



MATERNITY & PATERNITY RELATED STAFF ABSENCES



If you take time off work because you or your partner are having a baby, adopting a child or having a baby through a surrogacy arrangement, you are eligible for some form of maternity or paternity leave.

It is vital that a school is aware of its responsibilities to staff, and employees understand the leave and pay they are entitled to. As long-standing experts in staff absence insurance to the education sector, we understand that absences are inevitable and can be financially costly, disruptive and time-consuming to deal with. With stringent budgets, schools must be prepared should teachers and support staff require parental leave.

This report shares some of the data we've collected over the years about how prevalent maternity and paternity absences are within schools.

We will also help to clarify the leave you are entitled to, the 2015 changes to the law and the obligations of your school as your employer.

The key for employers in preparing for maternity and paternity leave is planning. Schools should encourage staff to provide statutory notice for when they plan to take leave as soon as possible; this enables schools to plan effectively for staff absence periods.



Most developed countries have a law regarding maternity and paternity leave.

However, the amount of paid leave employees are entitled to differs considerably around the world.

For example...

In the USA, Canada and China, expectant mothers are entitled to fewer than 15 weeks' paid leave. That said, there seems to be a steady shift in mind-set regarding the importance of providing a fair and supportive maternity and paternity policy by multinational corporations.

For instance, video streaming company Netflix is offering its 2,100 employees up to one year's paid maternity and paternity leave with parents being allowed to work part-time, full-time or come and go throughout the year. The aim of this new policy is to attract and keep the industry's best talent.

Although the UK offers one of the most comprehensive and extensive parental leave packages, by demand it has been forced to review its policy.

THE LAW



It is important for working, expectant parents to be prepared for the arrival of their child.

Part of this involves understanding the leave and pay they are entitled to. Here we will provide an overview of what you could be eligible for.

Maternity

When you take time off to have a baby or adopt a child, statutory maternity leave is made up of:

- Ordinary maternity leave – first 26 weeks.
- Additional maternity leave – following 26 weeks.

Statutory maternity pay (SMP) is paid for up to 39 weeks. This entitles you to:

- 90% of your average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first six weeks.
- £145.18 or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the following 33 weeks.

SMP is paid in exactly the same way as your wages, either weekly or monthly and will be subject to tax and national insurance deductions as standard.

Your SMP will start from the date you schedule to take your maternity leave. In order to be eligible, you must earn on average at least £112 per week, give the correct notice (28 days), provide your employer with proof of your pregnancy and have worked for your current employer continuously for at least 26 weeks. Agency workers are entitled to statutory maternity pay but are not entitled to statutory maternity leave.

THE LAW, CONTINUED



Should you not give the correct notice your employer cannot refuse maternity leave or pay. However, employers can delay the start date of leave or pay if the employee doesn't have a reasonable excuse for giving the wrong amount of notice.

Paternity

As a male, if your partner is having a baby or adopting a child you are entitled to two weeks' paid leave.

This does not increase if your partner is having or adopting multiple children such as twins or triplets. Leave must be taken in one go and can therefore not be a few days here and there.

A week is the same amount of days that you normally work in a week. For example, if you only work Thursdays and Fridays, a week is two days.

Here are some key facts regarding paternity leave:

- Leave can not start before the birth and must end within 56 days of the birth.
- You must provide your employer with 28 days' notice from when you plan to take your leave. This can be general e.g. the day of the birth or one week after the birth.
- You can take unpaid leave to accompany a pregnant partner to two antenatal appointments. You can apply for leave immediately if you are a permanent employee.

NEW RIGHTS



New rights came into effect from 5th April 2015 which allow UK parents to take Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) following the birth or adoption of their child.

The new scheme means that parents can share leave how they like between them for a maximum period of one year, and this can be taken in discontinuous periods. Parents can take leave in their child's first year at different times, or double up by taking leave at the same time.

SPL enables parents to share the caring responsibilities evenly or have one parent taking the main caring role, depending on their preferences and circumstances. This means that parents entitled to paternity leave can now take off more than the original maximum of two weeks.

For example...

A mother and her partner are both eligible for SPL and ShPP. The mother ends her maternity leave and pay after 12 weeks, leaving 40 weeks available for SPL and 27 weeks available for ShPP. The parents can choose how to split this.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA



Shared Parental Leave

To qualify for SPL, you must share responsibility for the child with one of the following; your husband, wife, civil partner, joint adopter, the child's other parent or your partner (if they live with you and the child). You or your partner must be eligible for maternity pay or leave, adoption pay or leave or maternity allowance.

You must also:

- have been employed continuously by the same employer for at least 26 weeks by the end of the 15th week before the due date.
- stay with the same employer while you take SPL.

During the 66 weeks before the week the baby is due your partner must:

- have been working for at least 26 weeks.
- have earned at least £390 in total in 13 of the 66 weeks.

Statutory Shared Parental Pay

You can get ShPP if you are an employee and one of the following applies:

- you are eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay or Statutory Adoption Pay.
- you are eligible for Statutory Paternity Pay and your partner is eligible for SMP, Maternity Allowance or SAP.

MATERNITY & PATERNITY RELATED ABSENCES IN SCHOOLS



Average length of absences

The average length of a maternity absence is 246 calendar days. Whilst it is no surprise that maternity leave is considerably longer than other types of absences, this finding shows how challenging, financially costly and disruptive a maternity absence can be for a school without an insurance policy which includes maternity cover.

The average length of a paternity absence is 10.75 calendar days.

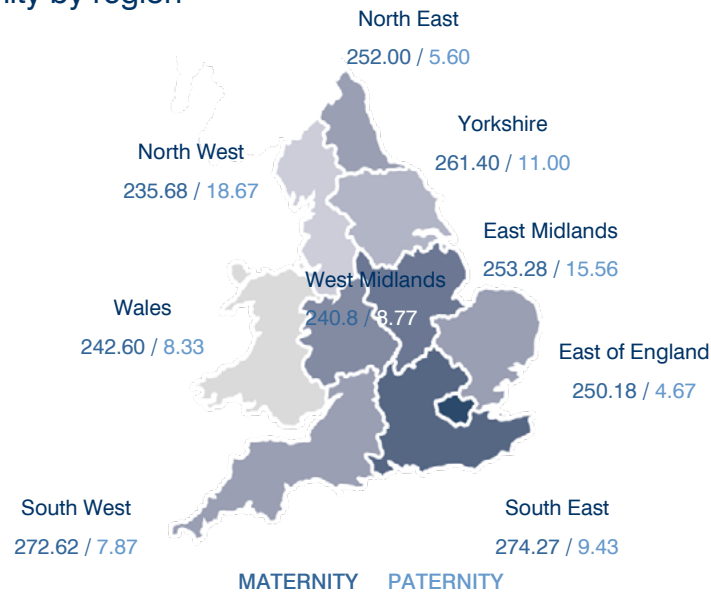
Top three causes of absence days

Maternity is the biggest reason for absence days amongst teachers and school support staff. 40.20% of all days taken absent within schools are due to maternity. This is more than twice the amount of the next most prevalent cause of absences which is stress, responsible for 16.02% of all absence days.

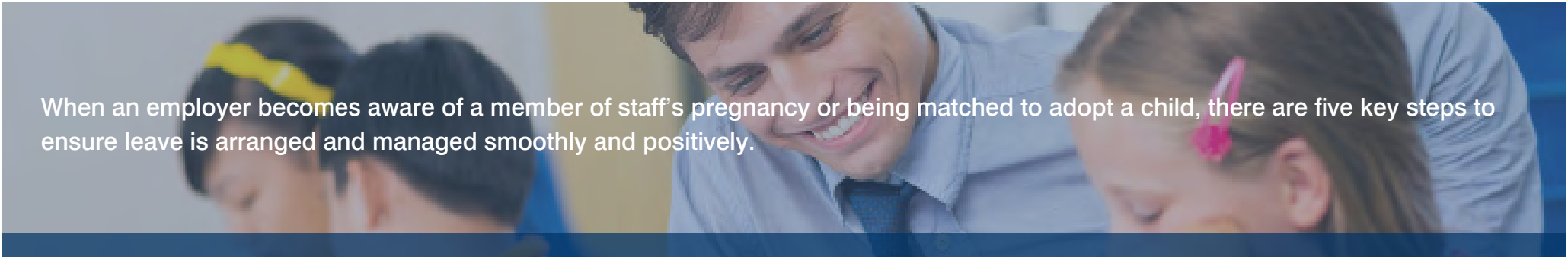
Prevalence of maternity related absences

On average, 3.01% of all female staff within schools will take maternity leave each year.

Average length of absence (calendar days) due to maternity and paternity by region



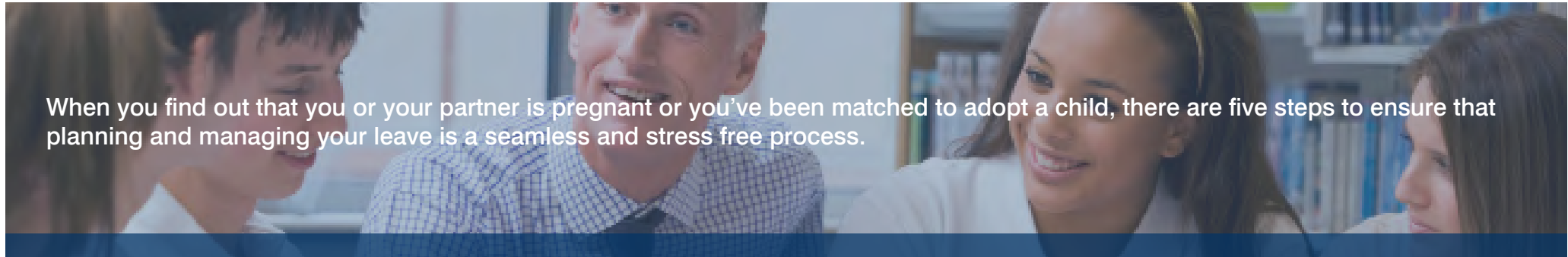
FIVE STEPS FOR EMPLOYERS



When an employer becomes aware of a member of staff's pregnancy or being matched to adopt a child, there are five key steps to ensure leave is arranged and managed smoothly and positively.

- 1. Direct them to your maternity/paternity policy.**
Parental leave policies set out the occupational leave parents are entitled to. Exposing employees to this policy will ensure that the member of staff understands the benefits and leave they are entitled to thoroughly and accurately. For Shared Parental Leave and Statutory Shared Parental Pay, it is the employee's responsibility to check that they are eligible.
- 2. Explain notice requirements.**
Ensuring that employees request leave in alignment with the correct notice periods will allow the employer to consider what impact the leave arrangements will have on their organisation and how this could be mitigated.
- 3. Discuss early intentions.**
Upon receiving notice of an employee's intentions to take parental leave, seek an informal discussion regarding their plans. This provides an opportunity for the employee to talk about their preferences and what leave they plan to take. This allows the employer to get an idea of the type and pattern of leave an employee may wish to take, giving them time to consider how best to accommodate their absence from work.
- 4. Notification of a leave booking.**
Employers will find it beneficial to have an informal meeting with the employee once they have received a notice to book leave. This can ensure a mutual understanding and avoid any confusion regarding the notification. In other words, the purpose of the meeting is to ensure that both parties are in agreement in relation to the leave arrangements.
- 5. Communicate with one another.**
All best practice parental leave policies should include details about keeping in touch when an employee is on leave. Good communication arrangements can help an employee on leave feel attached to the workplace, their career and their colleagues.

FIVE STEPS FOR EMPLOYEES



When you find out that you or your partner is pregnant or you've been matched to adopt a child, there are five steps to ensure that planning and managing your leave is a seamless and stress free process.

1. Notify your employer.

Let your employer know that you will require parental leave as soon as possible. This can be before you have decided when to start your leave. This will mean that your employer knows that you are entitled to time off for things such as antenatal appointments. It will also help you and your employer to plan ahead and make arrangements for covering the period while you are on leave.

2. Arrange your leave.

On providing proof of pregnancy, notify your employer when you wish to take your leave. You can then confirm your entitlement and arrangements with your manager. Be sure that if you need to start your leave early for whatever reason (such as an early arrival) you must advise the appropriate person (e.g. HR Manager) of the delivery date so your maternity/paternity plan and pay can be adjusted.

3. Discuss your return.

Discuss your plans with your employer regarding when you plan to resume work. With the introduction of Shared Parental Leave, your return date is less predictable. It is a good idea to ensure that both you and your employer are prepared for when you do return. If you decide not to return to work at all, you must give your employer notice in the normal way.

4. Communicate.

Once your leave is agreed and you are absent from work, remain in contact with your employer. Communication allows both parties to keep up to date on changes within the workplace and to personal circumstances. This will be mutually beneficial.

5. Keeping in touch days.

“Keeping in touch days” let you work up to ten days during your statutory maternity leave, without losing maternity pay or maternity allowance or ending your leave. These may be used for any kind of work, including training or any activity undertaken for the purpose of keeping in touch with the workplace.

ABOUT ABSENCE PROTECTION



Thank you for taking time to read our insights into maternity and paternity related absences.

We hope you found this useful and now have a better idea of how you can prepare should you need to take some form of parental leave or one of your member's of staff is absent due to maternity or paternity obligations.

Who are we?

We are a market leading provider of staff absence insurance to the education sector.

To help schools negotiate some of the challenges presented by staff absences, we have developed a suite of services designed to mitigate the financial risk, minimise disruption and reduce staff absences.

Our solutions give schools the widest choice of insurance options in the market.

How can we help?

We cover schools against an array of absence causes. Our policies include cover for maternity and paternity leave to ensure that schools can financially accomodate such absences when they occur. We offer maternity cover as a fixed sum up to £10,000 or as a daily benefit of your choice. Cover for paternity related absences is included in our policy as standard. If you want to know more about how we can help you manage staff absences in your school, why not call one of our in house schools team? Alternatively, please visit our website.



THANK YOU

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Disclaimer - All data is anonymous and correct as at 1st October 2015. The data is based on genuine claims and absences recorded by Absence Protection.

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