

Leave Policy

This policy covers the following:

1. Annual Leave
2. Volunteer Leave
3. Domestic Emergencies
4. Carer Leave
5. Sick Leave
6. Serious Illness / Bereavement Leave
7. Adoption, Maternity, Paternity & Shared Parental Leave
8. Other types of Special Leave
9. Sabbatical
10. Flexible Working
11. Other Policies

1. ANNUAL LEAVE

Each employee of Growing Hope and Growing Hope local charities will receive 25 days of annual leave plus 8 bank holidays. Part time staff will receive the pro rata equivalent of the annual leave allowance.

Each employee receives an additional day of annual leave per year of service up to 7 additional days on a pro-rata basis. All leave, including bank holidays, should be recorded on the employees leave record

Leave should be discussed and agreed by the line manager. All leave must be logged by the employee within their leave record. For Clinic Managers, leave should be approved by the Chair of Trustees, and the Pastoral Supervisor and CEO should be informed.

Employees can carry over a maximum of 3 days annual leave per year, at the discretion of their line manager.

2. VOLUNTEER LEAVE

Each employee will receive one week of leave per year (at their FTE) which they may take for volunteering each year. Volunteer leave should be agreed by the line manager and fall in line with the values of Growing Hope and must be logged by the employee within their leave record. For Clinic Managers, volunteer leave should be approved by the Chair of Trustees, and the Pastoral Supervisor and CEO should be informed.

3. DOMESTIC EMERGENCIES

Definition

Leave under this heading can be defined as arrangements granted when members of staff need to be absent from work under circumstances not covered by sick leave, annual leave, bereavement leave, maternity leave, paternity leave, parental leave, adoption and fostering leave, or flexible working arrangements. It is urgent and unforeseen.

Entitlement

Up to one working week's paid leave can be allocated by the line manager, taking into consideration the amount of time reasonably required to attend to the situation which has arisen.

In cases of exceptional difficulty, the managers can extend this period for up to a further working week and has the discretion to determine whether this should be on a paid or unpaid basis. It may, however, be considered appropriate for the member of staff to utilise annual leave under circumstances where the situation, while still important, has ceased to be an emergency.

In exceptional circumstances, a member of staff may be faced with long-term **difficulties**, and the manager should consider other options to assist in the situation. This may include a reduction in working hours, an alteration to the employee's shift pattern, a move to another post etc.

There is no requirement for the approved number of days to be taken in one block.

Notification

Members of staff must make their line manager aware of their potential need for leave at the earliest opportunity and should keep in regular contact throughout this period. Leave should be recorded on the employee's leave record and in the case of Growing Hope local charities, the Chair of Trustees of the local charity should also be notified, in addition to the Pastoral Supervisor and CEO in the case of Clinic Managers.

4. CARER LEAVE

Definition

Where members of staff are responsible for caring for a spouse or civil partner, child, parent, close relative or other dependent who relies on the employee for assistance and where work and home life can cause conflicting pressures. Carer leave is designed to encourage managers to adopt flexible working practices at times when employees need assistance to balance their caring responsibilities with their working commitments. This provision is primarily for those who are required to provide care for a dependent.

Local Arrangements

The needs of staff who care for a spouse or civil partner, child, parent, close relative or other dependent who relies on the employee for assistance, can often be very simple e.g. knowing that

they will be able to leave work on time each day or being able to make a telephone call home during the day to check that all is well. Alternatively, a variation in the working pattern, such as altered shifts, or earlier/later starting and stopping times, may provide an adequate solution. Needs such as these may be relatively easy to satisfy and it is expected that the individual's manager will provide sympathetic support and strive to reach a mutually acceptable solution to the employee's requirements that balances these with the needs of the service.

Short periods of time off

There may be circumstances when an employee needs a short period of time off e.g. to accompany a dependent to hospital in an emergency, etc.

Short Term Carer Leave allows for up to one working week's paid leave, which can be extended by up to a further working week of paid leave, to deal with urgent unforeseen care needs. Employees are allocated a maximum of two weeks (at the full time equivalent) of carers leave per year. This is accrued throughout the year and can include separate instances of leave. After this, any carers leave taken will be unpaid or using annual leave. Employees are responsible for recording this within their leave record.

Line managers must ensure that the Senior Finance Officer (accounts@growinghope.org.uk) is updated if leave exceeds two weeks.

Long-term Arrangements

There may, however, be times when the caring demands on the employee are such that the individual is forced to consider more extreme measures, such as, altering contractual work patterns, a long-term reduction in working hours etc, to meet their caring commitments. While each case must, quite obviously, be judged on its individual merits, Growing Hope is committed to ensuring that where the reason for an employee requesting a reduction in contracted hours is for the provision of care, the individual's case will be considered sympathetically and will not be unreasonably denied.

Employees with caring responsibilities, who recognise the need to alter their contracted working hours on a long-term basis, should discuss the matter with their manager in the first instance. Where the manager feels unable, because of the needs of the service, to agree to the employee's request, other alternatives should be considered such as secondment or redeployment.

5. SICK LEAVE

Short Term sickness

- If you are absent from work owing to sickness (physical or mental health) or injury, you must report this to your line manager before 9am on the first day of leave. Clinic Managers should inform their Pastoral Supervisor, their Chair of Trustees and the Executive Assistant (Growing Hope). Sick Leave should be logged on the employees leave record.

- You should continue to report to your line manager each day if you need to remain off sick.
- If you require more than 7 calendar days sick leave you must present a 'fit note' from a doctor. Failure to report sickness may result in disciplinary action being taken and payments which would otherwise be made to you during sickness absence being withheld.
- Employees may take sick leave if they become ill on or before a period of annual leave. This must be discussed with your line manager.
- If non-continuous sick leave totals more than 28 days in a year, then further sick pay will be calculated as per the long-term sick pay arrangements below.

Long Term sickness

Growing Hope has a responsibility for the health, safety and welfare of its employees. Growing Hope recognises that a certain level of sickness absence is inevitable in any organisation and that factors affecting sickness levels can vary widely. Growing Hope aims to promote a positive and supportive payment policy in order to reduce absence and support staff returning to work.

A continuous absence of 28 days or more constitutes long term sickness.

Growing Hope will endeavour to assist in any reasonable way that it can to facilitate a return to work and take such measures as are reasonably practicable to ease the medical condition if possible.

Entitlements

A staff member is entitled to Statutory Sick pay, payable at the rate set by the government (<https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>) while off sick provided that they meet the qualifications laid down by the government.

Please see <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay/eligibility> for the relevant qualifications.

Growing Hope's Occupational Sick Pay is made up of Statutory Sick Pay (the rate of SSP is usually set by the government to take effect from 6th April each year) and the difference between that and the employee's normal salary or half pay, as appropriate. It will be paid to staff members at the following rates:

Week 1-8	SSP and OSP equal to full pay
Week 9-12	SSP and OSP equal to half of normal pay
Week 13 onwards	SSP only, up to the maximum of 28 weeks

This entitlement will take into consideration any sickness absence over a rolling year. A rolling year is the 12-month period prior to the first day of the current absence.

Employees are entitled to statutory sick pay from the first day of sickness absence. Statutory sick pay is paid for the days they would have worked. The days they would have worked are called 'qualifying days'.

Statutory sick pay is paid for a maximum of 28 weeks for one or more linked Periods of Incapacity to Work (PIW) in a three-year period. Two or more linked periods which are separated by eight weeks or less are said to be linked and are counted as one period.

An outline of this is found in Appendix 1.

Sickness and annual leave

Staff who are off work due to sickness may apply to take annual leave whilst they are absent but must follow the normal request and authorisation procedures. Annual leave will be paid at the full rate of pay. Members of staff cannot request annual leave retrospectively.

6. SERIOUS ILLNESS / BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

Definition

To provide reasonable support to members of staff at times of distress due to the unforeseen illness, or the death, of a spouse or civil partner, child, parent, close relative or other dependent who relies on the employee for assistance.

Entitlement

Line Managers have the discretion to award up to one working week's paid leave in each occurrence of serious difficulty. In particularly distressing circumstances, the manager may extend this by up to a further week of paid or unpaid leave.

Duration

In considering the amount of leave, the line manager should take into account the specific circumstances, e.g. the relationship between the member of staff and the person in question, whether the member of staff has a responsibility for the estate of the deceased, the availability of other relatives or friends and the distance to be travelled in dealing with such matters.

Notification

Members of staff must make their line manager aware of the potential need for leave at the earliest opportunity and should keep in regular contact throughout that period. Leave should be recorded on the employees leave record and in the case of Clinic Managers, the Chair of Trustees, Pastoral Supervisor and CEO should be notified.

7. ADOPTION, MATERNITY, PATERNITY AND SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

This Policy is intended to give the employee relevant information and is not an exhaustive account of all the regulations. Growing Hope has made reference to the Agenda for Change (NHS document) Terms and Conditions of Service handbook on Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Parental and related leave in order that it matches the leave expectations health care professionals would receive elsewhere.

Maternity leave is a period of time off from work that a mother is entitled to take to recover from childbirth and care for her newborn child and the right to return to the employee's post, or an alternative post, on no less favourable conditions.

Adoption leave is the right to time off work to have the employee's child placed with the employee and the right to return to the employee's post, or an alternative post, on no less favourable conditions.

The employee's entitlement to maternity /adoption provision will vary according to the employee's length of service within Growing Hope / Growing Hope Local Charity. The employee's personal decision of whether to return to work or not after maternity/adoption leave will also affect the employee's benefits.

ORDINARY MATERNITY/ADOPTION LEAVE (OML/OAL)

The entitlement to a period of 26 weeks leave regardless of how long an employee has worked for Growing Hope / Growing Hope Local Charity. This will be unpaid unless an employee qualifies for Statutory Maternity Pay or Maternity allowance.

ADDITIONAL MATERNITY/ADOPTION LEAVE (AML/AAL)

The entitlement to a further period of up to 26 weeks unpaid leave regardless of how long an employee has worked for Growing Hope / Growing Hope Local Charity.

STATUTORY MATERNITY/ADOPTION PAY (SMP/SAP)

The minimum level of Maternity/Adoption Pay that an employee is entitled to through State provision if an employee has 26 weeks continuous service with a Growing Hope / Growing Hope Local Charity by the 15th week before their expected week of childbirth/adoption (EWC/EWA) and paid sufficient National Insurance (NI) Contributions.

STATUTORY MATERNITY/ADOPTION ALLOWANCE (SMA/SAA)

Allowance paid by Department of Work and Pensions to those employees, who do not qualify for Statutory Maternity Pay. Eligibility is determined by the above Government Departments.

OCCUPATIONAL MATERNITY/ADOPTION PAY (OMP/OMA) - Based on eligibility. Maternity/Adoption Pay, which is payable by your Employer.

QUALIFYING WEEK (QW)

15th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC).

MAT B1 FORM

The certificate provided by the employee's GP or Midwife, anticipating the potential date of the birth of their baby. Usually issued to employees between 24-26 weeks into pregnancy.

DATE OF PLACEMENT/MATCHING CERTIFICATE

To claim adoption leave, you need to tell your employer the date you plan to start leave and the "date of placement" (when the child starts living with you) within seven days of being matched with a child. You must also provide proof of adoption, such as a matching certificate, to receive pay.

KEEPING IN TOUCH DAYS (KIT)

The employees' entitlement to Keeping in Touch (KIT) days.

DEPARTMENT FOR WORK AND PENSIONS (DWP)

PATERNITY LEAVE

The entitlement of a father, or mother's partner, to take 1 or 2 weeks of statutory paternity leave to care for a new child

A. Duties and responsibilities

Employee

Employees are responsible for co-operating with the Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental leave procedures and should make every effort to attend any meetings arranged by their line manager.

Line Manager

Requests for Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental leave should be addressed without any undue delay on the part of the line manager.

The line manager must view any applications with an open mind and follow a fair and justifiable decision-making process.

Where it is decided that a refusal to grant a Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental leave application is to be referred to a grievance hearing, the line manager must prepare a thorough management case outlining their decision-making rationale for consideration by the grievance panel.

Growing Hope trustee board (Local or National)

The Growing Hope local trustees* or the Director of Operations in the case of Growing Hope National are responsible for the creation and maintenance of records of applications for Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental leave within Growing Hope in line with best practice for information governance.

The trustees (in the case of the local charities) should support, where necessary, line managers through the Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Parental leave procedures, including the grievance stage if required.

B. Health and Safety

Staff who are pregnant are encouraged to disclose their pregnancy to their line manager as soon as they are comfortable to do so, to allow Growing Hope to provide full support. However, staff must inform their line manager that they are pregnant no later than the 15th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC) and state their intentions in an email.

The MATB1 Certificate confirms the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC), and it will be available after the 20th week before the EWC, from a GP or midwife. The original must be submitted with the date that maternity leave is expected to start.

For Adoption, a Matching Certificate should be attached, (please note that Maternity and Adoption pay cannot be processed without the MAT B1 or Matching Certificate).

Following the receipt of these forms Growing Hope local trustees* or the Director of Operations in the case of Growing Hope National, will respond with a written letter confirming the entitled leave and start date of this leave for the employee.

The employee's line manager** will undertake a risk assessment to ascertain whether there are any significant risks to the employee's health and safety which may affect the employee's pregnancy. Growing Hope is obliged to assess the physical, biological, chemical risks, working conditions and processes. These risks will vary depending on an employee's health, and at different stages of their pregnancy.

The actual risk to the employee depends on the 'nature, degree and duration of the exposure' in each case, therefore each case will be looked up on its own merits. Some of the more common risks might be:

- lifting/carrying of heavy loads;
- standing or sitting for long lengths of time;
- exposure to infectious diseases;
- work-related stress;
- workstations and posture;
- exposure to radioactive material;
- threat of violence in the workplace;
- long working hours; excessively noisy workplaces.

An employee will be asked to help with the risk assessment. It is important that any advice an employee has received from their doctor or midwife, which could impact on the assessment, is passed on to the employee's line manager. The risk assessment will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure the employees' health and safety needs are being met.

Once the assessment has taken place, the Growing Hope local trustees* or the Director of Operations in the case of Growing Hope National, must decide what appropriate measure to take in response to the results of the assessment. The results and measures which are decided will be communicated to the employee and/or the employee's representative.

Assessment will take place in respect of 'all activities liable to involve a specific risk of exposure to the agents, processes or working conditions.

Where the assessment reveals a risk to the employee's health and safety, the Growing Hope local trustee board* or the Director of Operations in the case of Growing Hope National, must make a temporary adjustment to the employee's working condition and/or hours of work so that the employee is not exposed to the risk.

However, if having ascertained that there is a risk, it is in fact not, 'technically and/or objectively feasible or cannot reasonably be required on duly substantiated grounds', the employee should be moved to another job to avoid exposure to the risk. If this is not possible, the employee will be suspended on pay for such a period as is necessary for the employee's health and safety. During this period of absence, the employee's contractual rights subsist. However, if the employee unreasonably refuses an offer of suitable alternative employment, the employee will lose the right to remuneration.

If an employee is returning to work, they can continue to breastfeed if preferred. It is for an employee to decide for how long they wish to breastfeed and returning to work should not impact on this.

On returning to work an employee should provide their employer with written notification that they are breastfeeding and if possible, ideally let their employer know before they return. The employee's line manager must then conduct a specific risk assessment.

An employer is required to provide somewhere for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers to rest. HSE recommends to employers that it is good practice to provide a private, healthy and safe environment for nursing mothers to express and store milk (but this is not a legal requirement). It is not suitable to use toilets for this purpose.

C. Maternity/Adoption Leave and Pay

When the employee receives medical confirmation of pregnancy, the employee should notify their manager of this, the expected week of childbirth (EWC) and the date on which the employee wants to commence Maternity and Adoption leave, (which must not be a date earlier than the 11th week before the EWC or more than 14 days before the child is placed with the family).

Growing Hope undertakes to ensure that Maternity and Adoption leave does not cause staff any long-term disadvantage in relation to training needs and/or self-development.

Employees returning to work during or at the end of the first 26 weeks (Ordinary maternity/adoption leave, or Paternity Leave) are entitled to return to the same job on the same terms and conditions.

Employees taking more than 26 weeks (Additional maternity/adoption leave) are also entitled to return to the same job on the same terms and conditions. However, if that isn't reasonably practicable the employee is entitled to return to a suitable job on terms and conditions, which are no less favourable.

The employee is entitled to take up to a maximum of 52 weeks Maternity/Adoption Leave.

This is made up of two parts:

- ***Ordinary Maternity and Adoption Leave (OML)***

The first 26 weeks of Leave is referred to as Ordinary Maternity /Adoption Leave. Employees are entitled to take 26 weeks ordinary Maternity or Adoption leave irrespective of their length of service, or the number of hours worked each week, provided they comply with certain notification requirements.

- ***Additional Maternity and Adoption Leave (AML)***

Employees who qualify for ordinary Maternity or Adoption leave will also qualify for Additional Maternity Leave (AML). This is a further 26-week period that starts the day after the OML ends.

Compulsory Maternity leave Legislation prohibits mothers from returning to work during the two-week period immediately after the birth of their child.

Antenatal Care

All pregnant women have a statutory right to paid time off for antenatal care, regardless of length of service or the number of hours worked. Antenatal care may include relaxation and parent craft classes recommended by the employee's doctor, midwife or health visitor.

After the employee's first antenatal appointment, the employee should show the employee's manager the appointment card and discuss the employee's need for time off, so that the employee's manager has time to make any necessary arrangements to cover the employee's absence. In exceptional circumstances, the employee's manager may ask the employee to change the time of their appointment, if it will be inconvenient to the department and the employee should comply with this if practical.

Commencement of Maternity / Adoption Leave

The employee may commence maternity leave at any time from 11th week before the expected week of confinement up to the date of birth, provided that the notification procedures have been complied with.

Maternity leave will automatically commence in the event of absence from work for any pregnancy related illness during the four weeks prior to the commencement of the EWC, regardless of when maternity leave was actually planned to begin.

Maternity leave will begin automatically on the day after the first day of the employee's absence from work in such cases.

If an employee gives birth before the employee's maternity leave period was due to commence, she must notify Growing Hope in writing as soon as is reasonably practicable of the date on which she gave birth. In this instance, the maternity leave period will commence automatically on the day after the date of birth.

Adoption leave can start:

- up to 14 days before the date the child starts living with you (UK adoptions)
- when the child arrives in the UK or within 28 days of this date (overseas adoptions)
- the day the child's born or the day after (if you've used a surrogate to have a child)

Once Growing Hope has been notified of the date on which the Maternity or Adoption leave is due to commence (see below), it is still possible to vary this date provided notification of the variation is given to their manager at least 28 days before the new date, (unless this is not reasonably practicable). For Adoption leave you must tell your employer within 28 days if the date of placement (or UK arrival date for overseas adoptions) changes.

Sickness during pregnancy

If the employee is sick for a pregnancy related reason at any time during the four weeks before the expected week of childbirth, the employee's maternity leave will automatically begin on the day after the first day of the absence, even if that day is before the date the employee has notified as the date on which the employee's maternity leave to begin. If the employee is sick earlier than this, or as a result of a reason other than the employee's pregnancy, the absence will be recorded in the normal manner.

Special consideration will be given to managing the health and attendance of pregnant women and pregnancy related absences in relation to discussing sickness and work absences.

Premature and Stillbirth

Where an employee's baby is born alive prematurely i.e. at least 11 weeks before the baby is due, the employee can agree with the line manager for the Maternity and Adoption leave to be split, taking a minimum of two weeks leave immediately after the childbirth and the rest of the leave when the baby is discharged from Hospital.

In the event of a stillbirth occurring from the beginning of the 25th week of pregnancy, the employee will be entitled to the same amount of Maternity Leave and pay as if her baby was born alive.

Where an employee has a miscarriage before the end of the 24th week of pregnancy, normal sick leave provisions will apply.

Statutory Maternity and Adoption Pay

If an employee has at least 26 weeks' continuous service at the start of the 15th week before their child is born, they will normally be entitled to receive Statutory Maternity and Adoption pay (SMP & SAP) whether or not they intend to return to work.

Statutory Maternity and Adoption pay is payable at two rates for a maximum of 39 weeks. For the first six weeks the higher rate of either Statutory Maternity pay or 90% of salary will be paid.

After this time employees will be paid at the rate of Statutory Maternity Pay or 90% of their earnings, whichever is less. Statutory pay rates can be found on the gov.uk website (<https://www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave/pay>)

Occupational Maternity and Adoption Pay

Employees who have completed at least 26 weeks of continuous service with Growing Hope by the start of the expected week of childbirth, or by the date of placement for adoption, are eligible for Occupational Maternity or Adoption Pay.

Employees who intend to return to work for a minimum of 3 months after their leave are also entitled to Occupational Maternity or Adoption Pay. This is paid at 8 weeks full pay inclusive of Maternity or Adoption Allowance or Statutory Maternity or Adoption Pay, 18 weeks half pay plus Maternity or Adoption Allowance or Statutory Maternity or Adoption Pay.

Full pay is calculated by taking the average over the eight-week period prior to the qualifying week. For monthly paid staff this will include all the pay the employee receives in the 2 months up to and including the last normal pay day before the end of the qualifying week. The qualifying week is 15 weeks before the expected week of childbirth.

Should the employee opt to receive Occupational Maternity/Adoption pay and then not return to undertake the 3 months of work required within this policy, they will be liable to repay the difference between Statutory Pay and the Occupational Pay received within 6 months.

Maternity or Adoption pay will be paid into the employee's bank account on the same date that they would have received their salary and will be subject to the usual deductions for tax, National Insurance (NI) and pension contributions.

Maternity/Adoption Allowance

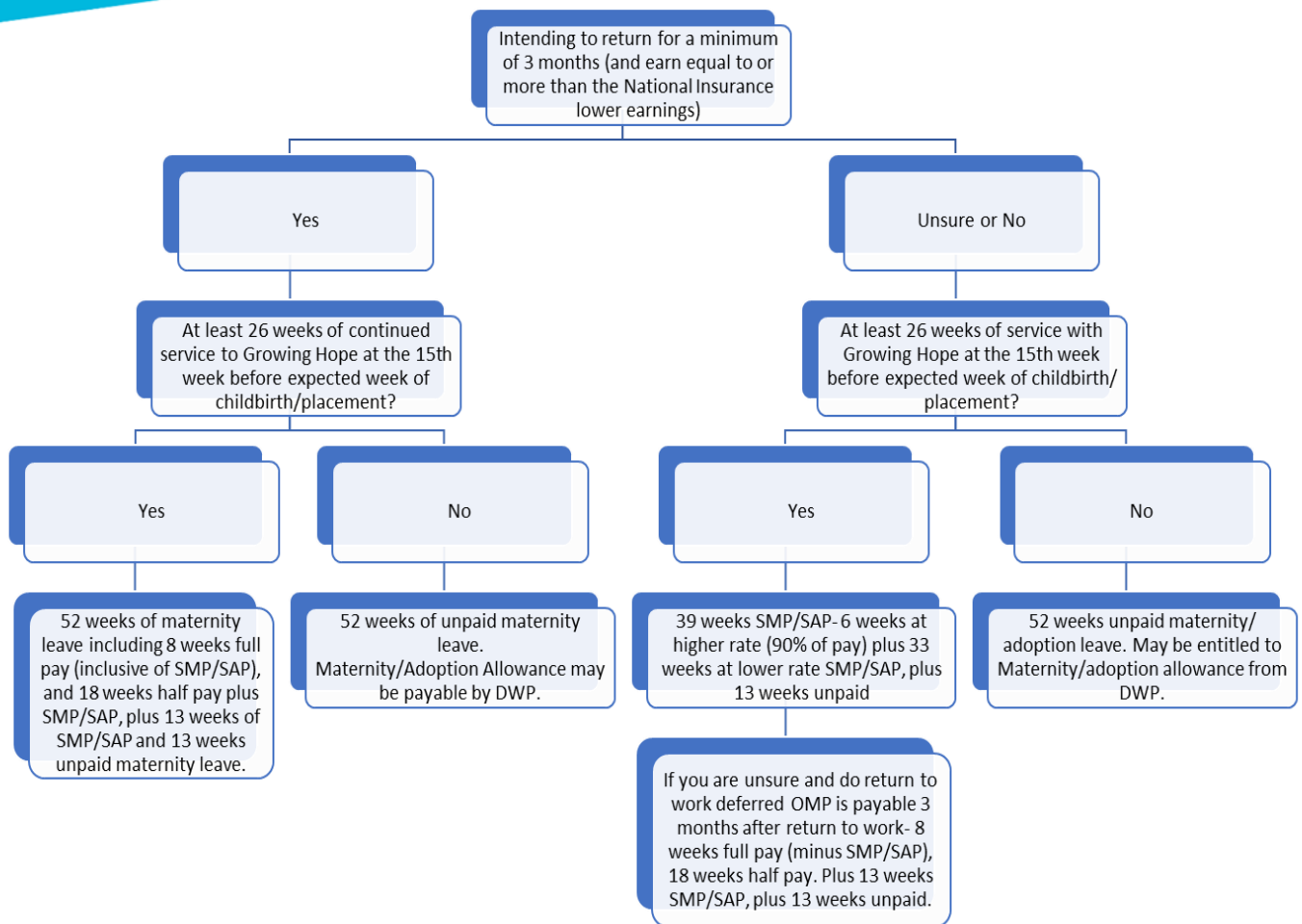
Those who have less than 26 weeks continuous service at the start of the 15th week before their child is born/adopted will need to contact the Department for Work and Pensions to apply for payment of Maternity/Adoption Allowance. The Department for Work and Pensions website is www.dwp.gov.uk

If an employee is not eligible for Maternity or Adoption pay, they may be entitled to claim Maternity Allowance direct from the Department for Work and Pensions by completing an SMP1 form, which the payroll department will provide if the employee is not eligible for any maternity pay scheme.

If an employee is unsure as to what maternity/adoption leave they are entitled to it is their responsibility to contact the Department for Work and Pensions.

Where the employee's contract expires during the employee's maternity/adoption leave, the employee will not be entitled to return to work.

A flow chart summarising the potential pay is found below:



Working and keeping in touch (KIT) days during maternity/adoption leave

Before starting maternity/adoption leave, the employee's manager will discuss voluntary arrangements for keeping in touch if the employee is planning to return to work. The employee may also agree to receive occasional work-related updates. The employee is under no obligation to keep in touch or to maintain any contact discussed before the maternity/adoption leave begins.

The employee may not work by law during the two weeks immediately following the birth of a child.

The law allows women to attend work on a maximum of 10 'Keeping in Touch' (KIT) days during their maternity/adoption leave to facilitate a smooth return to work. These days can be consecutive, can be shorter than a normal working day and can include training sessions etc. Working for a part of any day counts as one of the 10 KIT days. Any such KIT days and the arrangements for them must be agreed by both the employee and her manager and neither can insist on KIT days being used.

KIT days will be paid at the normal hourly rate as if the employee were at work if taken during the unpaid part of the employees' maternity/adoption leave. If a KIT Day is taken during paid maternity/adoption leave the employee will be paid at the normal hourly rate with an adjustment made to the SMP and OMP calculation for that week.

Payment of KIT days will be given on the return from maternity/adoption leave. The employee's manager should send an email to the accounts@growinghope.org.uk and the Director of Operations confirming the number of KIT days taken and the dates on which these were taken for payroll purposes.

For clinicians, Professional Registration must be maintained or renewed if this has expired whilst an employee is on maternity/adoption leave, if the employee wishes to work and be paid for KIT days.

Normally, KIT days would include for example:

- Training
- Away or development days with the team
- To communicate significant changes within a department, i.e. if a formal consultation is happening in line with organisational change.

Return to work

The employee will be asked to confirm on submission of their MatB1 form or their Matching Certificate in the case of adoption leave, confirmation of their maternity or adoption leave start date in writing and whether they intend to return to work for Occupational Maternity/Adoption Leave purposes.

Once the employee has submitted this form the local Growing Hope Trustees* or the Director of Operations in the case of Growing Hope National will write to the employee within 28 days to confirm the employee's return to work date and entitlement to maternity/adoption leave and pay.

- If the employee wants to return to work before the end of the stated maternity/adoption leave period, the employee must give their manager 8 weeks' notice of the date they wish to return to work. This notification does not have to be in writing and may be given before the period of maternity/adoption leave begins. We would encourage the employee to discuss the employee's return to work date with their manager at the earliest opportunity, so that suitable arrangements are put in place.
- If the employee does not give the required notice of an early return to work their employer may postpone the employee's return until a date that would secure the 8 weeks' notice. If the employee still returns to work before this date, their employer is under no obligation to pay the employee during the period of postponement.
- If the employee is unable to return to work on the date notified because of sickness, ~~the Trust's~~ Growing Hope's normal procedures for managing sickness absence will apply and the employee should notify their manager in the usual way.
- If the employee wishes to resign during or after a period of maternity/adoption leave, the employee should give written notice in the usual manner to their manager (please note repayment of Occupational maternity pay received during the leave period will then be required).
- If the employee wishes to apply for a period of unpaid parental leave or a flexible working arrangement after a period of maternity/adoption leave, the employee should refer to the parental leave section of this policy.

- There is no automatic right for the employee to reduce their hours or return to work on different conditions, but the employee's manager will consider the employee request in line with the Flexible Working section of this policy and give the employee objective reasons in writing, if it cannot be granted.
- On the employee's return to work after a period of maternity/adoption leave, subject to any organisational change, the employee has the right to return to the same job, on no less favourable terms and conditions. If there is no right of return because the contract of employment would have ended if pregnancy and childbirth had not happened, the repayment provisions set out above will not apply.
- When the employee returns to work, the employee's manager will update the employee on developments in their absence, including new and amended policies and arrange an induction appropriate for the length of the employee's absence from work.
- The employee has the right to paid time off for post-natal care. The employee should show their manager their appointment card and discuss the need for time off, so that their manager has time to make any necessary arrangements to cover the employee's absence. In exceptional circumstances, the employee's manager may ask the employee to change the time of their appointment, if it will be inconvenient to the department, and the employee should comply with this if practical.
- A fact sheet on maternity rights can be found on the Working and Families website: www.workingfamilies.org.uk

a. **Paternity Leave**

Birth/Adoption of a child

Paternity leave applies to biological and adoptive fathers (or adoptive mothers if the father is the primary caregiver) and nominated carers.

Paternity Leave

Employees are entitled to two weeks paid paternity leave and reasonable paid time off to attend ante-natal classes (the line manager may request sight of the appointment notification). The Contract of Employment continues throughout Paternity Leave, and an employee is entitled to return to the same job.

An employee can take their statutory paternity leave at any time in the first 52 weeks after the birth. Paternity Leave is for a period of 1 or 2 weeks and can be taken over 2 consecutive weeks or two separate 1-week blocks.

Process for obtaining paternity leave

You must inform your line manager of the baby's due date at least 15 weeks before the baby is expected.

Employees must also complete a [SC3 form](#) or the [online form](#) if adopting, at least 28 days before the date they expect the leave to start.

Paternity Leave cannot start until after the birth or placement of the child.

If your baby is due before 25 July 2026

Paternity Leave rules have recently changed. This means that you do not need to give 15 weeks' notice (including if you're using a surrogate) if both of the following apply:

- your baby is due before 25 July 2026
- you'll have been employed for less than 26 weeks up to any day in the 'qualifying week'

The 'qualifying week' is the 15th week before the baby is due.

You'll still need to give 28 days notice of when you want your leave to start and if you want to take 1 or 2 weeks leave.

If your baby is due on or after 26 July 2026, both the usual notice periods will apply.

Employees are entitled to reasonable time off to attend antenatal classes or official Adoption meetings.

Statutory Paternity Pay during Paternity Leave

An employee is entitled to 2 weeks paid Statutory Paternity leave if they:

- Have or expect to have responsibility for the child's upbringing.
- Are the biological father of the child or the mother's husband or partner.
- Paternity leave is paid at the rate of statutory pay or 90% of their earnings, whichever is less.

Enhanced Paternity Pay during Paternity Leave

All employees who have twelve months continuous service with Growing Hope before the child is expected to be born, or placed in Adoption, are entitled to Enhanced Paternity Pay. This is paid at full pay for four weeks, inclusive of Statutory Paternity Pay.

Stillbirths

If a stillbirth occurs after the start of the 16th week before the expected week of birth, Paternity leave is still applicable provided that all the other conditions have been met.

Return to Work

Employees are entitled to return to the same job following Paternity Leave.

b. Parental Leave

Unpaid Parental Leave

Employees who are either natural or adoptive parents, or who have parental responsibility under the Children Act, and who have one year's continuous service with Growing Hope may take up to eighteen weeks of unpaid parental leave to look after or to make arrangements for the good of a child or children.

Unpaid parental leave must be taken before a child's 5th birthday (18th in cases of disabled children). Where a child is adopted, parental leave must be taken before their 18th birthday or the 5th anniversary of their adoption (whichever comes first).

The entitlement is for each child and so is doubled for twins. Foster parents do not have the right to Parental Leave.

A record of parental leave taken will be kept by the manager and logged by the employee on their leave record. This will be retained on the employee's personal file for future confirmation.

A parental leave request must be made by email.

In cases where a father or the partner of a mother wishes to take parental leave immediately after the birth of a child, a copy of the MAT B1 certificate should be provided as supporting evidence. A copy of the child's birth certificate should be forwarded to the manager at the earliest convenience. Such parental leave would be in addition to any entitlement to paternity leave.

Employees wishing to take parental leave should discuss their request with their manager as early as possible to facilitate cover arrangements.

An employee should make a request for parental leave on the form attached to this policy and send it to his or her manager at least 21 days before the proposed start of the leave. ~~The~~ Growing Hope local trustees* or the Director of Operations in the case of Growing Hope National will confirm in writing the dates of the parental leave requested and whether or not it has been granted.

Parental leave must be taken in periods of not less than one working week. It may be taken as a single period of thirteen weeks or eighteen weeks in the case of a child with a disability, or shorter periods. One week of unpaid parental leave is equivalent to an employee's normal working week.

Parents of children with a disability may take parental leave in periods shorter than one working week, including individual days.

Managers will act reasonably in considering all requests for parental leave and will, where possible, grant the leave requested. If managers wish to turn down a request for parental leave, they must be able to demonstrate a significant reason, e.g. serious disruption to the department.

Postponing parental leave

There may be exceptional circumstances in which it is not possible to grant a request for parental leave at the time requested by the individual. This may be due to operational requirements (e.g. peak

absence time, difficulty in finding cover). In these circumstances the leave requested may be postponed by the manager for up to six months. Parental leave cannot be postponed by a manager for more than six months.

Growing Hope will not postpone any period of unpaid parental leave immediately after the birth or adoption of a child if 21 days' notice has been given. Provided the employee has given 21 days' notice of the expected week of birth, a period of unpaid parental leave will start on the day the child is born, regardless of whether the child is born early or late.

An entitlement to parental leave is not lost if it is postponed by Growing Hope beyond the child's 18th birthday.

When parental leave has been postponed by Growing Hope, the manager will write to the employee stating the reasons for the postponement.

Parents may request a change to the dates for which parental leave has been agreed, provided they give as much notice as possible. Managers may allow a change to or the cancellation of a period of parental leave, if reasonably practicable.

Return to work

At the end of a period of unpaid parental leave, an employee is entitled to return to the same job.

Pension contributions

During any period of unpaid parental leave, employees' occupational pension rights remain protected. However, unpaid leave does not automatically count as pensionable service.

Employees who wish the unpaid period to be treated as pensionable must pay both the employee and employer pension contributions for that period, arranged through the organisation's pensions office (People's Pension). It is the employee's responsibility to make the necessary arrangements.

Employees not wishing to return to work after a period of parental leave should resign in writing to their manager in the usual way.

c. Shared parental leave

An employee and their partner are entitled to Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) if they are having a baby or adopting a child.

Up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay can be shared between parents.

This needs to be shared in the first year after the child is born or placed with the family.

SPL can be used to take leave in blocks separated by periods of work, or it can be taken all in one go. Parents can choose to be off work together or to stagger the leave and pay.

Shared parental leave (SPL) is a form of leave available to working parents following the birth or adoption of a child.

In the case of adoption, it provides a more flexible alternative to the default system whereby one parent may qualify for up to 52 weeks' adoption leave and the other parent may qualify for up to two weeks' ordinary paternity leave.

In the case of adoption, under the SPL system, up to 50 weeks of the adoption leave entitlement may be designated as SPL. (The adopter can end their adoption leave once they have taken it for two weeks). Assuming you are both eligible, you and the other parent can choose how you split that leave between you. You may be able to take this leave at the same time or at different times. You may also be able to take it in more than one block.

In birth cases, SPL allows parents to take up to 52 weeks leave in total (two of which has to be Maternity Leave) on the birth of a child. They can take this leave at the same time, or at different times.

ENTITLEMENT TO SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

In relation to the birth of a child, you are entitled to SPL if:

- you are the child's mother and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the child's father (or your partner, if the father is not your partner);
- You are the child's father and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the child's mother; or
- You are the mother's partner and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the mother (where the child's father does not share the main responsibility with the mother).

In relation to the adoption of a child, 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 also be fulfilled:

- You must have at least 26 weeks of continuous employment with Growing Hope.
- In birth and adoption cases the other parent must have worked (in an employed or self-employed capacity) in at least 26 of the 66 weeks before the EWC or Qualifying Week and had average weekly earnings of at least £30 during 13 of those weeks; and
- In birth cases, you and the other parent must give the necessary statutory notices and declarations as summarised below, including notice to end any maternity leave, statutory maternity pay (SMP) or maternity allowance (MA) periods.
- In adoption cases, 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).
- In adoption cases, either you or your partner must also qualify for statutory adoption leave and/or SAP and must take at least two weeks of adoption leave and/or pay.

In birth cases, the total amount of SPL available is 52 weeks, less the weeks spent by the child's mother on maternity leave (or the weeks in which the mother has been in receipt of SMP or MA if she is not entitled to maternity leave).

In the case of adoption, the total amount of SPL available is also 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).

In birth cases, if you are the mother, you cannot start SPL until after the compulsory maternity leave period, which lasts until two weeks after birth.

In adoption cases, the adopter cannot start SPL until 2 weeks of adoption leave has been taken.

In birth cases, if you are the child's father or the mother's partner, you should consider using your two weeks' paternity leave before taking SPL. Once you start SPL you will lose any untaken paternity leave entitlement. SPL entitlement is additional to your paternity leave entitlement. However, if you are not entitled to Paternity Leave, Shared Parental Leave can start from the date of birth.

ENDING MATERNITY/ADOPTION LEAVE

In birth cases, if you are the child's mother and are still on maternity leave, you must give us at least eight weeks' written notice to end your maternity leave before you can take SPL.

In adoption cases, this is the same if you are taking or intend to take adoption leave and want to opt into the SPL scheme.

The notice must state the date on which your maternity/adoption leave will end. You can give the notice before or after you give birth, or after adoption leave starts, but you cannot end your maternity / adoption leave until at least two weeks after birth, or in the case of adoption you must take at least two weeks' adoption leave. Once the child's mother ends maternity leave, she cannot go back onto maternity leave once she or her partner have started Shared Parental Leave. In both cases an email request must be completed as notice of curtailment.

The other parent or your partner may be eligible to take SPL from their employer before your maternity or adoption leave ends, but they cannot start it until you have given us notice of your leave finishing (in writing by email).

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

- If you realise that neither you nor the other parent / your partner are in fact eligible for SPL or ShPP, you can revoke the curtailment notice in writing up to eight weeks after it was given;
- If you gave the curtailment notice before giving birth, you can revoke it in writing up to eight weeks after it was given, or up to six weeks after birth, whichever is later; or
- If the other parent / your partner has died.

In birth cases, once you revoke a curtailment notice you cannot submit a second curtailment notice unless there are exceptional circumstances. In adoption cases, once you have revoked a curtailment notice you will be unable to opt back in to the SPL scheme.

In birth cases, if you are the child's father or the mother's partner, you will only be able to take SPL once the mother has either:

- returned to work;
- Given her employer a curtailment notice to end her maternity leave;
- Given her employer a curtailment notice to end her SMP (if she is entitled to SMP but not maternity leave); or
- Given a curtailment notice to the Department of Work and Pensions to end her MA (if she is not entitled to maternity leave or SMP).

In adoption cases, 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:

- Returned to work;
- Given their employer a curtailment notice to end adoption leave; or
- Given their employer a curtailment notice to end SAP (if they are entitled to SAP but not adoption leave).

OPTING IN TO SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE AND PAY

When you complete your email request you need to confirm that the other parent has given an opt-in notice to their employer. This must be submitted no less than eight weeks before the date you intend your SPL to start.

EARLY BIRTH AND SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES – EFFECT ON SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

Early Birth

If the child is born before the expected due date and you had booked to take SPL within the first eight weeks of the due date, you may take the same period of time off after the actual birth without having to provide eight weeks' notice, by submitting a notice to vary your leave as soon as is reasonably practicable. Any leave arranged after the first eight weeks of the due date is still bound by the eight-week notice required to vary leave.

If the child is born more than eight weeks before their expected due date and the notice of entitlement to SPL and/or a notice to book SPL have not yet been given, then there is no requirement to give eight weeks' notice before the period of leave starts. The notices should be given as soon as is reasonably practicable after the actual birth.

Death of the Child

In the unfortunate circumstance that a child dies, and the parents have submitted a notice of entitlement to take SPL, then the parents cannot opt into SPL because a qualifying condition is caring for a child. The mother will remain entitled to maternity leave and the mother's partner may still qualify for paternity leave.

If the parents' have opted into SPL and have already requested leave, they will still be entitled to take this leave. No further notice request for leave can be submitted and only one variation notice can be given to reduce a period of leave or to rearrange a discontinuous leave arrangement into a single block of leave.

In these circumstances, if you are absent on SPL, you may cancel the agreed SPL and return to work by giving your employer eight weeks' notice of your return to work.

In these circumstances employees are encouraged to discuss their needs with their line manager.

Partner No Longer Caring for the Child

If your circumstances change and you have already booked SPL and are no longer responsible for caring for the child (unless it is because the child has died), your entitlement to both SPL and ShPP will immediately cease, and you must tell your line manager. Please note that if you have any SPL arranged within eight weeks of your entitlement ceasing, you may still be required to take it as SPL if it is not reasonably practical for you to return to work, for example because cover has been arranged. Any weeks of SPL arranged after eight weeks of your entitlement ceasing must be cancelled.

If the remaining parent will be continuing to care for the child, this person may be eligible to take your SPL entitlement. If the other parent, who is no longer caring for the child had any SPL leave entitlement outstanding, the remaining parent will only be able to transfer it into their own entitlement if they can get the signed agreement of the other parent to a notice confirming a variation of leave entitlement.

Death of a Parent

If either parent dies and the other parent is taking, or is entitled to SPL, then they will continue to be eligible. Any SPL that was due to be taken by the deceased parent may be transferred to the other parent if the other parent is eligible for SPL.

EVIDENCE OF ENTITLEMENT

You must provide, with your opt-in notice the following:

- In birth cases, a copy of the birth certificate (or if you have not yet obtained a birth certificate, a signed declaration of the child's date and place of birth) or MATB1 certificate;
- In the case of adoption, one or more documents from the adoption agency such as the Matching Certificate showing the agency's name and address and the expected placement date;

and

- the name and address of the other parent's employer, or a declaration that they have no employer, or that they are self-employed.

NOTIFYING US OF 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 shared parental pay, 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 periods of leave notices. This may enable you to take up to three separate blocks of shared parental leave. In exceptional circumstances we may agree to accept more than three periods 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. However, in some cases, we may 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 line manager in advance of submitting any formal period of leave notices. This will give us more time to consider the request and hopefully agree on a pattern of leave with you from the start. During a period of Shared Parental Leave and Pay you will not be able to carry out any work.

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 with your line manager. At the end of that period, your line manager 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, you will be entitled to one 12-week period of leave).

Alternatively, you may:

- Choose a new start date (which must be at least 8 weeks after your original period of leave notice was given), and notify us of this new date within 5 days of the end of the two-week discussion; or
- Withdraw your period of leave notice within 2 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).

SHARED PARENTAL PAY

The amount of Statutory Shared Parental Pay available can be up to 39 weeks, less any weeks of statutory maternity pay, maternity allowance or statutory adoption pay claimed by you or the other parent or your partner. This is providing you have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with Growing Hope 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. Statutory Shared Parental Pay is paid at a rate set by the government each year.

You may also qualify for Occupational Shared Parental Pay if you have been continuously employed with Growing Hope during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week. It is not a requirement that your partner is also employed by Growing Hope.

The number of weeks of full or half Occupational Shared Parental Pay to which you are entitled as described in the following paragraphs, will be subject to deduction of the number of weeks of full or half occupational maternity or maternity support (paternity), or adoption pay as appropriate, which may already have been paid to you or your partner by us, in respect of the child.

Subject to any deductions which will apply, pay will occur as follows:

- The first eight weeks of your SPL, Occupational Shared Parental Pay is full pay. Any statutory Shared Parental Pay that may be due for that period is included within the amount of the full pay.
- For the next eighteen weeks of SPL, occupational Shared Parental Pay is half pay, plus any statutory Shared Parental Pay that may be due for that period. However, the combined total will not exceed full pay. If required, the amount of Occupational Shared Parental Pay will be reduced in order to achieve this limit.

In birth cases:

- If you both work at Growing Hope, or b) you are the mother and the other parent does not work at Growing Hope, then in both cases, after the first 2 weeks of compulsory maternity leave, there remains an entitlement to 6 weeks full pay followed by 18 weeks of half pay, which can either be used on further maternity leave or SPL.

(It is important to note that if the mother and father or partner both work with Growing Hope the entitlement to 8 weeks at full pay should not be subject to the deduction of any weeks of full pay which the father or partner takes as maternity support (paternity), as that would mean that the couple would be worse off by 2 weeks' pay by taking SPL.)

- If either a) both of you, or b) you, opt into SPL, then the number of weeks of Occupational Shared Parental Pay to which you are entitled is the same as the number of weeks of Occupational Maternity Pay which is unused at the point in time when you start SPL.

It is important to note that if you have taken maternity leave prior to the birth, then it will only be the balance of the leave that is left that will be due and not necessarily the full amount as outlined above.

If you are the father or mother's partner, and the mother does not work for Growing Hope, then your entitlement to Occupational Shared Parental Pay is up to 8 weeks full pay and 18 weeks half pay. However, if you have taken maternity support (paternity) leave, then the 8 weeks full pay is reduced by the number of weeks of paid maternity support (paternity) leave which you have taken.

In adoption cases entitlement is the same as above, but based on the parent with primary caring responsibilities for the child and Adoption Support Leave:

For both birth and adoption cases, payment of Occupational 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 of your SPL. If you later decide not to return to work for this minimum period, you must repay any Occupational Shared Parental Pay (but not Statutory Shared Parental Pay) which you have received. In cases where we consider that to enforce this provision would cause undue hardship or distress, we will have the discretion to waive our rights to recovery in consultation with local board of trustees.

Shared Parental Pay for the mother working for Growing Hope will be calculated on the same basis as her maternity pay. Shared Parental Pay for the father or partner will also be calculated using the average weekly earnings rules used for calculating Statutory Maternity Pay entitlements.

OTHER TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT DURING SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE

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

Annual leave and public holidays will continue to accrue during Shared Parental Leave, whether paid or unpaid, provided for by this agreement. Where the amount of accrued annual leave and public holidays would exceed normal carry over provisions, it may be mutually beneficial to both the employer and employee for the employee to take annual leave before and/or after the formal (paid and unpaid) maternity leave period. The amount of annual leave to be taken in this way, or carried over, should be discussed and agreed between the employee and employer.

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. Your employee contributions will be based on the amount of any Shared Parental Pay you are receiving.

SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE IN TOUCH DAYS (SPLIT) DAYS

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 on up to 20 Shared Parental Leave in Touch Days (SPLIT) during your SPL. This is in addition to any Keep in Touch (KIT) days that you may work during maternity or adoption leave. There is no obligation on Growing Hope to offer these days or for you to agree to them. SPLIT days can be used in situations where both parties feel it would be beneficial for you to attend a work-related activity, for example a training session or a team meeting, or to work part of a week to help you to return to your role in a gradual way. You should confirm SPLIT Days by email to your line manager, copying in the Senior Finance Officer (for payroll processing to ensure payment for any hours worked) and the Director of Operations. A copy of your request will be saved to your employee HR file.

During a period of Shared Parental Leave and Pay, payment for the Shared Parental Leave will be offset by the amount of pay for work done on any SPLIT days to ensure that you do not receive any more than your full pay for any period worked.

RETURNING TO WORK

If you want to end a period of SPL early, you must give us eight weeks' prior notice of the return date. You must give this notice in writing using the form in this policy.

If you want to extend your SPL, where you still have unused SPL entitlement remaining, you must submit a new period of leave notice at least eight weeks before the date you were due to return to work, providing you have not already submitted three period of leave notices. If you are unable to request more SPL, you may be able to request annual leave or ordinary parental leave using the Parental Leave Policy. The decision on whether to grant this request will be subject to service need.

The impact of extending leave

You are entitled to return to work in the position you held before starting SPL, and on the same terms of employment providing your total leave does not add up to more than 26 weeks. If you take more than 26 weeks and 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:

- If your SPL and any adoption, maternity or paternity leave you have taken adds up to more than 26 weeks in total (whether or not taken consecutively); or
- If you took SPL consecutively with more than four weeks of ordinary parental leave (under our Parental Leave Policy).

If you want to change your hours or other working arrangements on return from SPL, you should make a request under the flexible working section of this 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.

RESOLUTION OF DISAGREEMENTS

No request for leave under this policy will be unreasonably refused. Should a disagreement arise, the individual is encouraged to resolve the disagreement with the Growing Hope local trustees (or the Director of Operations in the case of Growing Hope National employees) in the first instance but ultimately has the right to raise a formal grievance with the Growing Hope National charity and trustee board. It is preferable in such circumstances, for an employee and/or manager to seek advice on resolving the matter informally from their line manager.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Growing Hope is committed to 'equality and diversity' in respect of the 'protected characteristics' covered by the Equality Act 2010. These protected characteristics are age, disability (which includes mental health and people diagnosed as clinically obese), race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment (people who are having or who have had a sex change, transvestites and transgender people), marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

Equality is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It is mostly backed by legislation designed to address unfair discrimination based on membership of a particular group.

Diversity is about recognising and valuing difference in its broadest sense. It is about creating a culture and practices that recognise, respect, value and harness difference for the benefit of the patients, carers, members of the public and members of staff.

Shared parental leave is available to all staff who attain the eligibility criteria, to meet their individual needs and responsibilities, as their circumstances change throughout their working life, thus promoting equality across the workforce.

d. Continuous service

A period of parental leave paid or unpaid will count as continuous employment with Growing Hope although pay and most contractual benefits are suspended.

Annual Leave and Bank Holidays

An employee's entitlement to annual leave and bank holidays accrue during the employee's maternity/adoption/parental leave, whether it is paid or unpaid. If the employee has any outstanding annual leave before the start of the employee's maternity/adoption leave, the employee should discuss and agree with the employee's manager whether it would be a good idea to take some or all of it before the employee's maternity/adoption leave starts. If this is not possible, the employee should discuss and agree with the employee's manager the possibility of taking accrued annual leave when the employee returns from maternity/adoption leave, either in a single period or to allow a short period of part-time working, especially where the employee may be carrying annual leave/bank holidays over into a new leave year.

If the employee declares their intention not to return to work at all, any outstanding annual leave for the entire period of maternity leave will ideally need to be taken prior to the employee's leave start.

The employee cannot take annual leave directly after paid maternity/adoption leave, if it is the employee's intention to take unpaid maternity/adoption leave, as it would amount to the employees returning to work. If the employee does so, the unpaid maternity/adoption leave would be treated as normal unpaid leave, which the employee's manager is under no obligation to grant. However, the employee may make an application for a period of unpaid leave in line with Growing Hope's Flexible Working and Leave Policy or for a period of statutory unpaid parental leave.

Pension Scheme

Pension rights and contributions are dealt with in line with the provisions of the Pension Scheme used by the local Growing Hope. During periods of paid maternity/adoption leave, Growing Hope will continue to make pension contributions as if the employee is working and earning the employee's normal pay. The employee will continue to make contributions at the usual percentage rate of the employee's maternity/adoption pay.

During periods of unpaid parental leave, the employee's occupational pension rights will continue to accrue. If the employee decides to take the option of unpaid maternity/adoption leave, the employee will be required to pay the accumulated contributions to their pension scheme to cover the period of unpaid maternity/adoption leave. The accumulated contributions are taken over a period of time from the employee's salary when the employee returns to work.

If the employee decides that they do not wish to return to work when they previously stated that it was their intention to do so, then the employee will still be liable for contributions to the scheme and arrears may be payable if the employee has taken a period of unpaid leave.

Bereaved partner's paternity leave

Bereaved partner's paternity leave allows fathers and partners time off work, if their partner dies.

How this leave works

Bereaved partner's paternity leave is for the partner of someone who has died.

It can be used when someone dies within the first year of their child's life or adoption. The person who's died must be either:

- the mother or parent who gave birth
- the primary adopter
- an intended parent having a baby through surrogacy

The father or partner can take up to 52 weeks' unpaid leave to care for their child. They can choose the amount of time. They must take it in one block.

In most cases, they must take the leave within 52 weeks of either:

- the child's birth – including intended parents in a surrogacy
- the child's adoption placement
- the child's entry to Great Britain for overseas adoptions

There's an exception, if the death happens less than 14 days before the end of the 52 weeks. The father or partner can still take 14 days' leave.

This is a 'day one right', therefore can be taken from first day of employment.

Who can take this leave

The father or partner must have responsibility for bringing up the child.

They must be at least one of the following:

- the child's father
- married to, the civil partner or partner of the mother or parent who gave birth
- married to, the civil partner or partner of the primary adopter

Someone who separated from their partner can still take this leave. They must have ongoing responsibility for bringing up the child.

Pay

Bereaved partner's paternity leave is unpaid.

Giving notice and starting leave

You should inform your line manager as soon as they can, and if you are not in the position to inform them, then this can be done by a family member or friend on your behalf for example. However the formal notice to take leave must come from the employee themselves.

Less than 8 weeks after the death

If it's less than 8 weeks since their partner died:

- the leave can start straight away if needed
- they can tell their employer verbally or in writing, for example a letter or email
- they must tell their employer before they're due to start work that day

If the notice is given verbally, the line manager should confirm this in writing. For example, in a letter or email.

More than 8 weeks after the death

If it's more than 8 weeks since their partner died:

- they must give at least 1 week's notice before they start the leave
- they must tell their employer in writing

When notifying your line manager, please include the following information:

- the date their partner died
- the date they will start bereaved partner's paternity leave
- for birth and surrogacy – the date of the child's birth
- for UK adoptions – the date the adoption placement started
- for overseas adoptions – the date the child entered Great Britain

If it's less than 8 weeks since the death, they must also say how much leave they're taking and they must confirm this in writing within 8 weeks and at least a week before the return date.

If it's more than 8 weeks since the death, they must also confirm in writing:

- their relationship with the child
- that they have cared for or intend to care for the child
- the date they plan to return to work

Changing or cancelling leave

To change the start date:

- if it's less than 8 weeks after the death – they should inform their line manager of the new start date either verbally or in writing. If verbally, the line manager will follow up with confirmation in writing.
- if it's more than 8 weeks after the death – they must tell their employer in writing, and give at least 1 week's notice before the new start date

To change the return date, they must give enough notice. [Find out more about returning to work.](#)

To cancel the leave, they must tell their employer in writing before the leave is due to start. For example, in a letter or email. They must give at least 1 week's notice if the agreed start date is more than 8 weeks after the death.

If the child also dies or an adoption ends

A father or partner who would have been entitled to bereaved partner's paternity leave can still take up to 8 weeks if:

- their child also dies
- their adoption placement ends – for example the child is returned to the adoption agency
- there's a problem with their parental order for surrogacy and there's no time to appeal or reapply – for example they do not apply in time, or their parental order is refused or withdrawn

This right applies if they have not already taken bereaved partner's paternity leave for the same child.

Holiday

An employee still accrues (builds up) their usual annual leave entitlement when they're on bereaved partner's paternity leave. This includes bank holidays.

They cannot take holiday or get holiday pay while on bereaved partner's paternity leave. But they can arrange with their line manager to take it before or after.

If it is not possible to use all their annual leave entitlement. For example if they're on bereaved partner's paternity leave for all or most of the year, this can be carried over.

D. OTHER TYPES OF SPECIAL LEAVE

Definition

Another type of special leave is where an organisation is required to make available special leave with pay for staff to be absent from work to perform 'essential civic and public duties'. The legislative requirement for this is contained within the Employment Rights Act 1996 and covers a wide range of circumstances, a number of which are given below as examples:

- Justice of the Attendance at court as a witness
- Jury service
- Requests by members of a variety of public bodies including Children's Services

This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.

Up to one working week's paid leave per year can be allocated by the manager taking into consideration the amount of time reasonably required to devote to the issue. In exceptional circumstances the manager can extend this period for up to a further working week and has the discretion to determine whether this should be on a paid or unpaid basis. It may, however, be considered appropriate for the member of staff to utilise annual or unpaid leave.

Whilst Growing Hope is under no legal obligation to pay employees who undertake jury service, any staff called to fulfil the role of a juror will be paid their normal basic pay with enhancements for unsocial hours.

Members of staff must make their managers aware of the potential need to leave at the earliest opportunity and, where appropriate, should keep in regular contact throughout the period.

No request for leave under this policy will be unreasonably withheld. Should a disagreement arise, the individual has the right to raise a formal grievance.

E. Sabbatical

Growing Hope is committed to all employees being able to rest well in order that they can give their best when they are working. For this reason, employees can take a 2-week paid sabbatical following 4 years of continuous employment with Growing Hope. This can be taken within the 4th – 6th year and can be added onto annual leave as signed off by the charity staff.

After 7 years of continuous employment all employees are entitled to 2 months of paid leave as a sabbatical. This must be taken within the 7th- 10th year of continuous service. This can be used alongside annual leave if agreed by the employee's line manager.

As the focus of this leave is to give employees rest, employees cannot take the additional pay instead of the leave. If employees choose not to take a sabbatical within the years outlined above, they will not receive an alternative benefit from Growing Hope.

F. Flexible Working

Everyday Flexibility

Growing Hope is committed to enabling employees to work flexibly. For Growing Hope employees, the Senior Leadership Team, will reasonably consider all requests for flexible working and in the case of local Charity employees, the Chair of Trustees will reasonably consider all requests.

As a general principle Growing Hope will enable employees to use flexible working time (i.e. TOIL) to take back overtime where this is due (for example if they have attended an after-school meeting, conferences and events, trustee meeting or committee outside of working hours,).

Growing Hope will also enable employees to flex their time if they need to for necessary medical appointments or other unavoidable appointments which fall within working hours. Growing Hope trusts its employees to where possible avoid this occurring within working hours. Growing Hope expects employees to make up all time taken and to make sure their work is not diminished by any flexible working (whether this is in time or in working from home).

All TOIL and working from home requests must be informally discussed prior to taking them with the employee's line manager. TOIL must be recorded in an employee's leave record.

TOIL must be taken within six weeks of accruing the time unless otherwise specifically discussed and approved with line managers. After six weeks, the TOIL can no longer be taken.

Formal Flexible Working Requests

Employees have a legal right to request flexible working from day one of employment, in line with the Employment Rights Act 1996 as amended by the Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 and the updated ACAS Code of Practice (2024).

Flexible working allows employees to request changes to:

- Working hours
- Working times
- Working location

Examples include:

- Part-time or term-time working
- Home or hybrid working
- Adjusted start and finish times
- Compressed hours or alternative shift patterns

Employees may make up to two statutory flexible working requests in any 12-month period.

Employer Responsibilities

Growing Hope accepts flexible working requests for a wide range of reasons, including:

- Childcare
- Caring responsibilities
- Work/life balance
- Volunteering
- Personal wellbeing or other individual circumstances

Growing Hope is committed to exploring flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both the charity and the employee can be met.

Growing Hope will consider all flexible working requests fairly, reasonably, and in a timely manner.

Under current legislation, employers must:

- Handle requests in a reasonable manner
- Consult with the employee before making a decision
- Provide a written outcome within the statutory decision period (normally two months)
- Only refuse a request for one or more of the statutory business reasons

Where a flexible working arrangement is requested, Growing Hope will take into account a number of criteria. This includes:

- the costs associated with the proposed arrangement
- the effect of the proposed arrangement on other staff
- the need for, and effect on, supervision
- the existing structure of the department/team
- the availability of staff resources
- details of the tasks specific to the role
- the workload of the role
- whether it is a request for a reasonable adjustment related to a disability
- health and safety issues

Permitted business reasons for refusal

A request may be declined only if one or more of the following apply:

- Additional costs that would be detrimental to the organisation
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet service or customer demand
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff
- Inability to recruit additional staff
- Detrimental impact on quality
- Detrimental impact on performance
- Insufficient work available during proposed working times
- Planned structural changes

If a request is approved, the employee will receive written confirmation of the contractual change.

Pre-Submission Discussion

Before submitting the formal request, the employee must meet with their line manager to discuss:

- Feasibility of the proposed arrangement
- Contractual implications
- Impact on pay and pension (if hours are reduced)
- Rest breaks (Working Time Regulations)
- Health and safety considerations
- Training requirements
- Annual leave entitlement
- Any other relevant terms and conditions

Alternative proposals or adjustments may be explored during this discussion.

Submitting a Flexible Working Request

An employee is entitled to submit 2 statutory flexible working requests in a 12-month period.

An employee can only have one live request at a time. A request will stay live until any of the following happen:

- the organisation makes a decision
- the employee withdraws the request
- the employee and organisation agree an outcome
- it's been 2 months since the date of the request

Employees wishing to request flexible working must complete a Flexible Request Form and submit it to their line manager.

Any request must include:

- the date of the request
- the changes that the employee is seeking
- the date the employee would like the proposed change to start
- whether this is a statutory or non-statutory request
- whether the employee has made any previous flexible working requests to the organisation
- the dates of any previous requests

If the request relates to a reasonable adjustment for a disability under the Equality Act 2010, the employee should make this clear in the request.

If a request does not contain all of the required information, the line manager will advise the employee what else they need to provide and ask the employee to resubmit the request.

Team-Based Discussion

Because flexible working arrangements can affect team dynamics, the line manager may facilitate a team discussion to explore the impact of proposed changes. A member of the local trustee board may attend this discussion. This approach helps ensure that flexible arrangements for one employee do not create undue pressure on others.

Flexible working requests will be reviewed by:

- The Growing Hope Local Trustees (for Local Charity employees) or
- The Senior Leadership Team (for Growing Hope National employees)

who will consider the proposed flexible working arrangements. They will look at the potential benefits and adverse effects to the employee and to the organisation in implementing the proposed changes.

Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in the order they are received. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their working pattern.

Where an employee's request needs further discussion, the employee will be invited to a consultation meeting. If a meeting is arranged, it will be held within 10 working days of receipt of

the request. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and the line manager.

Where an employee's request can be approved in full without a consultation meeting, this will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days of receiving the request. This will include details of the new arrangements (start date, the changes and a three-month trial period and review date), and an invitation to talk about the new arrangements. Relevant colleagues will be informed, and the Senior Finance Officer will be notified if there are payroll implications.

This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.

A decision will be made on all requests, including any appeal within a maximum of 2 months. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.

Consultation meetings about flexible working

If an employee is invited to a consultation meeting, the purpose of this meeting will be to discuss:

- the request
- how the proposed working arrangements might work
- how it could be of benefit to both the employee and organisation

The employee will be given advance notice of the time, date and place of the meeting. If the initial date is problematic then one further date will be proposed. This meeting will be in person or a video call, or a telephone call if neither of those are possible.

At the meeting the employee may, if they wish, be accompanied by a colleague or a representative.

If the employee fails to attend a meeting and then fails to attend a rearranged meeting without good reason, their request will be deemed to have been withdrawn.

Communicating a decision after consultation

After a consultation meeting, the request may be granted in full, in part or refused.

Growing Hope (or the Growing Hope Local Charity) may:

- propose an alternative option
- grant the request on a temporary basis
- ask the employee to try the flexible working arrangement for a trial period

If a working arrangement is agreed, the employee will be sent a confirmation letter within 10 working days of the consultation meeting. This will include details of the new arrangements (start date, the changes and a three-month trial period and review date), and an invitation to talk about the new arrangements. Relevant colleagues will be informed, and the Senior Finance Officer will be notified if there are payroll implications.

If a request is refused, the employee will be given the decision in writing within 10 working days of the consultation meeting.

Right to appeal a decision

An employee has the right to appeal the decision if their request is refused or is only agreed in part. The employee may submit an appeal within 5 working days of being notified of a decision on their request. This should be done in writing and clearly state the reasons for their appeal.

The appeal will be heard within 5 working days. The employee will then be informed of the outcome of their appeal within 5 working days of an appeal meeting. These time limits may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.

At the appeal meeting the employee may, if they wish, be accompanied by a workplace colleague or a representative.

Conditions of Flexible Working Arrangements

All approved flexible working arrangements are conditional upon the employee:

- Attending required meetings within core hours or as agreed
- Participating in appraisal, training, and supervision
- Successfully completing a three-month trial period

Following the trial period, confirmation of satisfactory completion will be provided in writing.

Trialling new working arrangements

All new working arrangements will be subject to a trial period. A trial period allows for enough time to implement and get used to the new arrangement before making any decisions on its viability.

The organisation will put any trial arrangements in writing to the employee. This will include their new working pattern and make clear that it is only a temporary change to the employee's terms and conditions.

The employee will be informed in writing of the start and end dates of the trial period. The organisation may reduce or lengthen the trial period where necessary, with the agreement of the employee.

The organisation will reserve the right, at the end of the agreed trial period, to require the employee to revert to their previous working arrangement. In this situation, the organisation will give the employee four weeks' notice.

Ongoing Review

Once confirmed, flexible working arrangements will continue unless a fixed term has been agreed. Arrangements will be reviewed annually, taking into account:

- Service needs
- Team capacity
- Organisational priorities

There is no automatic right to revert to previous working arrangements.

Any future changes must be requested under this policy.

**Growing Hope local trustee board can choose to delegate this responsibility to the Director of Operations.*

*** This can be delegated to the Director of Operations*

G. Other policies

This policy should be considered in line with other Growing Hope policies (e.g. safeguarding, faith policy, Data protection policy).

Date Adopted: 15th November 2017

Date Updated: April 2026

Appendix 1 - Explanation of sick pay policy entitlement

The sick pay policy has been updated to incorporate instances of long-term sickness. Please refer to the policy for details

Each person's entitlement to the benefits of long-term sickness pay over any rolling 12-month period is allocated pro-rata to their working hours. Please see the table below.

The sick pay policy aims to support staff members in the event of sick leave. The pay policy applies to both long-term and short-term sickness, with short-term sickness building up to long-term sickness entitlements.

For various FTE's the entitlement based on policy is as follows:

	1 st 8 weeks = full pay in days	1 st 8 weeks in hours = full pay	Next 4 weeks in working days	Next 4 weeks in working hours	After 12 weeks and up to 28 weeks
FTE = 1	40	300	20	150	Statutory pay only, or zero pay if not
FTE = 0.8	40	240	20	120	Statutory pay only, or zero pay if not
FTE = 0.7	40	210	20	105	Statutory pay only, or zero pay if not
FTE = 0.6	40	180	20	90	Statutory pay only, or zero pay if not
FTE = 0.5	40	150	20	75	Statutory pay only, or zero pay if not
FTE = 0.4	40	120	20	60	Statutory pay only, or zero pay if not
FTE = 0.3	40	90	20	45	Statutory pay only, or zero pay if not

Please note: the first 8 weeks and the next 4 weeks all include Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) where the staff member is eligible.

What the table shows is that everyone receives the same entitlement in number of days. But the value of each "day" when converted to hours varies, based on each person's FTE.

Where a person moves from a part time role to a full-time role or vice versa, their entitlement to sick pay in a year (calendar/leave year) changes. For example, if a person starts on 2.5 days per week from 1 January to 30 June and then from 1 July to 31 December the person becomes a full-time staff member their annual entitlement will change as follows:

Initial whole year entitlement to full pay during continuous sickness=

40 days X 0.5 X 7.5 hours = 150 hours

Revised annual entitlement following a change in working hours =

40 days X 1 X 7.5 hours = 300 hours

Therefore, for the full year they will be entitled to something in between these two amounts which can be calculated as follows:

$40 \text{ days} \times 0.5 \times 7.5 \text{ hours} = 150 \text{ hours} \times 6/12 \text{ months} = 75 \text{ hours}$

$40 \text{ days} \times 1.0 \times 7.5 \text{ hours} = 300 \text{ hours} \times 6/12 \text{ months} = 150 \text{ hours}$

Total hours to receive full pay in that 12-month cycle before reduction to half pay = $150 + 75 \text{ hours} = 225 \text{ hours}$

If the staff member had already exhausted the initial 75 hours and was already on half pay, then following the increase in hours, the payment of full salary would be reinstated.

The trigger for all calculations begins with the first day of sickness.

This example shown above would also apply in reverse. If the annual sick pay entitlement is reduced due to a reduction in working hours, then the entitlement over a 12-month rolling period is also reduced. So if a staff member started as a full-time staff member for six months and reduced to half time, the full sick pay entitlement would be reduced from 150 hours to 75 hours and half pay should be commenced from then on until that entitlement is exhausted. Then statutory pay would start, where the staff member is eligible.