



Shared Parental Leave (Adoption) Policy

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Shared Parental Leave (Adoption) Policy

About this policy

This policy outlines the arrangements for shared parental leave and pay in relation to the adoption of a child. If you or your partner are pregnant or have given birth please see the Shared Parental Leave (Birth) Policy instead.

This policy applies to employees. It does not apply to agency workers or self-employed contractors.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

Frequently used terms

The definitions in this paragraph apply in this policy.

Partner: your spouse, civil partner or someone living with you in an enduring family relationship at the time the child is placed for adoption, but not your sibling, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew.

Qualifying Week: the week the adoption agency notifies you that you have been matched with a child for adoption.

What is shared parental leave?

Shared parental leave (SPL) is a form of leave that may be available where an adoption agency places a child with you and/or your partner on or after 5 April 2015.

It gives you and your partner more flexibility in how to share the care of your child in the first year after birth than simply taking maternity and paternity leave. Assuming you are both eligible, you will be able to choose how to split the available leave between you, and can decide to be off work at the same time or at different times. You may be able to take leave in more than one block.

Entitlement

You may be entitled to SPL if an adoption agency has placed a child with you and/or your partner for adoption and you intend to share the main responsibility for the care of the child with your partner.

The following conditions must be fulfilled:

- a) you must have at least 26 weeks continuous employment with us by the end of the Qualifying Week, and still be employed by us in the week before the leave is to be taken;
- b) your partner must have worked (in an employed or self-employed capacity) in at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the Qualifying Week and had average weekly earnings of at least £30 during 13 of those weeks; and
- c) you and your partner must give the necessary statutory notices and declarations as summarised below, including notice to end adoption leave or statutory adoption pay (SAP).

Either you or your partner must qualify for statutory adoption leave and/or SAP and must take at least two weeks of adoption leave and/or pay.

If your partner is taking adoption leave and/or claiming SAP, you may be entitled to two weeks' paternity leave and pay (see our Paternity Leave Policy). You should consider using this before taking SPL. Paternity leave is additional to any SPL entitlement you may have, but you will lose any untaken paternity leave entitlement once you start a period of SPL.

The total amount of SPL available is 52 weeks, less the weeks of adoption leave taken by either you or partner (or the weeks in which your partner has been in receipt of SAP if they were not entitled to adoption leave).

Opting in to shared parental leave and pay

Not less than eight weeks before the date you intend your SPL to start, you must give us a written opt-in notice which includes:

- a) your name and your partner's name;
- b) if you are taking adoption leave, your adoption leave start and end dates;
- c) if you are not taking adoption leave, your partner's adoption leave start and end dates, or if your partner is not entitled to adoption leave, the start and end dates of their SAP;
- d) the total SPL available, which is 52 weeks minus the number of weeks' adoption leave or SAP taken or to be taken by you or your partner;
- e) how many weeks of the available SPL will be allocated to you and how many to your partner (you can change the allocation by giving us a further written notice, and you do not have to use your full allocation);
- f) if you are claiming statutory shared parental pay (ShPP), the total ShPP available, which is 39 weeks minus the number of weeks of SAP taken or to be taken);
- g) how many weeks of the available ShPP will be allocated to you and how many to your partner (you can change the allocation by giving us a further written notice, and you do not have to use your full allocation);
- h) an indication of the pattern of leave you are thinking of taking, including suggested start and end dates for each period of leave (see paragraph 0 and paragraph 0 for information on taking leave). This indication will not be binding at this stage, but please give as much information as you can about your future intentions; and
- i) declarations by you and your partner that you both meet the statutory conditions to enable you to take SPL and ShPP.

Ending your adoption leave

If you are taking or intend to take adoption leave and want to opt into the SPL scheme, you must give us at least eight weeks' written notice to end your adoption leave (a curtailment

notice). The notice must state the date your adoption leave will end. You can give the notice before or after adoption leave starts, but you must take at least two weeks' adoption leave.

You must also give us, at the same time as the curtailment notice, a notice to opt into the SPL scheme (see paragraph 0) or a written declaration that your partner has given their employer an opt-in notice and that you have given the necessary declarations in that notice.

If your partner is eligible to take SPL from their employer they cannot start it until you have given us your curtailment notice.

The curtailment notice is binding on you and cannot usually be revoked. You can only revoke a curtailment notice if your adoption leave has not yet ended and one of the following applies:

- a) if you realise that neither you nor your partner are in fact eligible for SPL or ShPP, in which case you can revoke the curtailment notice in writing up to eight weeks after it was given;
- b) if your partner has died.

Once you have revoked a curtailment notice you will be unable to opt back in to the SPL scheme.

Ending your partner's adoption leave or pay

If your partner is taking adoption leave or claiming SAP from their employer, you will only be able to take SPL once your partner has either:

- a) returned to work;
- b) given their employer a curtailment notice to end adoption leave; or
- c) given their employer a curtailment notice to end SAP (if they are entitled to SAP but not adoption leave).

Evidence of entitlement

You must provide on request:

- a) One or more documents from the adoption agency showing the agency's name and address and the expected placement date; and
- b) The name and address of your partner's employer (or a declaration that they have no employer).]

Booking your SPL dates

Having opted into the SPL system you will need to give a period of leave notice telling us the start and end dates of your leave. This can be given at the same time as your opt-in notice, or it can be given later, as long as it is given at least eight weeks before the start of your leave. You

must also state in your period of leave notice the dates on which you intend to claim ShPP, if applicable.

If your period of leave notice gives dates for a single continuous block of SPL you will be entitled to take the leave set out in the notice.

You can give up to three period of leave notices. This may enable you to take up to three separate blocks of SPL (although if you give a notice to vary or cancel a period of leave this will in most cases count as a further period of leave notice). [In exceptional circumstances we may allow you to give more than three period of leave notices but there is no obligation for us to do so.]

Procedure for requesting split periods of SPL

In general, a period of leave notice should set out a single continuous block of leave. We may, in some cases, be willing to consider a period of leave notice where the SPL is split into shorter periods (of at least a week) with periods of work in between. It is best to discuss this with your manager and HR in good time before formally submitting your period of leave notice. This will give us more time to consider the request and hopefully agree a pattern of leave with you from the start.

You must submit a period of leave notice setting out the requested pattern of leave at least eight weeks before the requested start date. If we are unable to agree to your request straight away, there will be a two-week discussion period. At the end of that period, we will confirm any agreed arrangements in writing. If we have not reached an agreement, you will be entitled to take the full amount of requested SPL as one continuous block, starting on the start date given in your notice (for example, if you requested three separate periods of four weeks each, they will be combined into one 12-week period of leave). Alternatively, you may:

- a) choose a new start date (which must be at least eight weeks after your original period of leave notice was given), and tell us within five days of the end of the two-week discussion period; or
- b) withdraw your period of leave notice within two days of the end of the two-week discussion period (in which case it will not be counted and you may submit a new one if you choose).

Changing the dates or cancelling your SPL

You can cancel a period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the start date in the period of leave notice.

You can change the start date for a period of leave, or the length of the period of leave, by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the original start date and the new start date.

You can change the end date for a period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the original end date and the new end date.

You can change split periods of leave into a single continuous period of leave by notifying us in writing at least eight weeks before the start date.

You can request that a continuous period of leave be split into two or more discontinuous periods with periods of work in between. We will consider any such request as set out in paragraph 0.

A notice to change or cancel a period of leave will count as one of your three periods of leave notices, unless:

- a) the variation is a result of the child being placed with you earlier or later than the expected placement date;
- b) the variation is at our request; or
- c) we agree otherwise.

Shared parental pay

You may be able to claim Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) of up to 39 weeks (less any weeks of SAP claimed by you or your partner) if you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with us at the end of the Qualifying Week and your average earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year. ShPP is paid by employers at a rate set by the government each year.

[You will qualify for company shared parental pay if you have been continuously employed during the [12]-month period ending with the Qualifying Week [and did not take any maternity, adoption or shared parental leave during the [12] months ending with the Qualifying Week].]

[Company shared parental pay is paid at the full rate of your normal basic salary for the first [[NUMBER] weeks OR months] [and at half basic salary for the next [[NUMBER] weeks OR months]]. It includes any ShPP due for the weeks in question. Any company adoption or paternity pay you have received will be counted towards your company shared parental pay entitlement.]

[Company shared parental pay will only be paid if you are also claiming ShPP for the period in question.]

[Payment of company shared parental pay is conditional upon you confirming in writing, before starting SPL, that you intend to return to work for at least [six] months after the end your SPL. If you later decide not to return to work for this minimum period, you must repay any company shared parental pay (but not ShPP).]

Other terms during shared parental leave

Your terms and conditions of employment remain in force during SPL, except for the terms relating to pay.

Annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue at the rate provided under your contract. If your SPL will continue into the next holiday year, any holiday entitlement that cannot reasonably be taken before starting your leave can be carried over [and must be taken immediately before returning to work unless your manager agrees otherwise]. [You should try to limit carry over to one week's holiday or less. Carry over of more than one week is at your manager's discretion]. Please discuss your holiday plans with your manager in good time before starting SPL. All holiday dates are subject to approval by your manager.

If you are a member of the pension scheme, we will make employer pension contributions during any period of paid SPL, based on your normal salary, in accordance with the pension scheme rules. Any employee contributions you make will be based on the amount of any shared parental pay you are receiving, unless you inform [the Human Resources Department **OR** the Pensions Administrator] that you wish to make up any shortfall.

Keeping in touch

We may make reasonable contact with you from time to time during your SPL although we will keep this to a minimum. This may include contacting you to discuss arrangements for your return to work.

You may ask or be asked to work (including attending training) on up to 20 "keeping-in-touch" days (KIT days) during your SPL. This is in addition to any KIT days that you may have taken during adoption leave. KIT days are not compulsory and must be discussed and agreed with your line manager.

You will be paid at your normal basic rate of pay for time spent working on a KIT day and this will be inclusive of any shared parental pay entitlement. [Alternatively, you may agree with [your line manager to receive the equivalent paid time off in lieu.]

Returning to work

If you want to end a period of SPL early, you must give us eight weeks' written notice of the new return date. If you have already given us three period of leave notices you will not be able to end your SPL early without our agreement.

If you want to extend your SPL, assuming you still have unused SPL entitlement remaining, you must give us a written notice at least eight weeks before the date you were due to return to work. If you have already given us three period of leave notices you will not be able to extend your SPL without our agreement. You may instead be able to request annual leave or ordinary parental leave (see our Parental Leave Policy), subject to the needs of our business.

You are normally entitled to return to work in the position you held before starting SPL, and on the same terms of employment. However, if it is not reasonably practicable for us to allow you to return into the same position, we may give you another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable, but only in the following circumstances:

- a) if your SPL and any adoption or paternity leave you have taken adds up to more than 26 weeks in total (whether or not taken consecutively); or
- b) if you took SPL consecutively with more than four weeks of ordinary parental leave.

If you want to change your hours or other working arrangements on return from SPL you should make a request under our Flexible Working Policy. It is helpful if such requests are made as early as possible.

If you decide you do not want to return to work you should give notice of resignation in accordance with your contract. [This may have an impact on your entitlement to company shared parental pay.]