**Family Leave - FAQ**

*How should I keep in touch with staff on family leave?*

Every situation is different. Some members of staff will welcome contact and updates, whilst some would prefer to have no contact at all. It is recommended that managers agree with individuals prior to their leave commencing what level of contact they would like, and the best method for then to receive it.

The law does provide for staff to formally keep in touch through paid attendance days at work. The relevant policies confirm entitlements for these. There is no obligation on either party to provide or attend these days, but they can be useful in terms of maintaining contact and making the return to work easier. Again, we recommend discussing these with the individual before leave commences, and ensuring that they are aware of their entitlement.

*Does holiday continue to accrue during family leave?*

Yes. Leave continues to accrue as normal during family leave, and can be taken before or after the leave period. It is a good idea to discuss this prior to the leave commencing. Paid leave cannot be taken during periods of family leave.

*A member of staff wants to take parental leave but it is a busy time operationally. Can I say no?*

If the leave would unduly disrupt the University or have a significant impact on students or colleagues, the manager may require the employee to delay their leave for a maximum of six months. It cannot be refused entirely.

*One of my team has been on family leave, and wants to phase their return to work. Is this possible?*

Yes, if it is operationally feasible. Some members of staff may find it beneficial to return to work on a phased basis to allow them to adapt to balancing work and family, and to help a child settle into new arrangements.

Pay and benefits would be paid on a pro rata basis during this time. It is recommended that the manager discusses this fully with the individual to identify a mutually agreeable.

*A member of staff has been on family leave, but has decided that they do not wish to return to work. What do they need to do?*

The staff member should confirm their resignation in writing, and provide their contractual notice period in accordance with their contract of employment.

*What do I need to do before a member of staff returns from family leave?*

This all depends on how long the individual has been away from work. If they have been away for several months, it is good practice to spend time with them on their return to update them on changes within the University or department. Returning to work after a period away can be daunting for some people, so check in about any required support. If appropriate, re-set any new objectives via the P&DR process. If their work has been covered by another member of staff on a temporary basis, facilitate an appropriate handover. Check if the individual feels that they need any training to refresh their skills. Ensure that logistics are in place, e.g. IT equipment and access etc. Inform colleagues about the date of return.

*I have a member of staff who is going on family leave soon, and has indicated they may want to work flexibly on their return. What do I need to do?*

If the member of staff wishes to make a formal change to their hours or patterns of work, they should make a request for flexible working via the flexible working policy. This can be done prior to the return to work. However, it can benefit both parties to have certainty at an early stage, so if the individual already knows what work pattern they are seeking and you are in a position to consider it, then they can make the request before going on leave. More information is available in our flexible working guidance.

*What about family leave that isn’t planned but is an emergency?*

We have a policy to deal with these kinds of situations. Please see the Special Leave Policy.

*What about family leave for carers?*

An increasing number of people are providing caring responsibilities whilst also balancing work. Carers will be entitled to emergency special leave or to make a flexible working request. Please see the relevant policies for more information.

*I have a member of staff returning from maternity leave who has requested breastfeeding facilities. What should I do?*

Breastfeeding mothers may need to take short breaks during the day in order to express milk. We need to ensure that there is an appropriate place to both express and store milk. Facilities are available – please see our Breastfeeding Guidance for Managers for more information.

*One of my team is pregnant / has a pregnant partner. What time off do I need to provide in advance of their family leave commencing?*

Pregnant employees have a statutory entitlement, regardless of length of service or hours worked, to paid time off during working hours to receive antenatal care.

Partners also have a statutory right to unpaid time off to attend up to two antenatal appointments. Addition appointments are at the discretion of the manager. Another option is to allow partners to work flexibility around the appointments, for example, by making up any hours not worked at another time.

*How do I cover the work of a member of staff taking family leave?*

There are various ways that a position could be covered. It may be possible for other colleagues to cover part of the role, to offer a secondment or to recruit a temporary replacement on a fixed term basis. Discuss this with HR or see our specific guidance on StaffNet.