



University
of Exeter

Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Policy

Sensitive Content Warning

We know that some parents visiting this page may have a baby in neonatal care or have experienced loss. This page provides information about your rights. If you would prefer to speak to someone regarding neonatal care leave, please contact your HR Advisor.

Introduction

The University recognises the emotional stresses experienced by parents of children requiring additional medical help in the first weeks following birth. We wish to support those employees who are going through this difficult situation. If you have any questions, please contact your line manager or your HR support team.

The purpose of this leave is to ensure that employees who have, or who are adopting babies, who need to receive specialist care in hospital during the first weeks of life can take leave to spend time with them or at a later stage.

The Neonatal Care Leave and Pay legislative regulations are complex and in the light of future interpretation and guidance, the University reserves the right to revise these procedures and guidance. Consequently, these arrangements must be kept flexible to adapt and are not contractual.

Definitions

Neonatal care means care of a medical or palliative kind¹ which lasts for 7 days (consecutively) or more (beginning on the day after care begins) in the first 28 days (beginning with the day after the date of birth).

Medical or palliative

- Any medical care received in hospital (which includes a maternity home, as well as clinics and outpatients' departments)
- Medical care received elsewhere following discharge from an inpatient stay hospital. The care must be under the direction of a consultant and includes ongoing monitoring and visits to the child by healthcare professionals by that hospital; or

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2025/376/contents/made>

- Palliative or end of life care.

Parents mean those that have parental or personal relationship with a child receiving neonatal care, see below.

Birth: You must be:

- The child's parent or,
- the partner of the child's mother, or
- an intended parent of the child, and
- at the time of the child's birth, the person has or expects to have responsibility for the upbringing of the child;

Adoption: You must be

- The child's adopter or,
- The child's overseas adopter or,
- The child's prospective adopter or,
- the partner of the child's adopter or prospective adopter and at the time the child is placed with the adopter or prospective adopter, the person has or expects to have the main responsibility (apart from any responsibility of their partner) for the upbringing of the child, or
- the partner of the child's overseas adopter and at the time of the child's entry into Great Britain, the person has or expects to have the main responsibility (apart from any responsibility of their partner) for the upbringing of the child

Scope and Eligibility

This procedure applies to all eligible employees of the University based in the UK who have a baby born on or after 6th April 2025, who meet the definitions in the definitions section and who have given the correct notice. All our policies to support Parents and Carers apply equally to all staff, including those in same sex relationships.

Leave

Neonatal care leave is a day one right for all eligible employees based in the UK. Both parents can take Neonatal care leave. Neonatal care leave can only be taken to care for the child who received neonatal care.

If eligible, you will be entitled to neonatal care leave for the equivalent number of weeks your baby received neonatal care for with a maximum per parent of 12 weeks and a minimum of 7 days. Please note the leave is equivalent to the weeks of care received, not days.

The first qualifying period of 7 days begins with the day after the day your baby first receives neonatal care (i.e. days 2-8 of neonatal care). Neonatal care Leave can be taken from the day

after the first qualifying period. This means that you are not able to start neonatal leave until day nine.

Neonatal care leave is accrued per child per time so if there are multiple births and they all require neonatal care at different times then this will be added together to a total maximum of 12 weeks. If they require care at the same time, this counts as one child.

If a baby is admitted for a period of more than 7 days and then are readmitted for another period of more than 7 days within the 28 day window, both periods will count towards the total leave allowed.

There are two types of leave: Tier 1 and Tier 2.

Tier 1 leave: Neonatal care leave taken when the baby is in hospital and for 7 days after they stop receiving care. It can be taken in one block or taken as non-consecutive weeks of at least one week.

Tier 2 leave: Neonatal care leave taken any time after 7 days after the baby leaves neonatal care and within 68 weeks of the baby's birth/placement. Tier 2 leave must be taken in consecutive weeks.

Pay

Employees may be eligible for the University Neonatal Care Pay (UNCP), which is the pay that the University pays over and above statutory Neonatal Care Pay (SNCP). Entitlement to the University Neonatal Care Pay will depend on:

- meeting the eligibility requirements set out on the eligibility section above
- giving the appropriate notice and
- returning to work following your leave for a period of at least 3 months (or an equivalent period of time if you reduce your hours).

Neonatal care pay will be paid at your normal weekly rate (if you are eligible to statutory pay then this will be included in the normal pay).

Notifying the University/How to apply

You should notify your line manager and HRA if your baby has been admitted into neonatal care (for at least 7 consecutive days beginning the day after care begins). Click here to [notify human resources](#). This will begin the process to allow you to discuss your options with a member of the human resource advisor team. Under the regulations to make your application (once you know when you want to take the leave) you must give the following notice:

Tier 1 leave: You must notify the university as soon as is reasonably practical and before the first day of absence.

Tier 2 leave:

- a weeks' leave requires 15 days' notice,
- more than a week requires at least 28 days' notice

The notice dates may be able to be waived so we would encourage early discussion with your manager and human resources.

If you wish to withdraw notice, then the same amount of time as above needs to be given, if this is not possible, please do speak to your manager and HRA to discuss options.

If you do not use the link above the following information is needed by the university to process the leave. Request for leave must be given in writing (email) and contain the following, the person claiming leave and pay, the child's date of birth, evidence of adoption, the date the child started to receive neonatal care or dates if more than once, the date it ended (if it has, if it has not this must be followed up when care has ended) and a declaration that you intend to care for the child during the weeks requested and that you meet the eligibility criteria.

When can I take Neonatal Care leave

Maternity and Adoption: your maternity leave will begin as soon as you give birth and your adoption leave as soon as the baby is placed with you. You can only take neonatal care leave after your maternity leave ends. You can amend this date (for further information see the maternity leave pages). Neonatal care leave must all be taken within 68 weeks of the birth/placement and if it is tier 2 leave it must be taken in consecutive weeks.

Paternity, Shared Parental, Parental (unpaid) and Parental Bereavement Leave: these types of leave (due to statutory regulations) allow for more flexibility with how they are taken. These types of leave must all be taken in the way it states in the relevant scheme, and we would encourage you to read these. It might be that you would prefer to take the neonatal care leave before, between or after these other schemes.

Fixed term contracts

If you are employed on a fixed term contract or your employment ends during your neonatal care leave, your employment and payment of university neonatal care leave (UNCP) will end on the expiry date of the fixed term contract or end date of the contract, although Statutory Neonatal Care Pay (SNCP) will continue to be paid, if eligible.

If you are employed on a fixed term contract, your employment and payment of University Family Friendly Pay will end on the expiry date of the fixed term contract, although Statutory Pay will continue to be paid if eligible.

Before Leave

Annual leave: You are advised to take as much outstanding leave as possible before the start of your leave, however you should discuss your leave arrangements with your line manager and clarify and record the agreement made with them.

As a minimum, you are required to take the annual leave you have accrued up to the date you commence your leave (with the exception of paternity/partner leave due to its length), eg if you wish to commence your leave on 1 February, you should have taken 1/12th of your leave entitlement. However, your manager may agree to allow you to take more than the period accrued up to the start of your leave.

During leave

Annual Leave: You will continue to accrue annual leave during the period of maternity, adoption, shared parental leave and neonatal care leave which can be taken when your maternity, adoption and shared parental leave finishes, and you return to work.

Leave should be taken within the year in which it is accrued, except in those circumstances where your period of maternity, adoption, shared parental leave and neonatal care leave continues into the next calendar year (and, therefore, a new annual leave year). In such cases, any outstanding leave may be carried forward to the following year, providing it is taken in full, immediately following the period of maternity, adoption, shared parental leave and neonatal care leave.

Payment in lieu of annual leave cannot be made. During your maternity, adoption, shared parental leave and neonatal care leave, bank holidays and closure days that fall on days you would have worked, will be marked as 'not taken' in Trent and will not be deducted from your holiday entitlement. You will be able to book them as leave on your return.

There are no Keeping In Touch (KIT) days during neonatal care leave.

Returning to work

You're entitled to return to your original job if:

- if you return to work after taking time off for neonatal care leave, or
- if you return to work after taking multiple periods of statutory leave (such as maternity or paternity leave),
and
- You didn't take more than 4 weeks of parental leave at a time, or
- The total leave (excluding parental leave) didn't exceed 26 weeks.

For example, if you took maternity leave and neonatal care leave, you're entitled to return to your original job if the total time off didn't exceed 26 weeks.

In all other cases, you're entitled to return to your original job. If that's not possible, you have the right to return to a different job that's suitable and appropriate for you.

Risk assessment

If you have been away from work on maternity leave prior to your neonatal care leave, please ensure you complete the Maternity Risk Assessment upon your return to work.

Dependent Care

It is not appropriate to combine homeworking with dependent care and homeworking is not an alternative to paid dependent care. You must not plan to have sole responsibility for a child or other dependent during your working hours.

Further guidance can be found on the Parents and Carer's webpages regarding returning to work.

Not returning to work

If you decide not to return to work, you must give at least the amount of notice that you are required to give under your contract of employment. It will help your line manager if you let them know as soon as you are sure.

Repayment of maternity/adoption/shared parental/neonatal care leave pay

If you receive University maternity/adoption/shared parental pay, the University may reclaim from you all or part of the non-statutory element of this maternity/adoption/shared parental pay if you fail to return to work for at least 3 months following your maternity/adoption/shared parental leave (or an equivalent period of time if you reduce your hours). This excludes any non-working periods (eg KIT days, parental leave, vacation time for term time only workers). Please see the University Policy on Overpayments for details on how the money would be repaid by you to the University.

Support

Colleague Wellbeing <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/> also links to Spectrum Life (free 24 hours confidential support from our Employee Assistance Programme)

Parents and Carers network

<https://www.exeter.ac.uk/departments/inclusion/groups/networks/pandc/>

Grief, bereavement and loss group

<https://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/mentalhealth/griefandbereavement/>

External sites

<https://www.bliss.org.uk/>

<https://www.swneonatalnetwork.co.uk/>

<https://www.snugonline.org/>

Other related policies

Maternity, Adoption, Paternity/Partner Support, Shared parental, Bereavement, Paternity (bereavement), Emergency, Compassionate leave, Carers leave, Fertility, Miscarriage and Pregnancy loss guidance.

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