It may be that an employee needs some time off work in these circumstances and this will usually be taken as sick leave, during which the organisation's sickness absence policy will apply. If the employee suffers a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy, entitlement to maternity leave and pay will not be affected and the employee will still be able to take the time off, and

receive pay, as planned. From 6 April 2020, parental bereavement leave is also available for employees who suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy. More information on this entitlement is available in our separate policy on Parental Bereavement Leave.

An employee who:

- a. is taken into legal custody, or
- b. works for another employer

during the MPP must notify the organisation as soon as possible, as her entitlement to SMP may be affected.

Returning to Work after Maternity Leave

1. An employee returning to work during or at the end of ordinary maternity leave has the right to return to the same job as the one she had before she commenced her leave.
2. An employee returning to work from additional maternity leave is entitled to return to the job in which she was employed before her maternity leave period began unless that is not reasonably practicable; in this case the organisation is obliged to offer her a suitable alternative job on terms and conditions that are just as, or more, favourable to her as those of the previous job.
3. If an employee wishes to return to work before completion of her full 52 week maternity leave entitlement she will need to give eight weeks' advance notice of the date on which she intends to return.
4. If the employee does not give the correct notice, the organisation is entitled to postpone her return to work until the correct notice has been provided (but will not postpone her return beyond the date her full maternity leave entitlement would have come to an end in any case).
5. An employee may not return to work within two weeks of having given birth, which is the compulsory maternity leave period.
6. If the employee is ill and therefore not able to return on the due date, she must notify Laura Foster and the organisation's sickness absence policy and procedure will apply.
7. Where the employee does not wish to return after her maternity leave, she must give notice of resignation as provided for in her contract of employment.
8. If an employee wishes to return to work immediately after the end of her full maternity leave entitlement she is not required by law to give advance notice. However, in order to enable the organisation to plan effectively for her return, it would be helpful if she could let the organisation know that she intends to do so.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Policy review date: _____