

Parental Leave Procedure

1. Introduction

This document defines the policy and procedure to be followed in respect of Parental Leave.

Employees have the right to take unpaid time off to look after a child or to make arrangements for a child's welfare for which they have parental responsibility.

2. Parental Leave

Employees must take the leave for the purpose of caring for a child, although it is not necessary for the employee to live with the child in order to qualify for Parental Leave.

Employees are entitled to Parental Leave if they have a child under the age of eighteen, and the employee satisfies the following conditions:

- Have a minimum of one year's continuous service
- Named on the child's birth certificate; or
- Named on the child's adoption certificate; or
- Has formal parental responsibility of a child who is under the age of eighteen

The natural mother of a child automatically has parental responsibility.

Step parents may acquire parental responsibility for their partner's child either by adoption or by means of an agreement between the step parent and both natural parents (or by making an application to a court in the event of a disagreement). Without such an agreement, a step parent will not automatically have the right to Parental Leave.

Foster Parents do not have a right to Parental Leave.

Employees are entitled to 18 weeks Parental Leave for each child up until their 18th birthday i.e. in the case of twins 36 weeks leave may be taken.

Parental leave may only be taken in blocks of one week or more, up to a maximum of four weeks in any year for each eligible child. Employees with disabled children may take leave in odd days.

Employees may only take Parental Leave:

- Before the child's eighteenth birthday; or
- Before the eighteenth anniversary of placement or the child's 18th birthday (whichever is earliest) in the case of an adopted child.

All periods of Parental Leave are unpaid.

Employees may be asked to provide documentary evidence confirming entitlement, which could include:

- a) The child's birth certificate
- b) Paper's confirming the child's adoption or date of placement

Parental Leave cannot be transferred between parents.

Employees must submit a request for Parental Leave to the Supervisor / Line Manager, with at least 21 days' notice of the date on which the employee wishes to start their Parental Leave.

Employees wishing to take Parental Leave from the date of the child's birth or adoption must specify the week in which the birth or placement is expected, along with the start date and duration of the intended period of leave.

The company may postpone a requested period of Parental Leave for up to six months if it is felt that the period of leave would disrupt the business, except if the period of Parental Leave is intended to begin on the day the child is born or placed for adoption, in which case there can be no postponement.

Employees may request to take a period of Parental Leave at the end of maternity or adoption leave; however, the company may postpone this request if necessary, if it is felt that the period of leave would disrupt the business.

3. Continuation of benefits

Any period of authorised Parental Leave counts towards the employee's continuous employment. Service qualification with respect to company Sick Pay, Life Assurance, Holiday and Notice Entitlement continues to accrue during this period.

4. Returning to work after Parental Leave

Employees have the right to return to work after Parental Leave whether employment is of a temporary or permanent status and irrespective of length of service and hours of work.

If a period of Parental Leave is longer than four weeks, or if it has followed a period of Additional Maternity Leave/ Paternity Leave/ Adoption Leave, employees will be entitled to return to a suitable and appropriate job on the same terms and conditions.

A Parental Leave Request Form is available from the Human Resources Department.

5. Questions & Answers

a) Can I take more than four weeks off in one year?

No, there is no legal right to allow anyone to take more than four weeks parental leave in one year.

b) What can I do if I do not qualify for Parental Leave

You may be able to take annual or unpaid leave. You will need to discuss this with your Supervisor / Line Manager in the first instance.