



A Pocket Guide for Employees

Pregnancy, maternity leave and a successful return to work

A pocket guide developed by Working Families

Working Families is the UK's leading work-life organisation. We provide Practical evidence-based support to employees and the organisations for which they work.

- For legal advice contact us on 0300 012 0312
- For support in combining work and caring for a disabled child contact us on 020 7017 0072
- For more practical advice and to find out about our FREE webinars visit our website at www.workingfamilies.org.uk

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A Pocket Guide for Employees Pregnancy, maternity leave and a successful return to work

Written by Liz Morris with Susanne Jacobs

Foreword

Working Families is the UK's leading work-life balance organisation. We are dedicated to building a future where individuals, families and organisations can thrive. We do this by:

- Providing working parents and carers with free legal and in-work benefits advice and information, and help with negotiating flexible working arrangements
- Providing training and strategic consultancy to employers to develop high performance through employee engagement and wellbeing
- Conducting ground-breaking research to provide evidence for policy makers and employers to improve organisational performance and work-life balance

- Campaigning for everyone to have the opportunity to find the balance they need between work and family life

With over 30 years of expertise in the field of work-life balance and flexible working, plus the support of employers and opinion formers, we can make a positive difference to organisations and to the lives of families.

This pocket guide represents a small part of what we do. We hope that you will find it useful, as many others have, in developing your own sense of balance together with a thriving family life and career.



Sarah Jackson, OBE
CEO Working Families



Working Families

The UK's leading work-life organisation

Supporting policy makers, employers and families

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1. I'm pregnant – what next?

You are about to embrace one of the most rewarding transitions in your life. How you plan for this change will play a key part in how easily you can integrate family life, work and career.

The more preparation you do now, the easier it will be to return to work will be. Good preparation includes:

- Understanding your maternity rights
- Reflecting on your career aspirations values, needs and life-goals.
- Identifying different options for Maternity Leave, keeping in touch and your return to work
- Setting up reliable childcare arrangements which includes strengthening your general network of support and childcare options
- Agreeing roles and responsibilities at home

If you have a partner, husband or civil partner, work together as a team to prepare.

The emotional journey

Expecting a baby is often an exciting time. You may also experience anxiety or even shock. Life is about to change in a big way, bringing with it new responsibilities and challenges.

It can be very normal for all expectant parents, both mothers and fathers, to experience an “emotional wobble”. You may question how much you can really take responsibilities for a baby as well as home and work. You may also question how much you want or need to keep your job.

Allow yourself time to adjust to thought of your new responsibilities. Consider all of your options carefully before closing down any options with your employer. Remember also, that your Maternity Leave will be a transition and a period of uncertainty for your manager and colleagues as well.

Nobody knows how they will react to being a parent until they are one! However, there is much you can do now to help make this transition as smooth as possible.

2. My Benefits and Rights

This chapter covers basic Rights and Benefits. It includes an overview of:

- Maternity Leave
- Maternity Pay
- Time off for antenatal appointments
- Paternity Leave
- Health and Safety
- Emergency time off for dependants
- Health and Safety
- Other Rights
- Impact on Benefits

For more information on rights you can visit the Working Families website www.workingfamilies.org.uk or call the helpline: 0300 012 0312

TIP: Many larger employers offer benefits beyond the legal minimum so make sure you check your contract or staff handbook.

Maternity Leave

As a full-time or part-time employee you are entitled to 52 weeks Maternity Leave regardless of your length of service. Your leave is divided into two parts:

- The first 26 weeks, known as Ordinary Maternity Leave.
- The second 26 weeks is called Additional Maternity Leave.

You can start your Maternity Leave and Maternity Pay anytime from 11 weeks before your baby is due, unless you give birth before then. You can work right up until the birth if you wish. You need to provide written notice of your intention to take leave by the end of the 15th week before your Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC).

Your employment contract continues whilst you are on Maternity Leave. There is a period of Compulsory Maternity Leave: you are not allowed to return to work for the first two weeks after the birth of your baby (or four weeks if you work in a factory).

Maternity Leave continued...

If you are off work with a pregnancy-related absence during the last four weeks of your pregnancy your employer can insist that you begin your Maternity Leave then.

Holiday entitlement continues to accrue over the Maternity Leave period. The amount depends on your employment contract.

If things go wrong and you experience a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy then you are entitled to full Maternity Leave.

Maternity Pay

There are two types of maternity pay available whilst you take Maternity Leave:

- Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)
- Maternity Allowance (MA)

TIP:

If you are not entitled to MA or SMP you may be able to claim Employment and Support Allowance.

Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)

To be eligible for SMP you must have worked for your employer for at least 26 weeks by the end of the 15th week before your Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC). SMP amounts to 90% of your normal pay for six weeks, followed by 33 weeks at a flat-rate or 90% of your normal pay, whichever is the lower. It is paid by your employer.

To claim SMP you must give your employer confirmation of your pregnancy (a MATB1 form) and notice of at least 28 days before you wish the SMP to start. A MATB1 is available from your midwife or GP. Your employer will work out whether you qualify. If you don't qualify you may be able to claim Maternity Allowance (MA) instead.

An entitlement to SMP remains even if:

- you leave your job or are dismissed after the 15th week before your baby is due
- you do not intend to return to work

Visit the Working Families website for the current flat rate of SMP or MA
www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Maternity Allowance (MA)

This is a benefit for those who are working, or have worked recently, but are not entitled to SMP. MA amounts to 90% of your average earnings or a flat rate whichever is lower. It is paid by Job Centre Plus for up to 39 weeks.

To qualify you must have worked for at least 26 weeks in the 66 weeks (15 months) before your baby is due. The weeks do not have to be continuous or with the same employer and can include periods of self-employment. You must also have earned more than £30 a week in 13 of those weeks.

If you think your employer has calculated your entitlement to SMP or MA incorrectly or if they fail to come to a decision within four weeks of you giving notice, then you can ask the HM Revenue and Customs to intervene. Call the Working Families helpline for free advice on your next steps if you think your employer has calculated your entitlement incorrectly:

Working Families helpline 0300 012 0312

Time off for antenatal appointments

You are entitled to paid time off for antenatal appointments. After the first appointment your employer can ask you to provide evidence of your pregnancy and the appointment. The appointment needs to be made on the advice of a GP, nurse or midwife. It must relate to your pregnancy and can include relaxation and parent craft classes as well as scans.

If you currently work part-time check your employment contract as it can include a requirement to make best efforts to arrange antenatal appointments on a non-working day unless unfeasible.

Aim to provide plenty of notice of your antenatal appointments so that your employer can arrange cover if required. Wherever possible book a time that minimises disruption to your colleagues or your employer's ability to trade.

Your partner's employer may also provide them with time-off to accompany you to appointments. However, this is not yet a right in law.

Paternity Leave

If your partner, husband, civil partner is an employee and has worked for the same employer since before you became pregnant they are potentially entitled to 1 or 2 consecutive weeks Paternity Leave.

Your partner, husband, civil partner may also be entitled to Additional Paternity Leave and Pay (APLP). This enables you both to take some of the leave and pay in the first year to care for your baby. Your partner needs to have worked for their employer since before you became pregnant and you need to have returned to work before the end of your potential 12 months Maternity Leave. Their employer needs at least eight weeks of notice before the APLP is taken. They may require a form to be completed in order to trigger APLP.

Many larger employers offer benefits beyond the legal minimum. Always check your contract or staff handbook to see what benefits your particular employer offers.

Parental Leave

Employed parents who have worked for their employer for one year have the right to Parental Leave. Parental Leave is in addition to Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave and Additional Paternity Leave. Parental Leave is not paid.

Parental Leave is design as additional flexible leave to care for your child, e.g. spending more time together or settling into school or nursery.

Parental Leave can be taken in blocks of one week up to a total of 18 weeks per child before their fifth birthday. In the case of a disabled child, total Parental Leave is 18 weeks, to be taken before the child's 18th birthday and can be taken in single days.

In order to take parental leave you need to provide your employer with notice of at least 21 days. If Parental Leave immediately follows a period of maternity or paternity leave your employer cannot postpone this. At any other time, an employer can require the leave to be postponed for up to 6 months from the originally requested date of leave if *“the operation of his business would be unduly disrupted”*

Emergency time off for a dependant

Employees are entitled to take a reasonable amount of time off for a dependant in an emergency, this includes:

- Making arrangements for the care of a dependant who is ill or injured.
- Making arrangements if there is an unexpected disruption in childcare.
- Dealing with an unexpected incident at school.
- Arranging or attending a funeral of a dependant.

Your employer is not required to pay you if you take time off in an emergency. Your employer cannot discipline you for taking time off in these circumstances. You do need to tell your employer what is happening as soon as possible.

TIP: Have a number of different options for back-up childcare. This helps to minimise your stress when the inevitable hic-coughs in childcare happen.

Health and safety

You have a right to work in an environment that is safe for you and your baby whilst pregnant, breastfeeding and/or working within 6 months of giving birth. (See Chapter 9 for more information on breastfeeding)

You should inform your employer in writing that there may be a potential risk to you or your baby. Your employer will carry out a specific Health and Safety risk assessment to identify any potential risks.

TIPS: Areas of potential risk to think about are:

- Physical: manual handling, posture, movement, shocks and vibration, noise
- Infection or biological hazards
- Chemicals: pesticides, toxic chemicals, lead, mercury, asbestos, carbon monoxide
- Working conditions: temperature; working at heights, rest rooms; mental and physical fatigue, stress, working alone, violence

Visit the Health and Safety executive web site for further information www.hse.gov.uk

If risks are identified then your employer needs to take the following steps to remove these risks:

1. Temporarily alter your working conditions or hours of work. If this is not reasonable or would not avoid the risk, then:
2. Offer you suitable alternative work (at the same rate of pay) if available. If this is not feasible, then:
3. Suspend you on full pay for as long as is necessary to protect the health and safety of you and your baby.

These steps need to be done without loss to pay or other work related benefits. It is good practice to work **with** your employer to ensure that the changes put in place following a risk assessment are in actual fact removing the risks identified.

After the initial risk assessment and adjustment to working practices you need to keep your employer informed if you think that further risk assessments are needed, depending on how your pregnancy progresses or how the nature of work being done may change.

If you current work at night, you can continue to do so unless your midwife or GP identify this as a risk to you or your baby, in which case your employer

needs to offer you suitable day work without loss of pay or other work related benefits.

If you think that your work is putting your safety at risk or damaging your health, you should raise these concerns with your employer. For further information visit the Health and Safety Executive website www.hse.gov.uk or contact the Working Families helpline on 0300 012 0312

Other Rights

Discrimination

An employer cannot discriminate against you or sack you for a reason connected with your pregnancy.

Free prescriptions

All pregnant women can claim free prescriptions and dental treatment throughout their pregnancy and for up to 12 months after the birth. Your midwife or GP will give you a form to send to your health authority for an exemption certificate.

Benefits

Healthy Start Vouchers

If you are claiming Income Support, income-based Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) or income-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) you will be entitled to Healthy Start vouchers. People on Child Tax Credit may also claim if they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit. You can get a claim form from your midwife or GP, by calling 0845 607 6823 or visiting the website www.healthystart.nhs.uk.

Maternity Grant

If you are receiving Income Support, Child Tax Credit of more than the family element, Working Tax Credit which includes a disability element, pension credit or income-based JSA or ESA, you may be able to claim a one-off Sure Start Maternity Grant to help with the costs of a new baby. This will usually only apply to your first child.

Child benefit and Tax credits

You may be entitled to Child Benefit and Tax Credits once your child is born. If you are already claiming Tax Credits your entitlement may go up.

For more information about benefits entitlement or rights visit the Working Families website www.workingfamilies.org.uk or call the helpline on 0300 012 0312

TIPS:

Surveys shows that the costs associated with a new baby can vary enormously, from more than £7,000 or as little as £1,600 in the first year. Start planning now!

- There are a number of on-line calculators to help you budget e.g. www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk
- Work out your budget together with anyone you are sharing parental responsibility with.
- NCT nearly new sales are often a cost effective way to buy the things you need.

3. Fitting together work and family

Options for Maternity Leave and returning to work vary from one person and family to another. What works for you will depend on:

- Your values.
- Your career goals.
- Your family finances.
- Availability of childcare.
- Your partner, husband or civil partner's desire to take Additional Paternity Leave.
- The extent to which you want to share responsibility for managing children and home matters in general.

Take time now to explore your options. This will help you plan effectively for the next phase in your life and develop the resources you need for a successful return to work.

This chapter covers:

- How to identify your values and needs.
- The context of goals and career aspirations.
- Options for Maternity Leave.
- Options for flexible working.
- The importance of managing your Personal Brand.

TIPS:

- Set some quality time aside to reflect and plan before you announce your pregnancy at work.
- Think about how life will be after your baby arrives and also after you return to work.
- If you have a partner, husband or civil partner then work through the options and exercises together as a team.

Understanding my values

Your values are a small set of deeply held beliefs that guide your life. Values drive how we approach our relationships and activities. They are as unique to each one of us as our finger prints.

If you are planning or doing something that does not fit with your values your motivation and energy will be low. On the other hand, when you live in line with your values you will be energised and motivated.

Understanding your values will help you decide how to approach the journey through pregnancy, Maternity Leave and your return to work.

Use the exercise on the opposite page to help identify your values.

Think about how working and parenting fit with your values.

Here are some common words used to represent values. Highlight those which are most important to you. If you don't find a word or phrase that you are looking for then add it to the list. Then filter the words until you are left with between 5 and 7.

Test yourself: are these really YOUR values? If the world were to penalise you for holding these values would you continue to hold them?

Health	Selflessness	Achievement
Respect	Fun	Learning
Recognition	Growth	Development
Freedom	Happiness	Experience
Altruism	Helpfulness	Integrity
Honesty	Courage	Creativity
Significance	Order	Involvement
Sincerity	Trust	Loyalty
Spirituality	Authenticity	Carefulness
Trust	Empathy	Mastery
Openness	Prudence	Mindfulness
Self-reliance	Harmony	Motivation
Thankfulness	Accuracy	Rigor
Humility	Self-control	Restraint
Curiosity	Understanding	Faithfulness

Understanding my needs

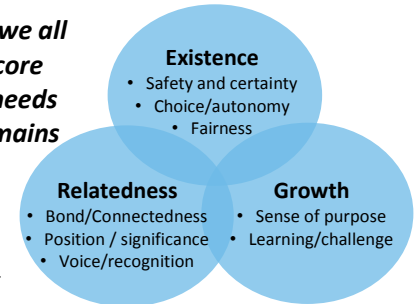
For most of us work fulfils more needs than money for food and shelter. It can also fulfil deep emotional needs such as a sense of connectedness, intellectual satisfaction and a feeling of being able to influence and being valued for our contribution.

Values guide how you do something, whereas needs guide what you do, often unconsciously. Understanding your needs will help you design a positive work-life-fit for you and your family.

If your needs are not being met, you will become pre-occupied and find it increasingly difficult to focus. When your needs are being met then you are able to be where you are both in mind and body (whether it is at work, with your family or taking time out to re-energise).

Our human needs can be grouped together into eight broad categories within three domains: existence, relatedness and growth.

As humans we all have eight core emotional needs in three domains



SOURCE: Jacobs
2011 and Alderfer
1969/2005

Use the exercise below to understand how your needs are being met now and how they could be met in the future.

For each of the eight categories of needs ask yourself:

- How do I feel and act when this need is met?
- How do I feel and act when this need is not met?
- How is this need being met at the moment?
- How effectively is this need being met at the moment? (Score out of 10)
- How else could I meet this need right now?
- How will having a baby influence the way I meet this need?

My goals and aspirations

Take a moment to dream; if money and time were limitless what would you do? What is it that you most desire?

With this dream in mind, take a look back at your values and needs. How does this dream fit with your values and needs? The goals that inspire you most will be based on your values.

Now bring your dreams back to the present. Use the space below to write down the priorities for your life right now, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually.

1. Emotional

2. Spiritual

3. Physical

4. Intellectual

Now think about your future goals. Make each as specific as possible so that you can relate to this future state.

In 2 years I want to be...

In 10 years I want to be...

Now ask yourself:

- How does this resonate with my values and needs?
- What is the first step I need to take to reach this goal?
- What does this mean for work, career and family?

Options for Maternity Leave

Your options for Maternity Leave will depend on your own values, needs and goals, as well as, the needs, values and goals of anyone you are sharing parental responsibility with.

In the blue boxes below are some of the pros and cons for shorter or longer Maternity Leaves. These are not exhaustive and there will be others which are specific to your own situation, for example, if you are a lone parent.

Shorter Maternity Leave

Pros: Skills remain fresh, easier to maintain your work profile, maintains your income level, can enable you to share leave with your partner, husband or civil partner through Additional Paternity Leave.

Cons: Possible exhaustion due to disruptive sleep patterns, more difficult to maintain breastfeeding, less able to deal with work stress because of fatigue, possible separation anxiety, potential difficulty finding childcare for babies under three months old.

Consider your options and how they marry to your values, needs and career aspirations.

Knowing what you want and understanding your options will enable you to maintain a professional approach at work and reassure your manager and colleagues of your commitment.

You should also take time now to consider options for flexible working. Remember you do not need to commit to any flexible working options until after your baby is born.

Longer Maternity Leave

Pros: A longer time supporting your child through key developmental changes, easier to continue breastfeeding, more time to adjust mentally and physically to the demands of new parenthood.

Cons: Skills can degrade over time, more complicated to maintain your profile at work, may miss personal development opportunities, reduction in family income, may exclude your partner from taking Additional Paternity Leave.

Flexible Working

Our need for flexibility changes with life-stage and/or interests. It can be related to family responsibilities or driven by the pursuit of another passion.



Expecting your first child is often the time when people think about how to re-balance their lives. It is increasingly common for men, as well as women, to work flexibly in order to be a hands-on parent.

The term “Flexible Working” refers to an arrangement that changes where or when you work, or the number of hours you work.

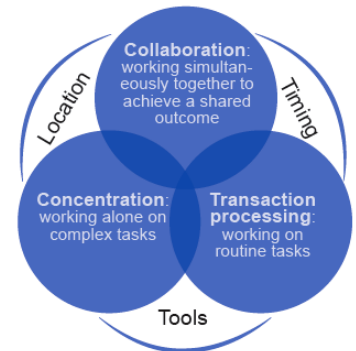
Flexible Working can be temporary or an on-going arrangement. It can be ad hoc use within a framework of principles or formalised in a change to your employment contract. Flexible working is an approach, an attitude and a behaviour which allows you to take responsibility for work and family and how they fit together.

The potential for flexibility in the way you work will depend on:

- Your employer's practices and policies.
- The constraints and flexibility inherent in the type of work that you do.
- Your capability and attitude.
- Your manager's capability and attitude.
- Your legal rights.

The next couple of pages describe how to identify the flexibility and constraints in your role. Even if, at this stage you are not considering flexible working, it is useful to analyse your role using this exercise. This will provide a good foundation for handover and resuming your responsibilities on return to work.

Every role is made up of three basic types of activity. Each activity will be constrained by time and location in different ways. Each activity may also depend on different tools.



Use the following exercise to identify patterns and find the flexibility in your role.

1. Use copies of the table on the next page or set up a spreadsheet with the same column headings.
2. Use this to keep a diary for a week or month.
3. When you have completed your diary add the following columns and categorise each row
 - (i) "Work type" is it "collaboration", "concentration" or "transaction"?
 - (ii) "Time dependency" is it required in "real time" or can it be done in "batches"?
4. If you have not used a spreadsheet, then transfer the data now into a spreadsheet. Sort by "Task description". Can any of the rows be added together? If so sum the durations and make a note in the Time/ date column to capture if this is done daily, weekly or monthly.
5. Sort by "Time dependency". Simplify by adding rows together where possible.
6. Sort by "Work type" and "Tools". Set up a column for "Location dependency" and note down if each task can be done remotely.
7. What patterns emerge? Are there logical chunks where you can split your role for part-time working? Where can you flex start and finish times or split your working day? Where can you work from home to reduce commute time?

My diary

Time/ date	Task description	Key project/ stakeholder	Duration (hrs)	Other participants	Tools	Work type	Time dependency	Location dependency

"Work type" = "collaboration", "concentration" or "transaction". "Time dependency" = "real time" or "batch".
 "Location dependency" = "remote" or "on site".

Managing my Personal Brand

A brand is a promise. It is a promise that comes to mind as soon as you hear a name or see a picture.

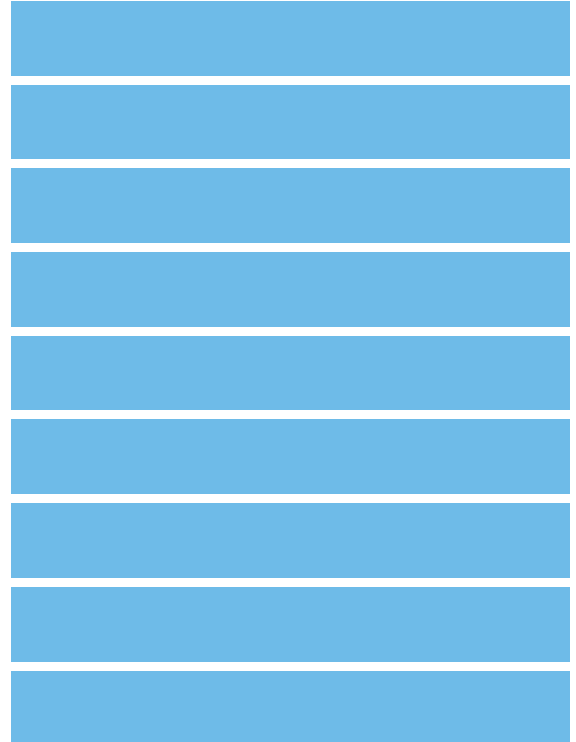
Your Personal Brand is what others believe to be true of you whether you are physically with them or not. Actively managing your Personal Brand will smooth the path through pregnancy and Maternity Leave to resuming your career.

Consider these questions and use the space opposite to jot down your ideas:

- What do you want others to think when they hear your name?
- What is it that you want your colleagues, clients and manager to be thinking of you whilst you are on Maternity Leave?

Think about how you currently act. Does this reinforce or undermine what you want your Personal Brand to be?

What do I want others to think when they hear my name?

A vertical stack of eight blue rectangular boxes, each intended for a line of handwritten text. The boxes are uniform in size and color, providing a structured space for the user to answer the question posed above them.

4. Telling my employer that I'm pregnant

Legally you need to inform your employer of your intention to take Maternity Leave by the 15th week before your baby's due date. You will need to supply proof of pregnancy and due date, this is normally a MATB1 from.

It is common to wait until after the first trimester, however, you may wish to tell your manager informally before this if you are experiencing difficulties with the pregnancy or there are health and safety concerns related to the nature of your work.

The sooner you inform your manager the sooner you can start working together to plan a smooth transition. Remember, that this is a transition for your manager and colleagues as well as a change for you. There is much you can do to help your manager support you and your baby.

Arrange a suitable low stress time to inform your manager in person. Be prepared and professional. Think about things from your manager's view point and consider how you can reinforce a positive Personal Brand. Be open and flexible. Make it easy for your manager to manage you. Share any dates for antenatal appointments.

Book another meeting with your manager to plan the transition in more detail. At the second meeting you may also wish to explore potential flexible working options. Remember that you do not need to make a decision about this until after your baby is born.

TIP:

Before you tell your manager ensure you have explored the following:

- ☐ Your employer's practices and policies.
- ☐ Your legal rights.
- ☐ Your values and needs.
- ☐ Your goals and career aspirations.
- ☐ Your manager's likely concerns.
- ☐ Your options for flexible working.

5. Developing an Action Plan

Work with your manager to develop an action plan of key dates and who needs to do what by when. There is a useful table of key dates in chapter 10 of this guide.

TIPS:

Your action plan should include:

- ☐ Key dates, such as antenatal appointments (and who will provide cover if required), handover date(s), start date of maternity leave, potential keep in touch days, deadline for when to request flexible working, planned return date etc.
- ☐ Handover details, including, when to explore options, time to develop detailed plan of who and when and then time to do the handover
- ☐ Pay details such as when to determine entitlement to MA or SMP, the date by which payroll need to be informed, and if a performance review needs to be done prior to leave to ensure the correct pay increments or bonuses.
- ☐ Health and safety assessment dates
- ☐ When and how to tell other people at work.

Telling others at work

Remember that this will also be a time of adjustment for the people that you work with. Their own work might change as a result of your pregnancy and Maternity Leave.

Work with your manager to plan when you will tell different people. Be willing to talk about concerns they may have about handover plans. Reassure them of your on-going commitment. It's a good idea to write down and practice your response to common avoid having to think on the spot.

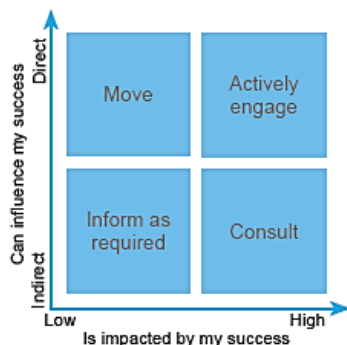
Managing career stakeholders

As well as the people that you work with directly there may be others who are influential in the success of your on-going career. The way in which you share your news and handover plan helps to reinforce a positive and professional Personal Brand.

Use the exercise on the next page to work out who your career stakeholders are.

Identifying career stakeholders

Who is it that can facilitate or block your career? Use the grid below to map out who has influence over your career and who will be impacted, positively and negatively by your success.



For each of the 'stakeholders' with direct influence over your career and/or who are impacted by your success, identify how you can share your news in a way that reinforces your Personal Brand.

6. Handing over

Develop a handover timetable with your manager. Your employer may choose to recruit someone to take on your role during leave, reprioritise activities or disperse responsibilities across the team.

Use the job analysis tool in part 3 of this pocket guide to identify the activities that make up your role. For every activity in your role plan out who will take this responsibility, when you will do the handover and what knowledge and skills need to be transferred or key people to whom the person providing covers needs to be introduced.

The sooner you have this plan in place the easier it will be to get diary time with those taking on responsibilities. It also helps to minimise the impact if you need to start your Maternity Leave earlier than originally planned.

Making a detailed account of what your job involves will also help you resume your responsibilities when you return to work.

Handing over continued...

Taking a proactive role in the handover process will make it easier for your manager and colleagues to support you. It will also help to avoid assumption that some people may make about your motivation or desire to remain engaged with work during your pregnancy.

Some women find it useful to complete a performance review before going on leave. It can help to ensure the right pay increments or bonuses are applied when you are on leave. It is also a positive record of your achievements which can help to increase your confidence when planning your return to work.

If you are planning to return after Ordinary Maternity Leave then you have the right to return to the job you were doing before started Maternity Leave. After this date you usually have the right to return to the same job. If you are told otherwise, for example, if a redundancy situation has arisen, then seek advice as soon as possible, from the free Working Families helpline on 0300 012 0312.

7. Keeping in touch

Employees who keep in touch with their colleagues, manager and employer find the process of returning to work easier than those who do not. Regular communication will help to maintain your Personal Brand and help to ensure that you are included in any changes or plans that may affect how you do your role on returning to work.

You are required legally to inform your employer if :

- you baby is born before your planned Maternity Leave start date
- you plan to return to work before the end of your 52-week statutory entitlement, you need to provide eight weeks formal notice

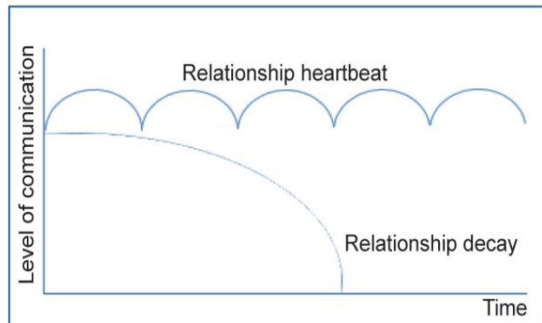
Your employer is required to **offer** to inform you of changes at work, training opportunities and job vacancies while you are on leave. Failure to consider you for a vacancy or promotion because you are on Maternity Leave could be discriminatory. However, it is up to you to agree with your employer how you are informed of changes and opportunities at work.

Keeping in touch continued....

Regular planned communication provides a heartbeat to maintain positive working relationships and your Personal Brand. Long periods of silence can lead to decay in the quality of relationships.

Agree a “Keeping in Touch” plan with your manager. Be proactive and consider the frequency of contact, what you would like to know, who will initiate the contact and how the contact will be made, e.g. email, phone or letter.

Developing a heartbeat and avoid relationship decay



You can also be able to work for up to 10 days during your Maternity Leave without bringing your leave to an end. These days are called “Keeping in Touch” or “KIT” days.

There is no legal obligation on you or your employer to use KIT days. However they are a very useful way of keeping your skills up to date, staying abreast of changes at work and/or phasing back to work.

If you are receiving Maternity Pay, then you continue to do so on a KIT day. Your pay can be topped up to the equivalent of a normal day's pay during on a KIT day without bringing your Maternity Pay or Maternity Leave to an end.

TIP:

- Employees that keep in touch with their colleagues and manager find it easier to return to work.
- If you are planning to share leave with your partner using Additional Paternity Leave (APL) there is currently a special condition regarding KIT days. APL can only start when your Maternity Leave officially ends. If you return to work before your full entitlement of 52 weeks Maternity Leave you must have used your 10 KIT days to officially bring your Maternity Leave period to an end and before your partner can start Additional Paternity Leave.

8. Preparing to return to work

Start preparing for your return as soon as possible. What you need to have in place by when will depend on when you wish to return to work.

Plan backwards from your return to work date, it can take up to 14 weeks to sort out a flexible working arrangement or there may be a considerable waiting list for certain types of childcare.

TIPS:

Consider the following when preparing to return to work:

- Flexible working options
- Childcare
- Balancing responsibilities at home
- Phased return to work

For help balancing work with parenting a child with a disability call the Waving Not Drowning helpline 0207 017 0072

Flexible Working Options

The term “Flexible Working” refers to an arrangement that changes where or when you work, or the number of hours you work. It can be temporary or on-going and it can be an ad hoc arrangement or formalised in a change of your employment contract.

Flexible working allows employees to integrate different aspects of life and create a positive work-life-fit.

A flexible approach to work also has many benefits to your employer.

- The organisation retains your skills and experience
- Keeps a successful team intact
- Saves time and money recruiting and training someone new.
- Potentially allows the organisation to cover a wider span of hours
- Lowers stress and the impact of personal issues on productivity.

Flexible working continued...

You have a statutory Right to request to work flexibly in your current job, if you are:

- an employee who has worked for your employer for 26 weeks and has a child under 17 (or a disabled child under 18 who gets Disability Living Allowance)
- an employee who has worked for your employer for 26 weeks and cares for a disabled adult.

Your employer has a duty to **seriously** consider your request.

It is important to understand that a change granted under the statutory right to request is permanent. If you want a temporary change then this must be specifically negotiated with your employer.

Even if you do not have the right to request (for example, you have not worked for your employer for long enough), you can still ask to change your pattern of work, and sex discrimination law may apply if you are turned down.

Once you have assessed your need for flexibility and identified various flexible options in your role (using the exercise in part 3 of this guide) talk with your manager as soon as possible.

The way in which you agree a flexible approach to work will depend on the type of flexibility you are considering and your employer's policies e.g. you may be able to make an agreement directly with your manager or you may need to use a formal request process.

For a formal request there is a statutory process which includes an obligatory time-line. A formal request can take up to 14 weeks to agree if there are appeals.

After you have made a formal request, your employer must hold a meeting with you within 28 days, unless they are going to agree to exactly what you have asked for. If they agree to your request, they should let you know in writing. At the meeting, you are allowed to be accompanied by a work colleague who is an employee of your employer, or a trade union representative who works for your employer.

Following the meeting, your employer must send you a written decision within fourteen days. Your employer can either agree to your request, offer you a compromise or refuse. If they refuse, they must give you a written reason. Your employer can only refuse your request for certain business reasons. Your employer should show why these reasons apply, and they must explain the appeal process.

The permitted business reasons are:

- Burden of additional costs.
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand.
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff.
- Inability to recruit additional staff.
- Detrimental impact on quality.
- Detrimental impact on performance.
- Insufficiency of work during the periods you propose to work.
- Planned structural changes.

You have fourteen days from getting the written reasons to appeal the decision. Call the Working Families helpline for advice on what to do next. Call the helpline on 0300 012 0312

The most successful flexible working arrangements are worked out collaboratively in a way that maximises the benefits for the employee and the organisation.

Maintain an open mind and seek to see things from both your perspective and that of your manager and your organisation.

There are many different forms of flexible working. For examples and a useful web guide visit the Working Families website www.workingfamilies.org.uk or call the helpline on 0300 012 0312

TIPS:

- Even if your agreement to work flexibility is agreed with your manager outside of the statutory process it is recommended that both you and your manager formalise it in a written agreement or framework of how work will be approached.
- For a web guide to making a flexible working request visit the Working Families website www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Childcare

The earlier you begin looking at childcare options the better your chances of avoiding last minute disappointment and problems. Nurseries and child-minders are restricted on places, especially for very young babies, and these may have to be reserved well in advance. Nurseries differ considerably in terms of opening times and whether they are open at all during school holiday periods. The costs and standards of different forms of childcare need to be investigated to suit your finances.

Finding the right childcare for you and your baby will help ease any anxieties when you return to work. Your childcare options will need to fit in with your work expectations and those of anyone else that you are sharing parental responsibilities with.

The common options are: child-minders, day-nurseries, nannies, au pairs and/ or family members.

TIPS:

- Don't feel pressured into choosing one particular provider
- Ensure that you and anyone else you are sharing parental responsibility with have a common understanding of the quality and features of the care you are seeking.
- Read the latest Ofsted inspection report.
- Follow-up references and recommendations.
- Try to visit as many of your shortlisted childcare providers as possible and
- Consider the following questions:
 - Is it a safe clean environment?
 - Do the other children look happy and cared for?
 - Are the staff happy and conscientious? (Ask about staff-turnover.)
- Visit the Family and childcare website for useful advice and check-lists www.familyandchildcaretrust.org.uk
- To understand the impact of childcare costs on tax credits and benefits visit the Working Families website www.workingfamilies.org.uk or call the helpline on 0300 012 0312

Rebalancing responsibilities at home

During Maternity Leave it is common that the mother will have also taken on responsibility for most day-to-day childcare and household tasks. Take time before you return to work to consider how things are going to be done in the future. If you are sharing parental responsibility and/or living with other people then make a formal agreement with them. This helps to manage expectations and avoid assumptions. Review things every few months to ensure that arrangements are working well.

Checklist of common things to consider:

- ☐ Childcare drop-off and pick-up.
- ☐ Day bag preparation, e.g. packing nappies, wipes, spare clothes, food, snacks etc...
- ☐ Preparing packed lunches.
- ☐ Primary and secondary emergency contacts.
- ☐ Back-up childcare options in case of sickness.
- ☐ Division of household such as cleaning, cooking, food shopping, clearing up, gardening, managing of household budgets.

Creating a Back to Work plan

Use your handover plan as a basis for a “Back to Work” plan.

A useful option is to create a ‘phased return’ that refreshes your skills, rebuilds relationships and enables new arrangements at home and childcare to settle in. The demands of the home are very different to the demands of the workplace. A phased return can help to rebuild your confidence. A phase return can be created by using ‘Keeping in touch’ (KIT) days, accrued holidays or, a short-term period of flexible working. Talk with your manager to agree the best option.

TIPS:

- A weekly review or update with your line manager during the first month is useful to understand what is working well and where to make adjustment to improve performance.
- Agree a date for around two months after your return to work to look at short-term objectives.
- Ask for help if you feel you need it. Other people will assume everything is okay unless you raise any issues with them.

Looking after your psychological well-being

Any change in life has the potential to cause negative stress and you may find yourself having misgivings about leaving your child and returning to work.

Allow yourself time to settle into a new routine. By pacing yourself you will be best able to support those you love and deliver sustainable performance at work. No one knows how they will feel as a parent until they become one. Our society is full of expectations about what it means to have a successful career and / or be a successful parent. It is hard not to compare yourself to these and feel frustrated or guilty.

If negative feelings are persistent or overwhelming during your Maternity Leave or on return to work, help is available.

It may be that you are experiencing anxiety or post-natal depression. One in 10 mothers experience post-natal depression in the UK. Help is available. Talk to your GP who will help you find the support you need.

9. Returning to work

Most women find that it takes a while to adjust on returning to work. The first few days can be a mix of excitement and challenge as you settle into a new routine.

If you have kept in regular touch with your manager and colleagues, they should give you a warm welcome back. Remember, the first few weeks will also be a time of transition for your colleagues and manager. You may have opted for flexible working and your colleagues and manager may need time to adjust to this new way of working.

Checklist for returning to work

- ☐ Confirm access codes/keys to get into your place of work
- ☐ Confirm who will meet you on your first day back and brief you on any changes
- ☐ Confirm ids and access to computer systems
- ☐ Agree handover plan to resume your responsibilities
- ☐ Arrangements in place to support breastfeeding or expressing if required

Breastfeeding

Some mothers choose to continue breastfeeding after they return to work. If you intend to continue to breastfeed or express during your normal working hours then you must inform your employer in writing before you return to work. Give plenty of notice as your employer may need to make arrangements in order to support you.

Your employer has a legal obligation under Health and Safety legislation to make reasonable adjustments to ensure you have **access** to a safe and comfortable environment for you and your baby. Your employer is obliged to ensure you also have access to somewhere safe to rest and should also provide a safe fridge in which to store expressed milk and clean place for you to store sterilising equipment or a breast pump.

Your employer must not refuse you access to training or prevent you returning to work because you are breastfeeding. If they fail to support you breastfeeding they risk unlawful sex discrimination. Legal advice is available from the Working Families helpline 0300 012 0312.

Negative emotions, guilt and doubt

As a new parent you will be bombarded with opinions about what you should, or should not, do to be the 'perfect' mother.

It is difficult not to draw comparisons and then feel bad when we fail to reach the impossible idealised standard either at home or at work.

Negative emotions such as doubt and guilt can creep in.

Many women feel this way at some time. It is a harmful way of thinking. If not turned around it can pave the way to exhaustion as you work harder to keep up with the impossible dream or anxiety and depression.

However, there is much that can be done to reclaim control of control in life and achieve a positive emotional balance.

Use the exercises on the next page to help get to grips with feelings of guilt.

Guilt is situational. We feel guilt when our thoughts, actions or behaviours are in conflict with our values. It is also very easy to be guilt-tripped by values that society or somebody that we respect or love is saying that we should hold.

Getting to grips with guilt

1. Be aware of how you feel at a given moment. Recognising and labelling the emotion will help you regain control and release tension.
2. Ask yourself, "Is this guilt appropriate?" Are you feeling guilty because of conflict with your own values or the values others are trying to give you?
3. If the guilt is coming from conflict with your own values then act to resolve the conflict.
4. If the guilt is coming from conflict with values that others are giving you then ask yourself "Where is the evidence that I should feel guilty?" "What are the assumptions and what do we just not know? Is this feeling of guilt appropriate?" Inappropriate guilt is very harmful because it can rarely be resolved. Make the choice to let inappropriate guilt go.

TIPs

You are less likely to feel guilty when you have good emotional resilience:

- An exhausted you is no good to anyone. Build into your week some moments to recharge your batteries.
- Focus on the positive. Each day write down five good things that have happened during the day. They can be big or small, such a smile or great cup of coffee. Over a short period of time you will start to see the positive. It will enhance your mood and enable you to cope with situations better.

In some situations, guilt can be stubborn. Learn to disassociate yourself by using your imagination. See yourself as an actor in a film or play. Say to yourself "That's interesting" then analyse what's being played out and ask what advice you would give yourself in this situation. Consider how else can you see the situation? This will help quiet your emotions and allow your rational brain to take control.

If Things Go Wrong

Should any problem arise with your employer during your Maternity Leave or on your return to work seek clarification the situation.

Misunderstandings left to fester can easily escalate in to mistrust and hostility. Keeping in touch and maintaining dialogue can help to avoid conflict.

You are protected from discrimination under the equalities legislation. However, should, a redundancy situation arise and your role is no longer needed, you can be made redundant as long as the selection pool for redundancy has been fairly identified. If your role is made redundant whilst you are on Maternity Leave your employer must offer you any suitable, available job before it is offered to another member of staff. You are not expected to apply for an alternative role whilst you are on maternity leave.

If you are concerned about redundancy ask for help from a union representative, ACAS, your professional body, or call the Working Families helpline 0300 012 0312

A successful return to work: you can make it work!

Nearly half those working in the UK are women. More than 80% will become mothers. There are an increasing number of women (and men) who successfully integrated a career and a hands-on parenting role.

The journey to parenthood is one of the biggest transitions in life. Yes there will be some bumps, but with good preparation, professionalism, emotional awareness and a proactive approach to maintaining a strong Personal Brand, you too can make it work.

For further information on how you can develop a positive work-life-fit visit the Working Families website www.workingfamilies.org.uk.

10.key dates

Before your baby is born

In the early weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your Rights and Benefits. • Check your employer's handbook. • Check your entitlement to Healthy Start Vouchers and/or a Maternity Grant. • Visit your GP or midwife for a health check and to confirm pregnancy. • Clarify your values, needs and goals. • Consider how work and family will fit together. • Ask for a Health and Safety risk assessment.
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is common to verbally inform your manager that you are pregnant. • Book a 2nd meeting with you manager to start to develop an action plan. • Analyse the activities that make up your role. • Plan how you will tell your colleagues and career stakeholders.
Week 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) then average earnings on which this is based are calculated over the next 8 weeks. • Develop an action plan for handover, keeping in touch and returning to work. • Discuss with your employer when you will take annual leave as this continues to accrue during Maternity Leave.
Week 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your GP or midwife will be able to provide you with a MAT B1 certificate. You will need this in order to claim SMP.

Week 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you baby is still born after the end of week 24 then maternity rights apply in the same way as for a live birth.
Week 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide notice of your intention to take Maternity Leave and pay (i.e. by the end of the 15th week before the week in which your baby is due). • Apply for Maternity Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance from Job Centre Plus if not entitled to SMP. • Your partner / the baby's father needs to provide notice of intention to take Paternity Leave to their employer if they are entitled. • A good time to start ante-natal and/or parent craft classes. • Think about potential childcare options, some nurseries have long waiting lists.
Week 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternity leave and pay earliest start date (11 weeks before EWC) • Earliest date to apply for a Maternity Grant.
Week 36 onwards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final preparation and handovers. • Finalise your Keeping in Touch plan. • If you are absent from work for a pregnancy-related reason in the last 4 weeks your employer can start your Maternity Leave and pay early.
Actual week of childbirth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maternity Leave must start the day after your baby is born, if it has not already started. • You need to inform your employer that your baby has been born. • Register your baby's birth to get a birth certificate. • Contact the NCT or La Lech League for support with breastfeeding.

After your baby is born	
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for Tax Credits and Child Benefit. • Day 10 check up with midwife/health visitor.
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compulsory Maternity Leave is 2 weeks following birth (4 weeks if you work in a factory).
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postnatal health check with GP/obstetrician. • Formally apply for flexible working if your partner is taking Additional Paternity Leave when your baby is 20 weeks old. (It can take up to 14 weeks for a formal flexible working request to be agreed. • Implement your Keep in Touch plan. You can work up to 10 KIT days without bringing your Maternity Leave to an end. If your partner is taking Additional Paternity Leave then you need to use your KIT days before your partner can start their Additional Paternity Leave. • Investigate childcare and back-up options.
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catch up with colleagues and/or your manager if you haven't already done so. • Provide partner's employer with notice of APL start date if taking it when the baby is 20 weeks (8 weeks of notice are required). • Apply now for flexible working if you are returning to work at the end of Ordinary Maternity Leave. It can take up to 14 weeks to agree. • Work with your manager and your partner to agree a back to work plan including any phase back and KIT days. Agree roles and responsibilities at home. • Last date to apply for a Maternity Grant.

Week 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your partner/the baby's father can take APL from now if they are entitled and you return to work. You need to have used all 10 KIT days before APL can start.
Week 38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply now for flexible working. It can take up to 14 weeks to agree.
Week 49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give notice of any intention to take Parental Leave at the end of Additional Maternity Leave (21 days of notice are required).
Week 52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last week of Additional Maternity Leave if you have not already returned to work. If you want to return to work sooner than this, you must give 8 weeks written notice of your return date. You do not have to give any notice if you are returning at the end of 52 weeks' leave. You have the right to return to the same job. If this is not reasonably practicable, then a suitable job on very similar terms and conditions. If you are ill at the end of AML then your employer's normal sickness procedure applies.

After returning to work	
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your official return to work date is when your Maternity Leave ends, although you may have done up to 10 KIT days of work prior to this. • Book a date with your line manager to discuss objectives and career aspirations.
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on values, needs, goals and logistics. What additional support do you need? Do you need to change the way you are working?

11. Useful Contacts

Working Families

For help combining work
and family including advice
on benefits and rights
www.workingfamilies.org.uk
Helpline 0300 012 0312

Gingerbread

A charity supporting single
parents
www.gingerbread.org.uk
Helpline 0808 802 0925

NCT

For antenatal and post natal
advice and support on
parenting, health and
breastfeeding
www.nct.org.uk
Helpline 0300 330 0700

La Lech League

Friendly mother-to-mother
breastfeeding support from
pregnancy
<http://www.laleche.org.uk/>
Helpline 0845 1202918

Waving not drowning

Support combining work with
parenting a child with disabilities
www.workingfamilies.org.uk
Helpline 0207 017 0072

Family and childcare Trust

Advice on finding day care
for your child
www.familyandchildcaretrust.org.uk

Citizens Advice

Helping to solve legal,
money and other problems
through free, confidential
advice
www.citizensadvice.org.uk
Helpline Wales 08444 772020
Helpline England 08444 111 445

ACAS

Promoting good employee
relations
www.acas.org.uk
Helpline 08457 474747

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A Pocket Guide for Employees

Pregnancy, maternity leave and a successful return to work

This practical pocket guide provides an essential toolkit for expectant mothers from the moment you know you are pregnant right through to a successful return to work. Packed with tips, exercises, checklists and signposting, this pocket guide helps you resume your career with a positive work-life-fit.

Working Families is the UK's leading work-life organisation providing legal advice to employees and practical, evidence-based support to organisations and policy makers.

www.workingfamilies.org.uk