

# MATERNITY POLICY

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## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 This policy outlines the statutory rights and responsibilities of employees who are pregnant or have recently given birth, and sets out the arrangements for antenatal care, pregnancy-related sickness, health and safety, maternity leave and the return to work afterwards.
- 1.2 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time. We may also vary elements, such as any time limits, as appropriate in any case.

## 2. WHO IS COVERED BY THIS POLICY?

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees. It does not apply to workers, agency workers, consultants or contractors.
- 2.2 We are inclusive of all parents, irrespective of the means of becoming a parent, sexual orientations and gender identities. See our Adoption Policy for support available for adoptive parents.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 The definitions in this section apply in this policy:

**Expected Week of Childbirth:** the week, starting on a Sunday, in which your doctor or midwife expects you to give birth.

**Qualifying Week:** the 15th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth.

## 4. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS POLICY?

- 4.1 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. We also ask you to support colleagues who are pregnant or new mothers to ensure the success of this policy.

## 5. NOTIFICATION

- 5.1 You must inform us as soon as possible that you are pregnant. This is important as there may be health and safety considerations (see section 9, Health and safety).
- 5.2 Before the end of the Qualifying Week, or as soon as reasonably practical afterwards, you must tell us:
  - a) that you are pregnant,
  - b) the Expected Week of Childbirth, and
  - c) the date on which you would like to start your Maternity Leave (Intended Start Date) (see section 11, Starting Maternity Leave).
- 5.3 You must provide a certificate from a doctor or midwife (usually on a

MAT B1 form) confirming your Expected Week of Childbirth.

## **6. TIME OFF FOR ANTENATAL CARE**

- 6.1 While you are pregnant you may take reasonable paid time off during working hours for antenatal care. You should try to give us as much notice as possible of your appointments.
- 6.2 We may ask you to provide the following, unless it is the first appointment:
  - a) a certificate from the doctor, midwife or health visitor stating that you are pregnant, and
  - b) an appointment card.

## **7. SICKNESS**

- 7.1 Periods of pregnancy-related sickness absence shall be paid in accordance with your contract of employment in the same manner as any other sickness absence.
- 7.2 Periods of pregnancy-related sickness absence from the start of your pregnancy until the end of your Maternity Leave will be recorded separately from other sickness records and will be disregarded in any future employment-related decisions.
- 7.3 If you are absent for a pregnancy-related reason at any time during the four weeks before your Expected Week of Childbirth, your Maternity Leave will usually start automatically (see section 11 Starting Maternity Leave).

## **8. MAT B1 FORM**

- 8.1 You should provide your manager with a copy of your MAT B1 form once you receive this, this is usually issued between weeks 20 and 25.
- 8.2 The MAT B1 form will enable you to claim Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), assuming you meet the relevant criteria, it will also verify the pregnancy and confirm your anticipated due date.

## **9. HEALTH AND SAFETY**

- 9.1 We have a general duty to take care of the health and safety of all employees. We are also required to carry out a risk assessment to assess the workplace risks to women who are pregnant, have given birth within the last six months or are still breastfeeding.
- 9.2 Once you have notified us that you are pregnant, we will carry out a risk assessment and will provide you with information as to any risks identified in the risk assessment, and any preventive and protective measures that have been or will be taken. If we consider that, as a new or expectant mother, you would be exposed to health hazards in carrying out your normal work we will take such steps as are necessary (for as long as they are necessary) to avoid those risks. This may involve:
  - a) changing your working conditions or hours of work,
  - b) offering you suitable alternative work on terms and conditions

- that are the same or not substantially less favourable, or
- c) suspending you from duties, which will be on full pay unless you have unreasonably refused suitable alternative work.

## **10. ENTITLEMENT TO MATERNITY LEAVE**

- 10.1 All employees are entitled to up to 52 weeks' Maternity Leave which is divided into:
  - a) Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML) for the first 26 weeks, and
  - b) Additional Maternity Leave (AML) of a further 26 weeks immediately following OML.

## **11. STARTING MATERNITY LEAVE**

- 11.1 The earliest date you can start Maternity Leave is 11 weeks before the Expected Week of Childbirth (unless your child is born prematurely before that date).
- 11.2 You must notify us of your Intended Start Date in accordance with section 5. We will then write to you within 28 days to inform you of the date we will expect you to return to work if you take your full entitlement to Maternity Leave (Expected Return Date).
- 11.3 You can postpone or bring forward your Intended Start Date by informing us in writing at least 28 days before the original Intended Start Date, or if that is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable.
- 11.4 Maternity Leave shall start on the earlier of:
  - a) your Intended Start Date (if notified to us in accordance with this policy),
  - b) the day after any day on which you are absent for a pregnancy-related reason during the four weeks before the Expected Week of Childbirth, or
  - c) the day after you give birth.
- 11.5 If you are absent for a pregnancy-related reason during the four weeks before the Expected Week of Childbirth, you must let us know as soon as possible in writing. Maternity leave will be triggered under section 11.4(b) unless we agree to delay it.
- 11.6 If you give birth before your Maternity Leave was due to start, you must let us know the date of the birth in writing as soon as possible.
- 11.7 The law prohibits you from working during the two weeks following childbirth (or four weeks if you work in a factory environment).
- 11.8 Shortly before your Maternity Leave starts, we will discuss with you the arrangements for covering your work and the opportunities for you to remain in contact, should you wish to do so, during your leave.

## **12. EARLY BIRTHS**

- 12.1 If your baby is born early you will still be entitled to your full Maternity Leave and pay; these will automatically start on the day after you give birth.

## 13. STATUTORY MATERNITY PAY

- 13.1 Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) is payable for up to 39 weeks of your Maternity Leave. SMP will stop being payable if you return to work (except where you are simply keeping in touch in accordance with section 18). You are entitled to SMP if:
- a) you have been continuously employed by us for at least 26 weeks at the end of the Qualifying Week and are still employed by us during that week,
  - b) your average weekly earnings during the eight weeks ending with the Qualifying Week (the Relevant Period) are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the Government,
  - c) you provide us with a doctor's or midwife's certificate (MAT B1 form) stating your Expected Week of Childbirth,
  - d) you give at least 28 days' notice (or, if that is not possible, as much notice as you can) of your intention to take Maternity Leave, and
  - e) you are still pregnant 11 weeks before the start of the Expected Week of Childbirth or have already given birth.
- 13.2 SMP is calculated as follows.
- a) First six weeks: SMP is paid at the Earnings-Related Rate of 90% of your average weekly earnings calculated over the Relevant Period.
  - b) Remaining 33 weeks: SMP is paid at the Prescribed Rate, which is set by the Government for the relevant tax year, or the Earnings-Related Rate if this is lower.
  - c) After 39 weeks: Maternity Leave is unpaid.
- 13.3 SMP accrues from the day on which you commence your OML and thereafter at the end of each complete week of absence. SMP payments shall be made on the next normal payroll date, and income tax, National Insurance and pension contributions shall be deducted as appropriate.
- 13.4 You shall still be eligible for SMP if you leave employment for any reason after the start of the Qualifying Week (for example, if you resign or are made redundant). In such cases, if your Maternity Leave has not already begun, SMP shall start to accrue on whichever is the later of:
- a) the Sunday of the week following the week in which employment ends. or
  - b) the Sunday of the 11th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth.
- 13.5 If you become eligible for a pay rise before the end of your Maternity Leave, you will be treated for SMP purposes as if the pay rise had applied throughout the Relevant Period. This means that your SMP will be recalculated and increased retrospectively, or that you may

qualify for SMP if you did not previously qualify. We shall pay you a lump sum to make up the difference between any SMP already paid and the amount payable by virtue of the pay rise. Any future SMP payments at the Earnings-Related Rate (if any) will also be increased as necessary.

## **14. TERMS AND CONDITIONS DURING OML AND AML**

- 14.1 All the terms and conditions of your employment remain in force during OML and AML, except for the terms relating to pay. In particular:
- a) benefits in kind shall continue,
  - b) annual leave entitlement under your contract shall continue to accrue (see section 15, Annual leave), and
  - c) pension benefits shall continue (see section 16, Pensions).

## **15. ANNUAL LEAVE**

- 15.1 During OML and AML, annual leave, including bank holidays, will accrue at the rate provided under your contract.
- 15.2 In many cases, a period of Maternity Leave will last beyond the end of the holiday year. Any annual leave for the year that cannot reasonably be taken before starting your Maternity Leave can be carried over to the next holiday year and must be taken immediately before returning to work, unless your manager agrees otherwise. You should try to limit carry-over to one week's holiday or less. Carry-over of more than one week is at your manager's discretion.
- 15.3 Please discuss your holiday plans with your manager in good time before starting your Maternity Leave. All holiday dates are subject to approval by your manager.

## **16. PENSIONS**

- 16.1 During OML and any further period of paid Maternity Leave, we shall continue to make any employer contributions that we usually make into the relevant pension scheme applicable to your employment, providing that you continue to make contributions based on the SMP you are receiving.
- 16.2 During unpaid AML we shall not make any payments into the relevant pension scheme applicable to your employment. You do not have to make any contributions, but you may do so if you wish, or you may make up for missed contributions at a later date.

## **17. REDUNDANCIES DURING MATERNITY LEAVE**

- 17.1 In the event that your post is affected by a redundancy situation occurring during your Maternity Leave, we shall write to inform you of any proposals and shall invite you to a meeting before any final decision is reached regarding your continued employment. Employees on Maternity Leave shall be given first refusal on any suitable alternative vacancies that are appropriate to their skills.

## **18. KEEPING IN TOUCH**

- 18.1 We may make reasonable contact with you from time to time during your Maternity Leave.
- 18.2 You may work (including attending training) for up to ten 'keeping in touch' days (KIT days) during Maternity Leave without bringing your Maternity Leave or SMP to an end. KIT days are not compulsory and must be discussed and mutually agreed in advance with your manager. In any case, you must not work in the two weeks following birth (or four weeks if you work in a factory environment).
- 18.3 You will be paid at your normal basic rate of pay for time spent working on a KIT day, and this will be inclusive of any maternity pay entitlement. Alternatively, you may agree with your manager to receive the equivalent paid time off in lieu.

## **19. RETURNING TO WORK**

- 19.1 Once you have notified us in writing of your Intended Start Date, we shall send you a letter within 28 days to inform you of your Expected Return Date. If your Intended Start Date has changed (either because you gave us notice to change it, or because Maternity Leave started early due to illness or premature childbirth), we shall write to you within 28 days of the start of Maternity Leave with a revised Expected Return Date.
- 19.2 We will expect you back at work on your Expected Return Date unless you tell us otherwise. It will help us if, during your Maternity Leave, you are able to confirm that you will be returning to work as expected.
- 19.3 Support will be offered during the leave period to maintain contact, facilitate returning to work and ensure employees do not face discrimination or disadvantage for future career advancement.
- 19.4 Shortly before you are due to return to work, we may invite you to have a discussion (whether in person or by telephone) about the arrangements for your return. This may cover:
  - a) updating you on any changes that have occurred during your absence,
  - b) any training needs you might have, and
  - c) any changes to working arrangements (for example, if you have made a request to work part-time; see sections 24, Your rights when you return, and 25, Returning to work part-time).

## **20. RETURNING EARLY**

- 20.1 If you wish to return to work earlier than the Expected Return Date, you must give us at least eight weeks' prior notice. It is helpful if you give this notice in writing.
- 20.2 If not enough notice is given, we may postpone your return date until eight weeks after you gave notice, or to the Expected Return Date if sooner.

## **21. RETURNING LATE**

- 21.1 If you wish to return later than the Expected Return Date, you should either:
- a) request Unpaid Parental Leave in accordance with our Unpaid Parental Leave Policy, giving us as much notice as possible but not less than 21 days, or
  - b) request paid annual leave in accordance with your contract, which will be at our discretion.
- 21.2 If you are unable to return to work due to sickness or injury, this will be treated as sickness absence and our Sickness Absence Policy will apply.
- 21.3 In any other case, late return will be treated as unauthorised absence.

## **22. DECIDING NOT TO RETURN**

- 22.1 If you do not intend to return to work, or are unsure, it is helpful if you discuss this with us as early as possible. If you decide not to return, you should give notice of resignation in accordance with your contract. The amount of Maternity Leave left to run when you give notice must be at least equal to your contractual notice period, otherwise we may require you to return to work for the remainder of the notice period.
- 22.2 Once you have given notice that you will not be returning to work, you cannot change your mind without our agreement.
- 22.3 This does not affect your right to receive SMP.

## **23. SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE**

- 23.1 If you wish to return to work and transfer part of your Maternity Leave to the baby's father or your partner, then this should be done using Shared Parental Leave (SPL), which is a form of leave available to working parents following the birth or adoption of a child. To use SPL you would need first to give us at least eight weeks' notice to end your Maternity Leave. Please refer to the separate Shared Parental Leave Policy for details.

## **24. YOUR RIGHTS WHEN YOU RETURN**

- 24.1 We do not tolerate discrimination in the workplace against people who have taken parental or carers' leave.
- 24.2 You are normally entitled to return to work in the same position as you held before commencing leave. Your terms of employment shall be the same as they would have been had you not been absent.
- 24.3 However, if you have taken any period of AML or have combined your Maternity Leave with more than four weeks' Unpaid Parental Leave, and it is not reasonably practicable for us to allow you to return into the same position, we may give you another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable.
- 24.4 You may take reasonable paid leave during work hours to attend



post-natal appointments as necessary. You should try to give us as much notice as possible of your appointments.

- 24.5 We will promote working environments that promote breastfeeding, including by ensuring adequate time, space and flexibility for breastfeeding mothers.

## **25. RETURNING TO WORK PART-TIME**

- 25.1 We will deal with any requests by employees to change their working patterns (such as working part-time) after Maternity Leave on a case-by-case basis. There is no absolute right to insist on working part-time, but you do have a statutory right to request flexible working, and we will try to accommodate your wishes unless there is a justifiable reason for refusal, bearing in mind the needs of our business or operations. It is helpful if requests are made as early as possible. The procedure for dealing with such requests is set out in our Flexible Working Policy.

## **26. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

- 26.1 We will monitor staff usage of leave and analyse leave usage by gender.
- 26.2 We will continue to review the effectiveness of this policy to ensure it is achieving its stated objectives.