



Parental Leave Policy

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The purpose of this policy is to inform employees who are parents of their statutory rights and entitlements and in relation to Parental Leave. The policy incorporates the procedure to be followed for each occasion of Parental Leave.

1. Introduction

Parental Leave is the right for employees to take time off work without pay to look after a child or make arrangements for the child's welfare.

Parents can use it to spend more time with children and strike a better balance between their work and family commitments.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the TfN's policy on Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Adoption Leave and Shared Parental Leave where appropriate.

There are different entitlements for parents of a disabled child. For the sake of this policy a disabled child is defined as being a child who is entitled to receive a Disability Living Allowance.

The content of this policy has been considered with due regard for the equality and diversity requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

2. General Principles

An employee will not be treated less favourably because they are on or wish to take Parental Leave.

An employee will not be discriminated against on grounds of Parental Leave in the areas of training, selection, promotion, job security or in any other terms and conditions of employment.

An employee will not be excluded from communication and consultation because of absence due to Parental Leave. Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that employees on Parental Leave are kept informed of developments, training opportunities and consulted with, where appropriate, as if they were still at work. HR & Skills Representative will ensure that employees are informed of vacancies which may arise whilst they are on Parental Leave.

An employee will not be dismissed for a reason connected with the appropriate use of Parental Leave.

These provisions apply equally to full time and part time workers, regardless of hours worked.

TfN will ensure that the Parental Leave provisions available to employees are publicised through internal communication channels and Intranet.

3. Eligibility

An employee has the right to take unpaid Parental Leave provided that:

- They have at least one year of continuous service

- They are named on the birth certificate as a parent of a child or have acquired formal parental responsibility for a child.

The right to take Parental Leave lasts until the child's 18th birthday.

4. Length of Leave

The maximum of 18 weeks can be taken under Parental Leave. The pattern in which leave can be taken differs depending on whether or not their child has a disability.

Children with no disability:

- An employee is entitled to 18 weeks unpaid leave for each individual child (this includes multiple births such as twins etc.). Any leave taken with past employers will count towards the 18 week limit
- A maximum of four weeks Parental Leave can be taken in any one year
- Leave must be taken in blocks of a week. Parental Leave taken for part of a week counts as one full week of Parental Leave.

Children with disability:

- An employee is entitled to 18 weeks unpaid leave for each individual child (this includes multiple births such as twins etc.) Any leave taken with past employers will count towards the 18 week limit
- There is no maximum number of weeks allowed in any one year for leave taken for the care of a child with a disability (apart from the overall 18 week limit mentioned above)
- Parental Leave for a child with a disability can be taken as single days or multiples of single days.

5. Rate of Pay

All Parental Leave is unpaid. The appropriate deduction will be made from employee's salary during the month in which they have taken Parental Leave or as soon as possible after the leave has been taken if the leave was arranged at short notice. The amount is calculated on the basis of their annual salary (FTE for part-time) divided by 365 days multiplied by the number of days of absence.

6. Procedure

Notification

To apply for Parental Leave an employee must confirm the following details in writing:

- the date they wish to start leave

- the name, date of birth and, if appropriate, date of adoption of the child for whom leave is being taken
- the date that they wish to return from leave
- if appropriate, that the child is disabled
- how much Parental Leave they have already taken in respect of the child.

Parental Leave Request Form can be found on TfN Intranet.

An employee must also attach a copy of the child's birth certificate, maternity certificate or the adoption papers. If their child has a disability they should also enclose proof of entitlement to Disability Living Allowance (this step is only required for a first application for Parental Leave in respect of a particular child).

Written request must be submitted to employee's immediate Line Manager with a copy sent to HR & Skills Representative at least 21 days before they wish the period of Parental Leave to start using Parental Leave Request Form which can be found on our Intranet.

Postponement

The application for Parental Leave can be postponed by the TfN for a period of up to six months. This may happen if the operation of the organisation would be unduly disrupted if they took leave at the time the employee requested. The only exception to this is where leave is requested for the period immediately after the birth or adoption of a child.

Any decision to postpone Parental Leave will be confirmed by HR & Skills Representative in writing within 7 days of the original request being received. The written confirmation will state the reasons for the postponement.

A meeting will then be arranged between the employee and their Line Manager to agree alternative dates for their Parental Leave.

Confirmation of leave

The HR & Skills Representative will write to the employee following agreement of their dates of Parental Leave to confirm dates of leave and arrangements for deductions to be taken from their salary for the unpaid leave.

In cases where more than one application has been submitted for Parental Leave in one department, TfN will make a fair and reasonable decision based on individual needs and this may include approval on 'first come first served' basis.

7. Return to work

An employee is entitled to return to the same job except where:

- Parental Leave is taken for a continuous period of more than 4 weeks; or
- The period of leave is taken immediately following additional maternity leave.

In either of the above cases an employee will be entitled to return to the same job unless it is not reasonably practicable for them to do so at the end of the period of Parental Leave.

If, in such cases, it is not reasonably practicable for an employee to return to the same job, they will be entitled to return to another job which is suitable and appropriate for them in the circumstances.

8. Abuse of the Parental Leave Policy

If an employee dishonestly claims Parental Leave, for example using Parental Leave to go on a holiday without their child or fraudulently claiming to be eligible to take Parental Leave, disciplinary action can be taken as outlined in TfN's Disciplinary Policy.

9. Parental Leave for twins under 18 years of age

Employees are entitled to Parental Leave for each child. So they are entitled to two lots of 18 weeks for each child.

10. Holiday Accrual during Parental Leave

Terms and conditions (including holiday accrual) continue as usual with the exception of pay.

11. Recording of Parental Leave

The HR & Skills Representative will record the occasions on which the employee has taken Parental Leave. As entitlement to Parental Leave relates to each individual child it is important to state the name of the child in each written request for Parental Leave.

12. Taking Parental Leave

An employee does not have to take the full week off. If they submit their application for three days Parental Leave and the request is accepted they will be given three days unpaid leave.

However, one full week will be deducted from their remaining Parental Leave entitlement (unless your child has disability, in which case they can take Parental Leave in multiples of a single day).

13. Additional Information

Continuity of Employment

During the period of Parental Leave employees will continue to accrue continuous service.

Job Opportunities

TfN does not wish employees to miss out on opportunities for promotion or progression. All internal job advertisements can be sent to a home email account or posted to employee's home address.

Staying in Touch

During the period of leave, TfN wishes to respect employee's special time with their child, so we will not contact them if we can avoid it. However, if there are any significant changes in the business area in which they work or if training opportunities arise their Line Manager will contact them to make sure that they are kept up to date with our current business position.

Pensions/Health Care Contributions

Periods of unpaid leave do not count as reckonable service for the purposes of the pension scheme, therefore periods of Parental Leave will not count towards employee's pensionable service.

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