Maternity Leave and Pay Policy

We endeavour to ensure all women are given support and encouragement before, during, and on their return to work from maternity leave.

All employees taking maternity leave are covered by this policy.

For the most up to date information about your maternity pay and leave entitlement please visit Maternity pay and leave: Pay - GOV.UK.

Notification requirements

Please notify us as soon as possible of your pregnancy to enable us to ensure that, where appropriate, any reasonable steps are taken to safeguard the safety of yourself and your unborn child.

To qualify for maternity leave we require that you provide us with written notification by the Qualifying Week (15th week before your Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC)), or as soon as reasonably practicable after this, of the following information:

- your pregnancy;
- your Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC); and
- the date you wish to start your ordinary maternity leave period, which can be any time from the 11th week before the EWC.

You should also give your maternity certificate (MATB1) issued by your doctor or midwife to your manager. You will normally be provided with this at around the 20-week stage.

Once you have notified your manager of your intended start date maternity leave, we will confirm, in writing, the date that we expect you to return to work after additional maternity leave has ended. This confirmation will be sent to you within 28 days of your notification.

An informal meeting will then be arranged with your manager to discuss your entitlements and the organisational processes involved. The meeting will include discussions on the following points:

- the amount of leave you can take to wish to take and the payment arrangements;
- the information that we will need from you to process your maternity leave;
- paid time off for ante-natal appointments;
- risk assessments to ensure your role does not pose a risk to your, or your baby's, health and safety;
- your right to return after maternity leave to the same or a similar role; and
- the opportunity to request flexible working and how a request should be made.

To ensure good communication and a smooth transition in the time leading up to maternity leave, and during the leave itself, you will be informed of the arrangements for covering your work and for remaining in contact whilst you are on leave.

We would like to keep you fully informed of any news or developments at work during your leave and we will continue to send you information on social events etc.

Health and safety

So that we may assess any potential risk that your role poses to your or your baby's health and safety, you must notify your manager as soon as you are aware that you are pregnant. A Health and Safety Risk Assessment will be undertaken and action taken to eliminate any risk.

Please speak with your manager immediately if you are worried about your own health and safety at any time.

Time off for ante-natal appointments

You are entitled to a reasonable amount of paid time off during normal working hours to receive ante-natal care. Ante-natal care can include medical examinations, relaxation classes and parent-craft classes as advised by a medical practitioner. Time off will be provided for any time spent travelling to and from these appointments, including any waiting time.

Other than for the first appointment, you may be asked to provide an appointment card to your manager to confirm the details of the appointment.

You will receive full pay for the time taken to attend these appointments.

You should try to give your manager, and the person who arranges the staff schedules for your centre (if relevant), as much notice as possible of antenatal appointments and, wherever possible, try to arrange them near to the start or end of your working day.

Fertility treatment

If you need time off work to undergo fertility treatment (or because your partner is undergoing fertility treatment), you should discuss this with your manager. Time off can be taken as annual leave or, alternatively, unpaid leave may be authorised, or a form of temporary flexible working may be approved, subject to the needs of the business.

If you require such time off you should inform your manager as soon as the plans have been confirmed; provide a statement from a qualified medical practitioner that fertility treatment has been recommended and approved; and, if requested, produce an appointment card for each occasion on which time off is required. Where possible, appointments should be made for times that will cause the minimum disruption to the working day, and you should provide as much notice as possible of the time off is required.

Length of maternity leave

Subject to meeting the notification requirements set out above, you are entitled to 52 weeks' maternity leave.

Unless you notify us that you wish to take a shorter period, we will automatically assume you are taking your full entitlement to 52 weeks and will write to you to confirm your expected return date.

During maternity leave, you remain entitled to receive your normal contractual terms and conditions of employment that you would have received had you not taken this leave, except for remuneration. This will include contractual benefits, subject to the terms of these benefits.

Commencing maternity leave

You can start maternity leave at any time from the beginning of the 11th week before the EWC until the date of birth. You are required to inform of us of the date you intend to start leave however you may change this date so long as you provide at least 28 days' notice of this change. Any application for a date change should be made in writing to your manager.

Compulsory maternity leave commences on the day after the childbirth occurs. Its purpose is to ensure that you have at least a two-week period of leave (or four weeks for factory workers) after the birth of your baby.

There are two incidences in which the maternity leave period is triggered automatically:

1. Where childbirth occurs before you had planned to begin you maternity leave. If this occurs, please notify us, in writing as soon as is reasonably practicable after the birth, of the date on which you gave birth. Your maternity leave period will begin automatically on the day following the date of the birth.
2. Where you are absent from work, wholly or partly due to your pregnancy, after the beginning of the fourth week before the EWC. If this occurs, please notify us, in writing as soon as you can. In these circumstances, we may require that your maternity leave period begins on the day following the first day of such absence.

Once you have notified us that your maternity leave has been triggered due to premature absence or premature childbirth, we will confirm, in writing, within 28 days, the date that we expect you to return to work at the end of this period of leave.

Shared parental leave

You may be entitled to take shared parental leave and you should refer to our shared parental leave policy for further information on entitlements, eligibility and notice requirements.

Maternity pay

Dependent upon your length of service, you may be entitled to receive statutory maternity pay (SMP). Details of the most up to date details on amounts of SMP you may be entitled to receive can be found at Maternity pay and leave: Pay - GOV.UK

If you do not qualify for such a payment, you may, dependent upon your circumstances, be eligible to receive state maternity allowance (MA). Details of how to apply for MA can be found at Maternity Allowance: Overview - GOV.UK.

Keeping in touch (KIT) days

You may, by mutual agreement, work for up to 10 days during your maternity leave period (but not during the compulsory maternity leave period) without losing statutory payments for that week or ending your entitlement to leave. Payment for KIT days will be discussed and agreed in advance of these being worked.

For this purpose, any work carried out on any day, even just an hour's work, is deemed to constitute "a day's work". Any days' work done under this provision will not have the effect of extending the total duration of the maternity leave period.

Stillbirth & miscarriage

Losing a child is one of the most difficult experiences anyone can undergo. PACE will treat this with the utmost compassion and sensitivity. Information about the amount of pay or leave you may be able to take in these circumstances can be found at Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay and Leave: Overview - GOV.UK

You might also want to request some time for compassionate leave or to take a period of annual/unpaid leave. These options are also available to the partner of someone who has a miscarriage. We will consider all requests sympathetically.

Holidays

You will continue to accrue holidays whilst you are on maternity leave. As these holidays cannot be taken whilst you are on maternity leave, it is important for us to discuss and agree the arrangements for the taking of these holidays.

We encourage you to take at least some of your annual leave before you return to work. If your working pattern allows you can speak with your manager about gradually reducing your hours before your maternity leave starts and/or returning gradually e.g. working 3 days/week and taking 2 days annual leave for the month before your maternity leave starts. If you cannot request this leave through the usual leave process, please email your manager and copy Human Resources.

If you cannot take all your remaining leave you ask to be paid for your outstanding leave and/or you can carry forward all your days into the next year leave. However, you will not be able to carry these days forward in the subsequent year, so we advise planning your leave with your manager as early as possible.

Returning to work

If you return to work after a period of maternity leave, you are entitled to return to the same job in which you were employed before your absence. Where this is not reasonably practicable, you will be entitled to return to a suitable and appropriate job on terms that are no less favourable.

Unless you state otherwise, it will be automatically assumed that you will return to work at the end of your full 52 week leave period. So that we may make effective plans for your return, we would be grateful if you would contact us shortly before your return. However, there is no obligation on you to do so unless you wish to change the date of your return, in which case you must give us eight weeks' notice.

If you qualify for shared parental leave and wish to return early from maternity leave for this purpose, you must also give us eight weeks' notice. You can find more information on this in our shared parental leave policy.

You may be invited to attend an informal meeting with your manager to discuss any arrangements regarding your return to work. This is likely to take place approximately two weeks before your return. The following points will be discussed at this meeting:

- any developments that have taken place at work;
- any appropriate training to take place; and
- any flexible working arrangements which have been agreed.

If you decide that you do not wish to return to work after your maternity leave, you are required to give us notice of your resignation. Your notice period to resign is set out in your contract of employment.

If you are unable to return on the agreed date due to sickness, please inform your manager immediately.

Flexible working

We recognise that women returning from maternity leave may wish to reduce their working hours or undertake homeworking.

We will make every effort to accommodate requests for part time working, provided that your duties can still be effectively carried out on such a basis. However, we must also consider the needs of the business when assessing and granting any requests.

Any flexible working request should be made in line with the process set out in the Flexible Working Policy.

Redundancy and pregnancy/maternity leave

If a redundancy situation occurs during your pregnancy or Maternity Leave, we will let you know about the proposals and involve you in any consultation process. We will invite you to a meeting before any final decision is reached regarding redundancies.

During your pregnancy and for a period of 18 months following the birth of your child, you have the right of first refusal on any suitable alternative vacancies.