



## Parental Leave Policy and Procedure

### Introduction

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) prides itself on being an employer of choice. With an incredibly varied role in delivering the very best for our residents, communities and businesses, our employees are committed and really make a difference. In return we seek to support and empower our employees, to give their best.

This policy sets out the circumstances where employees who have parental responsibilities may take unpaid time off work to look after their children who are under 18.

WODC are committed to supporting a positive work-life balance for all our employees and recognise that time with children is important. If you are eligible (see below), you can take ordinary parental leave to care for your child - this may be to look after your child during school holidays, be with them when they are unwell, or enjoy more quality time with them.

This type of parental leave may be particularly useful if you require time off to care for your child but have used up, or are not entitled to, other types of family-friendly leave (see below).

### Other Types of Family-friendly Leave

Ordinary parental leave should not be confused with:

- maternity, paternity and adoption leave; or
- shared parental leave, which enables employees to end their maternity or adoption leave early, and share the untaken balance with their partner.

### Who can take Ordinary Parental Leave?

You can take ordinary parental leave to care for your child if you:

- have a minimum of one year's continuous service with us by the time you take the leave; and
- have, or expect to have, parental responsibility for the child.

If you are unsure if you are entitled to ordinary parental leave, please contact your line manager.

### Amount of Ordinary Parental Leave you can take

You can take up to 18 weeks' unpaid leave for each child, subject to a maximum of four weeks' leave for each child in any one-year period.

You must take ordinary parental leave in blocks of at least one week. However, if your child has a disability, you can take the leave one day at a time (please speak to your line manager to arrange this).

Your entitlement to ordinary parental leave carries over from your previous employment. This means that, if you have taken ordinary parental leave with a previous employer:

- you can take the balance with us, but you must wait until you have worked for us for at least one year; and
- we will ask you about the amount of ordinary parental leave already taken for your child with your previous employers.

If you are unsure how much ordinary parental leave you can take, please contact your line manager in the first instance.

### Notice to take Ordinary Parental Leave

To take ordinary parental leave, you normally need to give your line manager at least 21 days' notice, counting back from the date on which the leave is to start. You should set out the dates on which you wish to take ordinary parental leave.

Fathers (or others who will have parental responsibility) requesting leave to begin when their child is born

You can ask for your leave to begin when your child is born, whether this is earlier or later than expected. In these circumstances, you should give your line manager at least 21 days' notice, counting back from the beginning of the expected week of childbirth.

Your notice should set out the expected week of childbirth and the length of leave you are requesting.

Adopters requesting leave to begin on the child's placement

You can ask for your leave to begin when the child is placed with you for adoption, whether this is earlier or later than expected. In these circumstances, you should give your line manager at least 21 days' notice, counting back from the beginning of the week in which the placement is expected to occur. If 21 days' notice is not possible, please give us notice as soon as you can.

Your notice should set out the week in which the placement is expected to occur and the length of leave you are requesting.

Paternity leave

If you are considering taking ordinary parental leave on the birth of your child (or if you are an adopter, the placement of the child with you for adoption), you should bear in mind that you may also be entitled to two weeks' paid paternity leave.

Paternity leave must normally be taken within 56 days of the child's birth or placement with you for adoption - please see our separate paternity leave policy.

### Evidence to take Ordinary Parental Leave

Your line manager or a director will ask you for evidence to support your request for ordinary parental leave. They will normally ask to see evidence of your child's birth certificate or certificate of adoption.

## Postponing your Ordinary Parental Leave

While our aim is to agree to your request for ordinary parental leave, there are circumstances in which we may need to postpone the start date. We will do this only if your absence would cause undue disruption to our organisation and will give you written notice of the postponement no more than seven days after we received your request.

However, we will never postpone your period of ordinary parental leave if the leave starts on the birth of your child or your child's placement for adoption.

If we postpone your period of ordinary parental leave, your line manager will discuss alternative dates with you to take that period of leave within six months of the first day the postponed leave was due to start.

## While you are on Ordinary Parental Leave

During your leave, all the terms and conditions of your contract, except normal pay, will continue and your continuity of employment is not affected.

This means that, while sums payable by way of salary will cease, all other benefits will remain in place. Annual leave will continue to accrue in the normal way.

During your leave, you continue to be bound by the terms and conditions of your employment. In particular, you should remember that you must not disclose any confidential information/are required to obtain our written consent before working for any other employer.

## Returning to work after Ordinary Parental Leave

If you take an isolated period of ordinary parental leave of four weeks or less, you are entitled to return to the same job you were doing before your absence.

You can also return to your previous job if you take a period of ordinary parental leave of four weeks or less following on immediately from a period (or consecutive periods) of maternity, adoption, paternity and/or shared parental leave (taken in relation to the same child) that did not last more than 26 weeks.

You are entitled to return to your previous job or, if that is not practical for our organisation, to another job that is both suitable and appropriate in the circumstances if you:

- take a period of ordinary parental leave of more than four weeks; or
- take a period of ordinary parental leave of four weeks or less following on immediately from a period (or consecutive periods) of maternity, adoption, paternity and/or shared parental leave (taken in relation to the same child) that lasted more than 26 weeks.

If you are taking ordinary parental leave, and are unsure where you stand on your return, please contact your line manager.

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