



## Shared Parental Leave Policy

**Date of Policy: May 2025**

**Review: May 2026**

- 1.1 This policy applies to all employees. This includes staff on full-time, part-time, temporary and fixed-term contracts. It doesn't apply to agency workers or to self-employed contractors.
- 1.2 Shared parental leave and pay allows eligible parents to share leave and pay between them in the first year after their child's birth or adoption.

This policy describes:

- who can take shared parental leave
- how shared parental leave works
- by law, what we both need to do before, during and after you take shared parental leave
- how we collect and store personal data when managing shared parental leave

## 2 Who Can Take Shared Parental Leave

### 2.1 If you're expecting a baby with your partner or co-parent.

You and your co-parent might be eligible for shared parental leave if you're:

- having a baby
- using a surrogate to have a baby
- adopting a child
- fostering a child who you're planning to adopt.

To be eligible, you must both:

- share responsibility for the care of the child at the time the child is born or placed with you for adoption or fostering
- meet work and pay criteria

The .gov.uk website has [more information about eligibility](#).

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## How shared parental leave works

Using shared parental leave, you and your co-parent can share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of statutory maternity or adoption pay. You can take up to six months off at the same time or stagger your leave at different times. But you'll need to take it in the year after your child is born or placed with you.

How much shared parental leave you can take depends on how much maternity or adoption leave your co-parent takes. Birth mothers must take a minimum of two weeks' compulsory maternity leave immediately after they give birth. So, if you decide to take shared parental leave, you'll have to wait until two weeks after the baby is born before you can take it.

Fathers and partners can take up to two weeks of paternity leave in any combination of one- or two-week blocks. They can take this leave any time within 52 weeks of the birth or adoption.

If you decide not to take shared parental leave, you may still be entitled to statutory paternity leave and pay. To find out more, please read our paternity leave policy.

The .gov.uk website has [more information about eligibility](#) for paternity pay and leave.

### Example

Sally is entitled to 52 weeks' maternity leave and 39 weeks' statutory maternity pay. She takes 16 weeks' leave and pay. She then chooses to share the remaining 36 weeks' leave and 23 weeks' pay with her partner and co-parent, Alex.

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## Requesting shared parental leave

You can request full blocks of unbroken shared parental leave (known as continuous leave) or blocks of time off mixed with time back at work (known as discontinuous leave).

You must take shared parental leave in complete weeks but can start a block of leave on any day of the week. For example, if you begin a week of

shared parental leave on a Tuesday, it will finish on a Monday. If you return to work between periods of shared parental leave, the next period of leave can start on any day of the week.

#### 4.1 **Continuous leave**

Taking continuous leave means taking a single unbroken period of leave. For example, six weeks off in a row. This must not exceed the total number of weeks of shared parental leave available and you must give eight weeks' notice.

#### 4.2 **Discontinuous leave**

Taking discontinuous leave means taking a set number of weeks of leave, with breaks between the periods of leave where you return to work. For example, taking six weeks of shared parental leave by working every other week for a period of three months.

#### 4.3 **Giving us notice**

You can submit up to three 'notices' for blocks of shared parental leave. You must give us at least eight weeks' notice for each block.

#### 4.4 **Mothers or primary adopters taking shared parental leave**

At least eight weeks before you plan to start taking a block of shared parental leave, you must give us:

- **leave curtailment notice:** this explains that you'll end your maternity or adoption leave and start taking shared parental leave
- **opt-in notice:** this explains that you're entitled to take shared parental leave and intend to take it
- **period of leave notice:** this sets out the start and end dates of your shared parental leave and states whether you intend to claim shared parental pay, if applicable.

#### 4.5 **Co-parents taking shared parental leave**

At least eight weeks before you plan to start taking a block of shared parental leave, you must give us:

- opt-in notice
- period of leave notice.

You can [use these free shared parental leave forms and templates from Acas to give us notice](#).

### **Example**

Clara and her co-parent Sam decide to take 20 weeks of shared parental leave each. Clara ends her maternity leave early, leaving 40 weeks of leave for her and Sam to take as shared parental leave.

Sam gives their employer eight weeks' notice to take all 20 weeks of their leave in one continuous block.

Clara wants to take three blocks of leave over the year. She gives her employer:

- one notice to take 10 weeks of leave from January to March
- a second notice to take five weeks from May to June
- a third notice to take five weeks from August to September.

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### **Providing notice**

Within 14 days of requesting shared parental leave, you'll need to supply the following evidence in writing.

- The name and business address of your partner's employer (or your partner's contact details if they're self-employed or unemployed)
- For biological parents, a copy of your child's birth certificate (or other official paperwork confirming the time and place of birth)
- For parents adopting a child, official documents stating the name and address of the adoption agency, the date on which you were told you'd been matched with a child, and the date on which the agency expects to place the child with you for adoption

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### **Responding to your request**

We'll respond to all shared parental leave requests in writing within 14 days.

We'll carefully consider all requests for discontinuous leave, weighing up the potential benefits and disadvantages for both parties. But we have the right to refuse them.

If we can't accommodate your request for discontinuous leave, we'll invite you to a meeting to discuss:

- the leave proposed
- what will happen while you're away from work
- how the leave proposal could be agreed
- whether a different arrangement would work instead
- what the outcome may be if no agreement is reached.

You can bring a colleague or trade union representative to this meeting.

If we decide to refuse your request, you can either withdraw it within 15 days of giving it, or you can take the leave in a single continuous block. If you withdraw the notice within 15 days, it won't count as one of your three notices.

We'll consider each request on a case-by-case basis. This means that even if we agree to one request, we can't guarantee granting another employee a similar pattern of leave.

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## **Changing or cancelling your request**

You have the right to change or cancel shared parental leave you've booked, as long as you make this request in writing at least eight weeks before:

- you were due to take the leave
- any new start date you're proposing.

This is known as a 'variation notice' and counts as one of the three notices you can give us.

If you need to change your booked leave because your baby's arrived early, or if we request to change your leave, this won't count as one of your three notices. We'll respond to variation notices in writing.

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## **Shared Parental Pay**

You may be entitled to statutory shared parental pay for up to 39 weeks if:

- you've worked continuously for us for at least 26 weeks at the end of the qualifying week (the 15th week before your baby is due)
- your average earnings are equal to or above the lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year.

[Read more about shared parental pay on the gov.uk website.](#)

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## **During Shared Parental Leave**

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### **Keeping in touch**

Before your shared parental leave, your manager will ask you how much contact you'd like to have with work while you're on leave.

For example, you may ask to be sent:

- notes of important meetings
- details of internal vacancies

- details of important announcements
- details of significant changes to the way we work
- details of changes to the team structure
- details of useful training courses.

There may be occasions when we need to contact you, even if you've told us you don't want to be contacted. In these circumstances, we'll only be in touch if there's significant information which might affect you. For example, if we're proposing changes to your job.

#### **8.2 Shared parental leave in touch (SPLIT) days**

You may work up to 20 keeping in touch (KIT) days during your shared parental leave. These are known as 'SPLIT' days.

SPLIT days are in addition to any KIT days you take during maternity leave. SPLIT days aren't compulsory and must be discussed and agreed with your manager. You'll be paid your normal contracted pay for SPLIT days. You won't receive shared parental pay on top of this.

#### **8.3 Impact on contractual benefits**

Your terms and conditions of employment remain unchanged when you take shared parental leave, except for the terms relating to pay. Instead of your usual pay, you'll receive shared parental pay.

When you return to work, you'll receive any pay increase (or other terms and conditions) that you would have received had you been at work.

#### **8.4 Annual leave**

You'll continue to build up annual leave during your shared parental leave. If your shared parental leave will continue into the next holiday year, you can carry over any holiday entitlement that you can't reasonably take before starting your shared parental leave.

Please discuss your holiday plans with your manager in good time before starting shared parental leave. Your manager will need to approve all holiday requests.

#### **8.5 Pension scheme**

If you're a member of the pension scheme, we'll continue to make employer pension contributions while you take shared parental leave, based on your normal salary. Any employee contributions you make will be based on the statutory shared parental pay you receive. Please tell us in writing if you want to make up any shortfall in employee contributions.

## 9 **Returning to work**

### 9.1 **Your return date**

Unless you tell us otherwise, you're expected to return to work the next working day after an agreed period of shared parental leave. If you can't work because you're sick or injured, you'll need to take sick leave.

If you don't return to work when agreed and aren't taking sick leave, we'll record any additional days off as an unauthorised absence. If you decide not to return to work, you'll need to resign by giving notice, as set out in your employment contract.

### 9.2 **Changing your return date**

If you want to end a block of shared parental leave early, you must let us know at least eight weeks before you'd like to return to work. It's helpful to give this notice in writing.

If you've already used your three notices to book and change leave, we might not accept your notice to return early, but we will consider it.

If you want to extend a block of shared parental leave, you must submit a new period of leave notice at least eight weeks before the date you were due to return to work. You can only give this notice if you still have shared parental leave remaining and haven't already submitted three notices. If you're unable to request more shared parental leave, you could request annual leave or ordinary parental leave instead.

### 9.3 **Returning to your job**

If you've taken up to (and including) 26 weeks' combined maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave, you have the right to return to the same job you had before you took your most recent block of leave. This means you'll return to the same terms and conditions of employment.

If you've taken **more than** 26 weeks' combined maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave, and we can't offer you the same role, we'll offer another suitable alternative job instead. The alternative job must have similar or better terms and conditions than your current role.

### 9.4 **Redundancy**

Employees who take shared parental leave are protected from redundancy for 18 months after the birth of their child if they take at least six continuous weeks of shared parental leave.

## 9.5 Requesting a change to your pattern of work

You have the right to request a change to your pattern of work. To find out more, please read our flexible working policy.

The .gov.uk website has [more information about eligibility](#) for flexible working.

## 10 Data protection

When managing your shared parental leave and pay, we process personal data collected under our data protection policy. We store data securely, and only staff who manage your leave and pay will have access to this information.

To find out more, please read our data protection policy.