

OUR POLICY ON UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE

What's this policy about?

This policy explains the right for working parents to take unpaid planned time off work (Unpaid Parental Leave), to care for or spend time with their children. This is a legal right for parents with at least one year's continuous employment with us.

Your entitlement is for up to 18 weeks' Unpaid Parental Leave per child during the period up to their 18th birthday, and periods of Unpaid Parental Leave taken with other employers count towards the 18 week limit.

In this policy, we explain your entitlement and the process for asking to take this sort of time off work. We also want to make it clear that no-one will be subjected to any form of detriment for taking or seeking to take Unpaid Parental Leave under this policy.

Is this policy part of my contract of employment?

No, and we can change this policy at any time, but if any changes are made, we'll always make you aware of them. We may also vary things like time limits, if we feel we need to.

Who's covered by this policy?

This policy applies to all employees. It doesn't apply to workers, agency workers, consultants or contractors.

Who's responsible for this policy?

While we ask all managers to take responsibility for making sure this policy is complied with, its successful operation also depends on you. Please take the time to read and understand it, and to go back to your manager with any questions you may have.

What isn't covered by this policy?

This policy does NOT apply to:

- Shared Parental Leave, which is a separate right for new parents and adopters to take leave during the first year after your child is born or placed with you for adoption, and is covered by our Shared Parental Leave Policy, or
- short periods of unpaid leave you may need to take in an emergency, to deal with an immediate crisis in relation to your child, which is covered by our

Time Off for Dependants Policy.

Who's entitled to Unpaid Parental Leave (UPL)?

There are three conditions for taking UPL:

- you have worked for us for a continuous period of at least one year by the time you want to take the time off,
- you have responsibility for the child you want to care for or spend time with, which means that you:
 - are your child's biological mother or father (whether or not you're living with your child), or
 - are your child's adoptive parent, or
 - otherwise have legal parental responsibility for your child – this might be perhaps because you're their guardian, or a step-parent who has a parental responsibility agreement or parental responsibility order, and
- you want to take the leave to spend time with or otherwise care for your child.

How much UPL can I take and when?

If you satisfy those three conditions, you can ask to take up to 18 weeks' UPL.

Any other period of UPL you've taken already, including with any other employer, gets deducted from your 18-week entitlement. Please let your manager know the details of any UPL previously taken.

You can't take more than four weeks' UPL in a year in relation to each child. A year, for these purposes, starts from the date you became entitled to take UPL in relation to that child.

You need to take UPL in blocks of at least a week, and to ask for periods of a whole number of weeks, unless you're taking the leave in relation to a disabled child.

For the purposes of this policy, a disabled child means a child who is entitled to any of the following:

- a disability living allowance,
- an armed forces independence allowance, or
- a personal independence payment.

You can only take UPL before your child's 18th birthday.

Telling us you want to take UPL

When you want to take UPL you need to tell your manager. It would be helpful if you can give this notice in writing. We need at least 21 days' notice, as follows.

- If you want to take UPL starting immediately on the birth of your child, you'll need to give us notice at least 21 days before the start of the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC). In your notice, please tell us the EWC and how long you want to take off.
- If you want to take UPL starting immediately on the adoption of your child, you'll need to give us notice at least 21 days before the start of the Expected

Week of Placement (EWP). If this isn't possible, please give as much notice as you can. In your notice, please tell us the EWP and how long you want to take off.

- If you want to take UPL immediately after a period of Paternity Leave, please give your manager notice of that at least 21 days before the start of the EWC (or EWP, if adopting). If this isn't possible, please give as much notice as you can. If you don't give notice at least seven days before your period of Paternity Leave starts, we might not be able to let you take the UPL you've asked for, but we will consider each case on its merits.
- In all other circumstances, you'll need to give us notice that you want to take UPL at least 21 days before you want the leave to start. In your notice, please tell us how long you want to take off, with the dates when you want your leave to start and end.

What evidence we'll need from you

Before taking UPL, we'll need to see some evidence from you that you are responsible for your child, or expect to be responsible, as well as your child's date of birth or date of adoption placement. This could be a birth certificate, an adoption or matching certificate, a parental responsibility agreement or a court order.

If your child is disabled, we'll need to see some evidence, preferably in writing, of their entitlement to a disability living allowance, armed forces independence allowance or personal independence payment.

For details of what evidence is required in your particular circumstances, or if you have difficulties obtaining the evidence, please talk to your manager.

Our right to postpone UPL in some situations

We hope that we won't have to do this, but there may be some situations where, for business or operational reasons, we'll need to ask you to postpone your UPL.

We definitely won't postpone UPL in the following situations:

- where you've given us notice in accordance with this policy to take UPL on the birth or adoption of your child, or
- where the postponement would result in your UPL being taken after your child's 18th birthday.

However, in other circumstances we might need to postpone your proposed UPL for up to six months, where it would otherwise unduly disrupt our business or operations. Examples include where:

- you want to take UPL during a peak period of work,
- a number of employees want to take leave at the same time,
- your work at that time is of importance to a time-critical project, or
- cover for your work can't be found before the date on which your UPL is due to start.

If we do need to postpone your UPL we'll consult with you about possible alternative dates. We'll give you written notice of why we need to postpone the UPL no more than seven days after receiving your notice asking to take UPL. In our notice, we'll also give you the new start and end dates of the UPL that we can let

you take.

Terms and conditions during UPL

UPL under this policy is unpaid. This means that the provisions in your contract relating to pay and benefits are suspended while you're on UPL.

However, during UPL you will be entitled to benefit from any contractual terms you have in relation to being given notice, redundancy compensation and disciplinary and grievance procedures.

Also, you'll continue to accrue holiday entitlement.

And finally, you'll remain bound by your obligation of good faith towards us, as well as any contractual terms relating to the giving of notice, the disclosure of confidential information, the acceptance of gifts and benefits, and your freedom to participate in another business (for example, by working for a third party).

Pensions

There are a couple of points to mention about pensions:

- If you're a member of a defined benefit (final salary) pension scheme, a period of UPL will count towards your pensionable service, and
- If you're a member of a defined contribution (money purchase) pension scheme, we won't make contributions during a period of UPL.

Returning to work

Normally, at the end of UPL, you'll be entitled to return to work in the same position you held before starting UPL, and your terms of employment will be the same as they would have been had you not been absent.

However, there are a couple of situations where it might not be possible for us to allow you to return to the same position at the end of UPL. These are:

- where your UPL has been longer than four weeks, or
- where you've combined UPL with a period of additional Maternity, Paternity, Adoption or Shared Parental Leave.

In these situations, you can be reassured that we'll offer you a suitable and appropriate alternative position on no less favourable terms.

If you want to change your working patterns (such as working part-time) after UPL, you'll need to make a request under our Flexible Working Policy and we'll consider it on a case-by-case basis. Please make this sort of request as early as possible, and we'll try to accommodate it unless there's a justifiable reason for refusing, based on the needs of our business or operations.

Abuse of this policy

In the unlikely event that any employee takes a period of UPL under this policy for purposes other than spending time with or otherwise caring for their child, this will be dealt with as a disciplinary issue under our Disciplinary Procedure.

And that's it... for now

We understand that things change, so we'll continue to review the effectiveness of

this policy and make sure it's achieving its objectives.