

Parental Leave Policy for The Methodist Circuit of Gloucestershire

This policy aims to provide details of and guidance on an employee's entitlement to statutory parental leave.

Parental leave may be taken in addition to maternity, paternity, shared parental and adoption leave.

1. Entitlement

1.1 If an employee is a birth or adopted parent, or has parental responsibility for a child, they are entitled to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave for each birth or adopted child for the purpose of caring for their child. The 18 weeks of unpaid leave can be taken up to the child's 18th birthday. The employee must have completed one year's service with the current employer.

1.2 If an employee is the adopted or birth parent or have parental responsibility for a child entitled to receive Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment (for those over 16 years), they are entitled to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave for each child. If the child has disabilities, they can take 18 weeks up to the child's 18th birthday.

This entitlement is subject to the following conditions:

- 52 weeks' service,
- Being the birth or adopted parent of a child or acquiring formal responsibility for a child under the age of 18.

1.3 Only a maximum of four weeks' parental leave can be taken, for any individual child in any one year. The right to a period of unpaid parental leave is available in respect of each child. So, where an employee has, for example, two children under the age of 18, they may take 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave in respect of each of those children. The same applies in cases of multiple births i.e. twins, triplets etc.

1.4 If an employee works on a part-time basis the entitlement is for 18 weeks of their normal working week i.e. pro-rata.

1.5 Any period of parental leave taken with a previous employer for the same child will be taken into account when calculating an employee's entitlement. *NB: There is no legal obligation for previous employers to disclose parental leave records.*

1.6 Parental leave is an individual right and cannot be transferred between parents.

2. Purpose of Parental Leave

2.1 Parental leave can be used for the welfare of children for example to:

- spend more time with their children,
- look at new schools,
- settle children into new childcare arrangements,
- spend more time with family, such as visiting grandparents etc.

This list is not exhaustive.

3. Notifying the employer

3.1 An employee must notify their line manager at least 21 days before either of the following:

- the date on which they intend to start parental leave
- before the beginning of the week in which they expect the child to be placed with them for adoption.

3.2 A Parental Leave Application Form should be completed, signed and sent to the line manager.

3.3 On the first occasion parental leave is requested the employee will be asked to provide evidence of their entitlement, for example their child's birth certificate to prove their child's age and that they have responsibility for that child. In the case of adoption, a Matching Certificate that will be issued to the employee by the authorised adoption agency/local authority.

4. How Much Leave May Be Taken?

4.1 Parental leave may be taken in blocks of at least a week. Other than parents with children who have disabilities, parents do not have the right to take parental leave in single days.

5. Postponing the Commencement of Parental Leave

5.1 In some circumstances the line manager may be unable to agree to an application for parental leave on the specific dates requested due to the particular needs of the Circuit at that time. In these circumstances the line manager will need to discuss the postponement with the employee and alternative dates will need to be mutually agreed. The line manager will need to confirm in writing this change to the employee within seven days of receiving the application. The alternative dates should as far as possible be reasonable within the time frame of the employee's request and their needs.

6. Contractual Conditions

6.1 At the end of a period of parental leave the employee will have the right to return to the same job under their original contract of employment and on the same terms and conditions with no break in continuous service.

6.2 If it is not possible for the employee to return to work at the end of their parental leave period due to any work related issues, they may return as soon as it is practical to do so. This should be discussed and agreed with the line manager/ District Lay Employment Secretary (DLES).

6.3 The employee will be entitled to benefit from any terms and conditions of employment, other than pay, which would apply if they had not been absent on parental leave. If, for example, a pay award takes place during the parental leave period this will be applied on your return.

6.4 The employee will continue to accrue annual leave during parental leave.

7. Pension

7.1 The employee should contact the pension provider directly to get advice and information about arrangements for this period.

8. Employee loans

8.1 If the employee is in receipt of a loan (for example season ticket) they should liaise with the line manager to ensure that the outstanding loan amount is repaid within the agreed time frame. This

should be discussed **before** parental leave commences depending the duration of the parental leave. So for example a week's parental leave may not warrant such a discussion.

9. Communication with Employees

9.1 It is good practice that employees on parental leave are kept informed about significant changes at work. Before parental leave starts (depending on duration), discussions should take place between the line manager and employee as to what contact is appropriate and information can be shared with them during their absence. The employee may prefer not to receive information from the Circuit and this should be mutually agreed, if this is the case and should not lead to any detriment on the part of the employee.

10. Failure to Return to Work

10.1 If the employee fails to return to work at the end of their parental leave and does not provide a written explanation, they will have terminated their contract of employment. The line manager must attempt to make a welfare check and contact the employee and or the next kin by telephone and or email. If there is no response they should write to the employee no later than one week from the date they were expected to return. The letter will request confirmation that the employee is not returning to work and making it clear that failure to reply will be taken as termination of their contract. Line managers should ensure that the DLES is informed as soon as possible when an employee fails to return from parental leave.