

## Maternity Leave

### Guide for employees

This guide provides information for employees going on maternity leave from when they notify their manager of their pregnancy to their return to work after Maternity Leave.

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#### Getting help

Contact your manager if you have any queries about this guide.

Managers can obtain advice by:

Calling the HR Services Advice Centre on 0845 6060603 / 5456 7100

Managers working for Parcelforce Worldwide should call 0845 6042787 / 5456 4747

For web access please go to: <https://www.psp.royalmailgroup.com>



# Maternity Leave

## Guide for employees

### Overview

Royal Mail Group wants to provide employees with a positive experience when they have a family. We also want to help and support employees during their pregnancy, maternity leave and return to the workplace.

This guide provides information to employees on the process for taking maternity leave; when to let their manager know they are pregnant; their entitlement to maternity leave and pay; keeping in touch during maternity leave and returning to work following leave.

This should be read in conjunction with the Maternity Leave Policy.

### Notification of the pregnancy

We would encourage women to talk to their manager at an early stage of their pregnancy. There are benefits in doing so as it allows for a discussion about support at work through their pregnancy and the opportunity to talk about their maternity plans.

There are some issues the manager should discuss with the woman, including time off for ante-natal appointments; availability of Occupational Health advice and support; key steps leading up to maternity leave; and agreeing dates for review meetings during the pregnancy. The new or expectant mothers' risk assessment should be completed at the end of the meeting (see section below).

### Support for expectant mothers

#### New or expectant mothers' risk assessment

The assessment is used to identify any hazards which may pose a health and safety risk to the expectant mother and should be regularly reviewed and updated where necessary until the start of the maternity leave. Where required the manager can seek advice from the Occupational Health Service (see below for contact details).

Where adjustments to the workplace, job content, or working hours are agreed they should be recorded, and reviewed on a regular basis.

Further information can be found on the Safety Intranet site. [Expectant mother risk assessment](#).

### Key steps leading up to maternity leave

#### Time off for antenatal care

If possible, antenatal appointments should be arranged outside work hours. Where this is not possible, managers should be flexible in making arrangements to allow attendance as pregnant women have a legal right to paid time off to attend antenatal care.

#### Occupational Health advice

If the manager requires occupational health advice they can contact the Occupational Health Service Medical Helpdesk on 0845 612 4123.

Where the manager needs specific advice on the expectant mother's health, they should ask for the woman's verbal consent for referral to the Occupational Health Service.

If the woman feels unable to talk to their manager about a health issue they can contact the First Class Support Employee Assistance Programme on 0800 6888 777. This is a confidential service which provides practical advice.

## Review meetings

There are benefits for both the expectant mother and their manager in having regular review meetings. It is an opportunity to review working arrangements, answer any questions and, if required, review the risk assessment.

Where there are any adjustments required to the role, these should be made, where reasonable. This will allow the expectant mother to continue working until the maternity leave is due to start.

There may be times when the expectant mother is unable to come to work due to pregnancy related or other illness. This should be managed through the Attendance Policy. Advice on the treatment of these absences can be found in the Attendance Guide.

## Preparing for maternity leave

Before the woman starts her maternity leave, the manager should meet with her to discuss preparations for her maternity leave.

The discussion should cover:

- How the employee's job is going to be covered during their maternity leave
- The start date of the maternity leave and potential future work plans
- Clarify their maternity leave and pay entitlements
- How contact will be maintained and how often
- The information that will be shared during their maternity leave
- Keeping in touch days
- Annual holiday

## Maternity leave

Women who are expecting a child have some basic legal rights to maternity leave and pay. Royal Mail Group also supports eligible employees with additional pay. These entitlements are explained in full in a table in Maternity Leave Policy.

### Eligibility

All pregnant women are eligible for maternity leave from their first day of employment.

Women must however:

- Notify their manager of the pregnancy no later than 15 weeks before their baby is due or as soon as is reasonable practicable
- Notify their manager of the date the baby is due (expected week of childbirth)
- Provide the manager with a MAT B1 form which is a certificate from a doctor or midwife confirming the expected week of childbirth. A MAT B1 form can be requested from week 20 of the pregnancy
- Inform their manager of the date on which they intend to start maternity leave

### Starting Maternity Leave

- The earliest that maternity leave can start is 11 weeks before the week in which the woman is expected to give birth
- Women should advise their manager of any changes to the start of their maternity leave at least 28 days before the new start date or as soon as is reasonably practicable
- Pregnancy related absences may result in the maternity leave starting earlier than originally arranged. In such circumstances maternity leave can start four

weeks before the expected week of child birth

### Maternity leave and pay

Statutory maternity leave is the period of time that all pregnant women are entitled to from the first day of employment.

This period is made up of Ordinary Maternity leave for 26 weeks and Additional Maternity Leave for 26 weeks.

The first two weeks are compulsory leave where women cannot return to work, however they can return before the end of the 52 week period.

### Pay and benefits Contractual terms and conditions

All terms and conditions of the employee's contract continue with the exception of normal pay (See the Maternity Leave and Pay table in the Maternity Leave Policy for details of pay).

### Annual Holiday Entitlement

	<b>Weeks 1 – 52 of Maternity Leave</b>
<b>Annual holiday entitlement (Pro rata for part timers)</b>	<b>Paid leave accrued:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Contractual annual holiday</li><li>• Bank/public holiday</li></ul>
<b>Taking annual holiday</b>	<b>The woman can take her annual holiday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Before maternity leave period starts</li><li>• After maternity leave period ends</li></ul> <b>She cannot take annual holiday:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During maternity leave or between ordinary and additional maternity leave</li></ul>
<b>Carrying over annual holiday</b>	Can be carried over to the following annual holiday year.

### Pensions

- Pension contributions remain the same for weeks 1 – 39 when maternity leave is paid if the woman is eligible
- No pension's contributions are paid for weeks 40 – 52 when maternity leave is unpaid
- If the woman wishes to pay any missed contributions they should contact the Pensions Helpline on 0114 2414545 or Postline 5456 4545

### Company cars

- Cars will continue to be provided during all statutory periods of maternity leave (including those paid at SMP only)
- If an employee has opted not to have a company car and they have elected to take the non-pensionable cash supplement, this supplement is treated as pay for purposes of maternity leave and will cease or reduce accordingly

## Work Equipment

- Before going on maternity leave employees with work computers should contact IT and request that files are retained and not automatically archived
- Business laptop computers and mobile phones may be kept during maternity leave; however the cost of all personal calls must be reimbursed

## Save as You Earn (SAYE)

Employees contributing to SAYE Share Scheme will continue to make contributions during Royal Mail paid maternity leave. During statutory or unpaid leave periods, employees will need to contact Equiniti (0800 012 12 13) regarding payments or payment holidays, as their SAYE deductions may not be taken during this period. They will need to arrange either a standing order with Equiniti to continue payments or extend their savings term by up to six months.

## How to apply

The woman should complete the Maternity Leave Request form and give this to their manager at least 15 weeks before they intend to start their leave. If they do not have access to PSP their manager will be able to provide a copy of the request form.

The woman should provide their manager with their MATB1 form (see Eligibility section above).

## Manager's responsibilities

- The manager must take a copy of the MATB1 form to keep on file locally
- The details contained on the MATB1 will need to be entered onto Managing My Team to generate a Maternity Absence Record on PSP
- HR Services Maternity Team will then send the woman a Maternity Entitlement letter to confirm their leave and pay
- Where the woman is not entitled to pay, HR Services will issue her with an SMP1 form which she will need to take to the Department of Work and Pensions in order to confirm whether or not she will be entitled to maternity allowance benefits
- The manager will need to make any changes to the start, finish or return to work dates on the Maternity Absence Record

## Miscarriages and stillbirths

In the unfortunate event of a woman having a miscarriage or stillbirth, the manager should treat the woman sensitively and offer the support of our Occupational Health Service where appropriate. If the miscarriage happened before the end of the 23<sup>rd</sup> week of pregnancy and the woman is absent from work as a result this should be treated as sick absence.

If a stillbirth occurs on or after the 24<sup>th</sup> week of the pregnancy the absence should be treated as maternity leave and maternity rules apply.

## Surrogacy

An employee having a child through either a surrogacy situation or as approved prospective adopters who look after children as part of a "fostering to adopt" arrangement, will be entitled to adoption leave, provided that the employee meets the criteria and can produce a relevant Parental Order issued by the courts proving their parental rights.

## Changes to start dates

If the woman wishes to change their maternity leave start date they will normally need to give 28 days' notice unless this is not reasonably practicable. The amended date should be entered by their manager onto Managing My Team.

## Keeping in touch

HR Services will send an amended Maternity Entitlement letter to the employee.

### Why keep in touch?

When an employee is away from work for a long period of time they can feel isolated and the thought of returning may be daunting. Having a plan to keep in touch helps the employee feel they are valued and will help to make her return to work as easy as possible.

### Information a manager should share

General updates and relevant information including changes in the team.

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- pay rises
- bonuses
- internal vacancies advertised on [www.royalmail.com/myjob](http://www.royalmail.com/myjob) during the maternity leave period
- proposed redundancies or reorganisations

### Keeping in touch (KIT) days

KIT days can be a good way to involve the employee in workplace events and make it easier for them to return to work. The manager should talk about KIT days when agreeing the keeping in touch plan with the employee before maternity leave starts.

Employees on maternity leave may work for up to ten days without bringing their maternity leave period to an end or losing their entitlement to statutory maternity pay.

The employee will be paid for any KIT days attended as follows:

- If receiving full pay then no further pay is due
- If receiving statutory maternity pay then pay will be reduced by the rate of statutory maternity pay
- If they attend while receiving no pay then usual pay will be received (the manager will need to notify HR Services so that pay can be restored for the KIT days)

KIT days can be taken as separate days or in a single block as agreed between the manager and the employee.

The employee is not obliged to complete any KIT days during their maternity leave period, neither is the employee entitled to be offered any work. Therefore thought needs to be given as to the content of KIT days.

Examples of how to use KIT days:

- Invite the employee to attend an important team meeting
- For the employee to meet new team members and be updated on key changes
- To carry out their annual appraisal review

Following the meeting, the employee should complete the Keeping in Touch form and pass this to their manager. Where they do not have access to PSP, their manager should provide the form. The manager should then use the form to create the agreed keeping in touch days through Managing My Team on PSP. The Keeping in Touch form should be kept in the employee's local file.

## Organisational changes during maternity leave

Where organisational changes occur, Royal Mail Group will ensure women on maternity leave are involved in any consultations or other appropriate procedures on the same basis as all other affected employees.

## Returning to work

Women who intend to return to work after maternity leave are encouraged to keep in touch with their manager in order to help with arrangements and preparation for return.

Where the woman wishes to return earlier or later than previously stated, she should contact the manager to agree a new return to work date (using the Return to Work form), providing at least eight weeks' notice. The manager should then amend the return date on PSP.

Where the manager has not heard from the woman eight weeks before the agreed return date, they should make contact and find out if they are still planning to return to work as agreed.

The options available to the woman are:

- Return to work on the agreed date
- Extend their maternity leave if they have not taken their full ordinary and additional leave entitlement
- Apply for parental leave at the end of the maternity leave
- Resign if they do not wish to return to work

If returning to work from ordinary maternity leave the woman has the right to the same job as she held before starting her leave. However where the woman returns to work after a period of additional maternity leave, she is entitled to return to either the same job, or if this is not reasonably practicable, to another suitable job that is on terms and conditions not less favourable than before maternity leave started.

## Shared Parental Leave

Mothers can choose to end their maternity leave and statutory maternity pay early so that the remainder can be shared with their partner as Shared Parental Leave. Up to 50 weeks maternity leave and 37 weeks statutory maternity pay can be shared. See the Shared Parental Leave Policy and Guide for more details.

## Before returning to work

If the woman is returning to work her manager should consider talking to them about return to work arrangements. This discussion could include:

- Talking about the jobs she could return to. If she is considering reducing her hours, or changing working patterns through a flexible working arrangement (see the Flexible Working Policy and Guide)
- Identifying any training required on return to work
- The support available for those with young families, including Childcare Voucher Scheme – reduced childcare costs. More information can be found at [Benefits website](#).

## On return to work

The woman should be welcomed back to work by her manager. The welcome back could include:

- Health and safety induction

- Tour of the office
- Talking about the job role and any training that has been arranged
- Summary of things they have missed while on maternity leave
- The opportunity to raise any questions or concerns
- Making her aware of the childcare voucher scheme

### Resignation

In some cases the woman may make the decision that they do not wish to return to work. She should give written notice of her resignation to her manager, as set out in her contract of employment.

Further information on managing resignations can be found in Leavers Guidelines.

### Breastfeeding

Some returning mothers may still be breastfeeding. Under Health and Safety law Royal Mail Group must provide suitable storage facility for a woman expressing milk. Managers should exercise common sense in meeting this requirement, including allowing the woman suitable privacy to express milk

### Where to go for further Information

The Getting help box on the front page tells you where to find further information

Please also refer to the Policy and Information Site on PSP or HR pages of the intranet (non-PSP users) for further guidance relating to this policy.

Department of Works and Pensions can provide information on:

- Statutory Maternity Pay
- Child Benefit
- Child Trust funds
- Tax Credit
- Child Support

Refer to <https://www.gov.uk/>.

First Class Support is the confidential and independent helpline for all employees- a place to turn to if you have any problems and can be accessed by:

- Calling 0800 6888 777
- Visiting [www.rmgfirstclasssupport.co.uk](http://www.rmgfirstclasssupport.co.uk)