

Pregnancy and Maternity Leave Policy and Procedure

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1. Purpose and Introduction

Blackpool Skills Academy's maternity Leave Policy outlines the company's provisions for women employees who are expecting a child and/or require time to care and bond with their new-born.

The company endorses the right of its employees to become parents. We are also aware that pregnancy or caring for an infant or a newly adopted child may cause difficulties for them in relation with their job duties. We are, therefore, prepared to support pregnant employees and allow new mothers enough time to recover from childbirth and care for their child.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all eligible female employees of the company.

3. Policy Elements

Maternity Leave is a temporary absence from an employee's position and applies to expectant or new mothers who require time off for pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare.

All female employees are entitled to maternity leave after a certain time of service specified by the law. In general, eligibility of an employee will be assessed according to legislative guidelines. It falls to the company's discretion to grant paid maternity leave or unpaid maternity leave for an employee deemed legally ineligible.

4. Procedure

For reasons of Health and Safety, employees are strongly advised to inform their managers as soon as possible that they are pregnant, in order that arrangements can be made for a health and safety risk assessment to be undertaken.

The expectant mother must adhere to the following procedure:

- She must give formal written notice to her immediate supervisor and the head of Centre about her pregnancy (or adoption), at least a specified number of weeks prior to the date of the expected childbirth
- She must submit a document stating the date of the expected childbirth and the desired beginning date or maternity leave.
- If a certificate of pregnancy or proof of adoption is requested, she must provide one signed by a physician, registered midwife, or other appropriate source.
- She must arrange a meeting with her supervisor to agree on ways of keeping in touch.

5. Health and safety

Our Training centre is required by law to carry out a health and safety risk assessment for employees at work, who are pregnant, have given birth within the previous six months or who are breast-feeding. If a risk is identified, managers and Head of Centre will consider if changes to work practices or hours of work are possible to allow employees to continue in their posts. If changes are not possible, they may be offered suitable alternative work for the period concerned. Whereas a result of a risk assessment, they should be offered a suitable alternative, if there is no such alternative, they will be suspended with pay until a suitable alternative becomes available. However, if an employee should refuse any such suitable alternative work, entitlement to pay will be withdrawn.

Assessing potential risks to an employee and their unborn child opens a communication channel that should be maintained throughout the pregnancy, so that new risks or concerns can be dealt with as they arise. Often, no action is needed in the early stages, but as the bump gets bigger, so can the problems that the mum-to-be faces. So, risk assessments need to be reviews periodically.

Risks to consider-

- Balance problem when working on slippery, wet surface and when working at heights.
- Workstation adjustments to accommodate for the growing bump.
- Person Protective Equipment which may become too small
- Seating must be accessible, comfortable and allow frequent changes of posture.

- The potential for haemorrhoids, fainting and heat stress if in a hot environment.
- Tiredness.
- Early morning shifts and an increased sensitivity to workplace odours may cause nausea.
- Noise exposure may increase blood pressure and tiredness.
- Exposure to passive smoking
- Lone working.
- The risk of work-related violence
- Exposure to hazard substances, radiation and physical hazards which could be detrimental to the unborn child.

Removing the risks- any risks elevated by being in the workplace MUST be removed- this can be done in one of three ways:

- Temporarily adjusting her working conditions and hours of work.
- Providing suitable alternative work- at the same rate of pay
- Suspending her from work on paid leave for as long as necessary to protect her health and safety and that of her child.

Where possible, adjusting working conditions is probably the most favourable approach for both parties, so here are some ideas of how you can mitigate identified risks:

- Providing the opportunity to alternate between sitting and standing positions.
- More frequent rest breaks.
- Avoiding exposure to radiation
- Restricting exposure to hazardous substances
- Increasing their working space
- Supplying lifting equipment to reduce manual handling.
- Restricting or re-allocating duties so that heavy objects do not have to be lifted.
- Improving control measures such as physical containment, hygiene practices and vaccinations to protect against biological hazards.
- Excluding new and expectant mothers from the workplace or relocating them so that they are not exposed to infectious biological agents or harmful substances.

Of course, pregnancy affects every woman differently, which is why it is essential to conduct individual assessments and ensure a regular review programme. Some expectant mother will have problems throughout their term, while others may have very few. So, keep talking, make changes where needed and you will have happier staff and a more productive workplace.

6. Maternity Leave Entitlement

All pregnant workers are entitled to up to 52 weeks' maternity leave. This comprises 26 weeks ordinary maternity leave immediately followed by up to a further 26 weeks additional maternity leave. They must also take a minimum of two weeks maternity leave immediately after the birth of their child.

The employee is entitled to receive up to 39 weeks statutory maternity pay during your maternity leave followed immediately by up to 13 weeks unpaid maternity leave if you:

- Have given the employer at least 28 days' notice of the date you intend to start your statutory Maternity Leave.
- Have given your employer proof of your pregnancy.

The earliest date a woman can start maternity leave is the beginning of the eleventh week before the baby is expected. She must notify her employer with details of the week the baby is expected and the date she chooses to start maternity leave. The employer must respond within 28 days stating the date the woman is expected to return after maternity leave.

7. Ante-natal Care

Pregnant employees are entitled to paid time off to attend ante-natal medical appointments recommended by the doctors, nurses, or midwife. This can also include recommended parenting or relaxation classes.

Fathers and partners who are employees can take unpaid time off to accompany their partner to up to two appointments. The companion can take 6.5 hours per appointment, including travelling and waiting time. Any additional time can be taken with the employer's consent or as a holiday.

8. Returning to work following Maternity Leave

- If you wish to return to work on the agreed date, no notice is required.
- If you wish to return to work earlier than your agreed date, or if you wish to extend the period of your maternity leave, you will need to give your employer at least eight weeks' notice in writing of the new date of return.
- You should return to the same job if you took ordinary maternity leave. If you have taken Additional maternity leave, then you have the right to return to a job that is not significantly different, but it may not be the same.
- If you become pregnant again during your maternity leave, then a second period of maternity leave will begin immediately, without you returning to work.

9. Notification

When can maternity leave start?

Usually, the earliest an employee can start their maternity leave is 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth. The expectation rules are:

Expectation 1- Absence due to childbirth before the start of Maternity Leave

If childbirth occurs before the intended start date of maternity leave, the maternity leave period starts automatically on the day after childbirth. In these circumstances, the employee should notify their manager or Head of Centre, as soon as reasonably practicable, and provide a copy of the child's birth certificate or a document signed by a doctors or midwife that confirms the actual date of birth.

Expectation 2- Absence due to pregnancy related illness

If an employee is absent from work for a pregnancy related illness in the 4 weeks before the expected week of childbirth, the employees Maternity leave will begin on their first day of their absence.

Maternity Leave

There are various descriptions used for maternity leave in the UK. Key terms are:

- Compulsory leave: The two weeks immediately after giving birth during which the woman is not permitted to work (Found weeks if she works in a factory).
- Statutory Maternity Leave (SML): The 52 weeks of leave a woman may take. There is no qualifying period for the 52 weeks but there is a qualifying period for some of the statutory maternity leave.
- Shared Parental Leave (SPL):_The shared leave available to either or both parents.