



Family Leave Policy

August 2022

Title:	Family Leave Policy		
Scope:	Maternity, Paternity and Adoption leave, Neonatal leave, Pregnancy loss support Shared Parental leave Parental leave for those with children up to 18yrs old Emergency time off for dependents Compassionate leave Carer's leave		
Owner:	Gill Johnson, COO		
Date created:	August 2022	Created by:	Aoife O'Leary, CEO
Date Updated:	Jan 2024 Sept 2024 Apr 2025 Dec 2025 Apr 2026 July 2026	Updated by:	Gill Johnson, COO Zuzka Majcova, People and Culture Manager
Changes:	Jan 24: Previous: 12 weeks fully paid parental leave followed by 27 weeks statutory pay; New: 26 weeks fully paid parental leave followed by 13 weeks statutory pay Making more explicit statutory rights versus enhanced benefits Addition of ShPL, Parental Leave, Emergency Time off for Dependents and Compassionate leave policies Sept24: Updated amounts related to Statutory Pay Changes due to the Paternity Leave Amendment Regulations 2024 Clarification on KIT and SPLIT days Addition of carer's leave, redundancy protection information, and neonatal leave Apr25: updated for Neonatal care act confirmation, changes to statutory pay rate. Dec25: Addition of paid carers' leave and time off for fertility and support around pregnancy loss. Apr26: Statutory rates increase and day 1 right eligibility changes, bereaved partner's paternity leave Jul26: Updated guidance for taking time off to care for dependants who are sick.		Date of next review: July 2027

Introduction

Opportunity Green was established to fight the climate crisis, but the climate is so intertwined with equity that you can't tackle one without also ensuring that you are doing what you can to tackle the other. We want to provide a supportive working environment for new parents, while doing our bit to tackle the gender pay gap within our budgetary constraints as a new organisation. As Opportunity Green grows, we commit to keeping this policy under review with a view to providing the best support we are able within our means and resources.

This is why our family leave policy applies equally whether you are a soon-to-be parent of a biological, surrogate or adopted child, and whether this is your first child, or you are adding to your family. We will support you before, during and after your parental leave to help you manage your transition into parenthood as smoothly as possible.

We acknowledge that some of the language used to describe family leave in this policy is gendered and binary. We use this language in line with statutory rights and to provide clarity for our employees. We acknowledge that individual's gender identities do not always ascribe to this binary. If you are unsure on which statutory rights apply to you, please reach out to the People & Culture Manager.

Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave

Your Statutory Rights

Maternity Leave

You qualify for Statutory Maternity Leave if you're an employee not a 'worker' and if you give the [correct notice](#). It does not matter how long you've been with Opportunity Green, how many hours you work or how much you get paid.

Statutory Maternity Leave is 52 weeks made up of:

- Ordinary Maternity Leave – first 26 weeks
- Additional Maternity Leave – last 26 weeks

You do not have to take 52 weeks, but you must take 2 weeks' leave after your baby is born.

You have the right to reasonable time off with full pay for 'antenatal' (pregnancy-related) appointments and care before you have your baby.

Start date and early births

Usually, the earliest you can start your leave is 11 weeks before the expected week of childbirth. Leave will also start:

- the day after the birth if the baby is early
- automatically if you're off work for a pregnancy-related illness in the 4 weeks before the week (Sunday to Saturday) that your baby is due.

Keeping in touch

You are entitled to 10 Keeping in Touch Days to make sure that you have the option to keep up to date with what's happening at work as much (or as little) as you like.

Returning to work

You must give Opportunity Green at least 8 weeks' notice if you want to change your return-to-work date.

Pay

Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) is paid for up to 39 weeks. You get:

- 90% of your average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first 6 weeks
- £194.32 or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks

SMP is paid in the same way as your wages (for example monthly or weekly) and will start in line with your maternity leave. Tax and National Insurance will be deducted. To qualify for SMP you must:

- earn on average at least £123 a week
- give the [correct notice and proof you're pregnant](#)
- have [worked for your employer continuously](#) for at least 26 weeks continuing into the 'qualifying week' - the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

If you're not eligible for SMP Opportunity Green will give you form SMP1 explaining why you cannot get SMP within 7 days of making our decision. You may be eligible for [Maternity Allowance](#) instead.

Early births or if you lose your baby

You can still get Statutory Maternity Leave and SMP if your baby is born early, is stillborn after the start of your 24th week of pregnancy or dies after being born.

Further information on your statutory rights as a mother / birthparent can be found [here](#).

What you need to do

No later than the 15th week before your child is due to be born, tell your line manager and / or People and Culture Manager. This is so that we can kick off the process of confirming your leave and so that we can help guide you through the number of statutory requirements and other options available to you.

Paternity / Partner Leave

Employees can choose to take either 1 week or 2 consecutive weeks' leave. The amount of time is the same even if they have more than one child (for example twins). This is a day 1 right. Leave cannot start before birth. The start date must be one of the following:

- the actual date of birth
- an agreed number of days after birth
- an agreed number of days after the expected week of childbirth
- following a period of shared parental leave

Paternity/partner leave can be split into two blocks of one week at any point in the first 52 weeks after the birth or adoption of a child.

Pay

Statutory Paternity Pay for eligible employees is either £194.32 a week or 90% of their average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). Tax and National Insurance need to be deducted.

Leave for antenatal appointments

Employees can take unpaid leave to [accompany a pregnant woman](#) to 2 appointments of up to 6 and a half hours each [antenatal appointments](#) if they are:

- the baby's father
- the expectant mother's spouse or civil partner
- in a long-term relationship with the expectant mother
- the intended parent (if they're having a baby through a surrogacy arrangement)

If the baby dies

Employees still qualify for paternity leave and pay if the baby is either:

- stillborn from 24 weeks of pregnancy
- born alive at any point in the pregnancy but later dies.

If your partner dies

Employees are entitled to Bereaved partner's paternity leave if their partner 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. This is a day 1 right with no requirement for length of service with the employer.

For more information please visit the [Acas website](#).

What you need to do

No later than the 15th week before your child is due to be born, tell your line manager and People and Culture Manager. This is so that we can kick off the process of confirming your leave and so that we can help guide you through the number of statutory requirements and other options available to you. You will then need to give us at least 28 days' notice of each period of leave.

Adoption Leave

Statutory Adoption Leave is 52 weeks. It's made up of:

- 26 weeks of Ordinary Adoption Leave
- 26 weeks of Additional Adoption Leave

Only 1 person in a couple can take adoption leave. The other partner could get [paternity leave](#) instead.

If you get adoption leave, you can also get paid time off work to attend 5 adoption appointments after you've been matched with a child.

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)

Change your dates

You must tell us within 28 days if the date of placement (or UK arrival date for overseas adoptions) changes. You must give us at least 8 weeks' notice if you want to change your return-to-work date.

Pay

Statutory Adoption Pay is paid for up to 39 weeks and is paid in the same way as your wages. Tax and National Insurance will be deducted. It starts the day you start your adoption leave. The weekly amount is:

- 90% of your average weekly earnings for the first 6 weeks
- £194.32 or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks

Surrogacy Leave

You and your partner may be eligible for [adoption pay and leave](#) and [paternity pay and leave](#) if you use a surrogate. If you're not eligible for paid leave, you may be able to take [parental leave](#) or [annual leave](#).

Surrogates

Every pregnant employee has the right to 52 weeks' [maternity leave](#) and to return to their job after this. If you are a surrogate, what you do after the child is born does not affect your right to maternity leave.

Further information on statutory rights around surrogacy can be found [here](#).

The enhanced benefits outlined below apply to surrogate mothers / birthparents, and parents using a surrogate.

OG's enhanced maternity / paternity / adoption leave and pay

We recognise that having a child – whether it is your first child or you are adding to your family – can be a life-altering experience with several adjustments to make for you and your family. That is why, for employees who have been with Opportunity Green for at least 52 weeks by the end of the 'qualifying week' – the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth, are entitled to enhanced benefits, in addition to the statutory rights above. Our policy is very generous and aims at giving equality, and flexibility, for both parents. We therefore ask that when you return from maternity, paternity or adoption leave (where you received our enhanced benefits) you stay with us for 12 months, and that if this is not the case or is not possible we reserve the right to ask for the enhanced pay you received to be returned to us.

Enhanced time off for new parents

Whether you are the birth mother, adoptive parent, father or partner we want you to have the opportunity to care for and spend time with your child. You might decide that it works for you and your family to get back to work more quickly after your child arrives, or you may wish to have another few months' leave when your child is a bit older.

Opportunity Green therefore offers:

- 12 months off for both the birth / main adoptive parent **and** the partner.
- You can take your 12-month entitlement at any time within 24 months of the birth or adoption, splitting your leave across the 24 months if you prefer (subject to prior arrangement and any statutory requirements).
- If you are the mother / birthparent / main adoptive parent and choose to return to work sooner than 12 months, your statutory leave entitlement – including any remaining pay entitlement – will end at that time. Any additional months, if you wish to take them, can be taken in agreement with your line manager within the remaining months of the first 24 months after the birth / adoption. This agreement will cover any 'left over' pay and pension contributions from the 39 paid weeks that we provide (see below for enhanced pay).
- It is a statutory right for fathers / partners to have 2 weeks leave. The timing of any leave over this amount needs to be agreed with your manager. **We strongly encourage all fathers / partners to take at least 3 months off within the first 12 months** and offer enhanced pay for this – see below.
- If you have a 2nd child born within the 24 months and the full 12 months of leave has not been taken, you will lose any outstanding balance at the start of your new leave period. You will also need to have been back at work for at least 3 months before the start of your next leave to qualify for enhanced pay.
- We offer 10 Keeping in Touch (KIT) Days for mother / birthparent / main adoptive parent **and** the partner to make sure you have the option to keep up to date with what's happening at work as much (or as little) as you like. KIT days taken during the first 26 weeks of enhanced parental pay will not be eligible for additional payment. KIT days taken during the last 26 weeks of leave (while on SMP/SPL or during unpaid leave) will be paid at full day rate of the person working them. Any day worked while on parental leave is counted as a KIT day. A full day rate pay is applicable and KIT day counted as taken regardless of exact number of hours worked during that day.

Enhanced pay for new parents

Because we know how important future financial security is when you have a family, we:

- Offer 26 weeks fully paid family leave for all parents (this includes the birth parent; main adoptive parent; partner of the birth parent / main adoptive parent). This is followed by 13 weeks statutory pay, and 13 weeks unpaid for the mother / birthparent / main adoptive parent or 13 weeks of unpaid leave for the father / partner.
- Will continue to pay your standard 10% pension contributions throughout your 12 months' leave, based on your usual salary.

Neonatal Care Leave

Neonatal Care Leave is a day one right and applies to parents of babies who are admitted into hospital up to the age of 28 days, and who have a continuous stay in hospital of 7 full days or more. If you qualify for this leave, you are entitled to up to 12 weeks of leave, linked to the length of the hospital stay.

Neonatal Care pay is a statutory entitlement in the same way as maternity and paternity pay. Neonatal Care Leave must be taken in the first 68 weeks of the baby's birth. This can be done all at once or in non-consecutive periods of at least one week at a time. For the mother that time is added at the end of statutory maternity leave and pay as that is automatically triggered by the baby's birth and cannot be stopped.

OG's enhanced neonatal care pay

We recognise that having your baby arrive unexpectedly early and requiring care on a neonatal ward is stressful and has long term impacts on your family. In keeping with our enhanced pay approach, Opportunity Green offers the following support to employees who qualify for enhanced family leave:

- Six weeks of fully paid neonatal care leave for all parents (this includes the birth parent; main adoptive parent; partner of the birth parent / main adoptive parent),
- Six weeks of neonatal care leave with statutory pay.

Returning to work

Flexible return

Annual leave accrued while you are on family leave can be used to help you to transition back into work in a flexible way. For example, you may wish to return on two or three days a week for a few weeks while you and your child settle into your new routine. We would encourage you to speak to your manager about how else we can support you to return to work after such a momentous change in your life, including for example flexibility to attend nursery settling in sessions.

Onwards career management

Your line manager will be encouraged to work closely with you to ensure that you are supported before, during and after your leave, including frequent one to ones and setting onwards career objectives as we welcome you back to work.

Shared Parental Leave

Your Statutory Rights

You and your partner may be able to get Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) if you're:

- having a baby
- using a surrogate to have a baby
- adopting a child
- fostering a child who you're planning to adopt

Further information on shared parental leave and your statutory can be found [here](#), and please talk to your line manager, People and Culture Manager or the COO to find out more, and to help decide if this is the right option for you and your family or if our other benefits would suit you more.

If you decide to take SPL, you can take this leave all in one or in up to three separate blocks of leave. SPL must be taken within the remaining window of the original 52 weeks following end of maternity leave. During SPL you can work up to 20 days during that time (per parent) without ending your SPL. These are called Shared Parental Leave in touch (SPLIT) days. Any days worked under this arrangement must be first agreed by your line manager and the People and Culture Manager. Opportunity Green will pay you for any SPLIT days worked at your usual day rate if these fall outside of the enhanced pay offer.

What you need to do

No later than the 15th week before your child is due to be born, tell your line manager if you are considering shared parental leave. This is so that we can kick off the process of confirming your leave and so that we can help guide you through the number of statutory requirements and other options available to you. If you change your plans while on maternity/adoption leave, you need to give us eight weeks' notice for any changes.

Parental Leave

Your Statutory Rights

Parental leave is a statutory entitlement and was introduced to give parents the right to take unpaid time off work to look after their child. Parents can use it to spend more time with children and strike a better balance between their work and family commitments.

Parental leave can be taken anytime before your child turns 18. The statutory leave is unpaid and is a day 1 right. Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to claim [financial support](#).

How much Parental Leave can you take?

Each parent can take up to 18 weeks of parental leave in total for each child, until the child turns 18. If you have two children, you can take up to 36 weeks in total. Parents with three children can take up to 54 weeks. And so on.

You can take up to 4 weeks per child per year. If you have two children, you can take up to 8 weeks per year.

You have to take parental leave in blocks of one week, unless otherwise agreed with your line manager and People and Culture Manager, or if your child is disabled (see below). A week is the length of time you are normally required to work over 7 days. For instance, if you normally work three days a week, one 'week' is equivalent to three working days.

If your child is on [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\)](#) or [Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\)](#), you can take parental leave one day at a time.

Parental leave applies to each child and not to an individual's job. Therefore, you 'carry over' any unused parental leave from one employer to another, as long as you are eligible.

Fertility treatment

We understand that going through fertility challenges is difficult. Receiving and recovering from the physical and psychological effects of fertility treatment takes time. We want to ensure that anyone struggling with fertility challenges has the time and support to manage this alongside their work. If you need time off for anything related to your or your partner's fertility treatment, speak to your line manager as soon as you can to make a plan for the time you need. We would encourage you to let your line manager know so that they can support you during this time, however if you would prefer not to tell anyone you are able to take sickness absence / planned medical leave instead to cover these absences.

We understand that treatment can involve appointments at short notice. Please work with your line manager when planning for these and keep them updated on any changes. Opportunity Green offers flexible working arrangements, and you can request time off for your appointments and treatments without a loss of pay in line with our other policies. Fertility treatment that requires a full day of absence or longer is counted as planned medical leave under our Sickness Absence Management policy. This also applies if it is your partner who is undergoing fertility treatment; you will be entitled to the same amount of paid time off to attend these appointments with them.

If you are sick due to receiving fertility treatment, you are entitled to time off work to recover, and the usual sickness absence pay. We strongly encourage you to take time off when you need to. Please follow the processes set out in our Sickness Absence Management policy.

If you think that you would benefit from some reasonable adjustments or temporary changes to your work, please speak to your line manager and the People and Culture Manager, so that we can work out how to best support you.

You can also access more information and support through the [Fertility Network](#).

Pregnancy loss leave

We understand that pregnancy loss can be a devastating experience, no matter how early on in pregnancy a miscarriage occurs and whether it happens to you, your partner or the surrogate having your baby. Sadly, there is no statutory support available for early pregnancy loss at the moment in the UK, but OG recognises that people will need support at this time and therefore offers the following enhanced paid leave as set out below.

If you are reading this because you have been affected, we are sorry for your loss. We do not assume to know how much leave you might need if this has happened to you. This Policy is not about creating a one-size fits all approach. It highlights the different ways that we can support you. Please speak to your line manager and / or People and Culture Manager so they can support you to make a plan for any time off work and return to work when the time is right for you.

Loss prior to 24 weeks

Anyone affected by pregnancy loss prior to 24 weeks of pregnancy, including partners and those affected by loss through fertility treatment from the point of embryo transfer, will be eligible for two weeks of paid leave. We would encourage you to let your line manager know so that they can support you during this difficult time and help you return to work. However, if you would prefer not to tell anyone you are able to take sickness absence instead.

Loss from 24 weeks onwards

The law and your rights are different if you are affected by pregnancy loss from 24 weeks onwards, your baby is stillborn or dies shortly after birth. You are entitled to your full statutory benefits in those circumstances. You will be eligible for enhanced pay from Opportunity Green for the first two months following your loss.

Return to work

However, we recognise that for some people, dealing with such loss can be helped by returning to work and we will support your return to work in a way that best meets your needs at the time, including flexible hours or reduced working day.

We know that if you are affected by pregnancy loss you may also need time away from work to attend medical appointments or to support your partner at these, and that it may be challenging to arrange these. Please keep your line manager informed if you are back at work from pregnancy loss leave and need to attend any appointments related to it. You will be able to take the time off needed for these.

Redundancy protections around pregnancy and family leave

Employees who are pregnant or taking family leave are entitled to redundancy protection:

- from the point an employee informs their employer they are pregnant
- until 18 months after the expected week of childbirth, the child's birth date, or date of adoption, for employees returning from maternity leave, shared parental leave or adoption leave.

During the protection period, employees have the right to be offered suitable alternative employment in a redundancy situation.

Time off for Dependants (including Emergency time off)

At OG we want to ensure that you are able to deal with any emergency involving a dependant that might come up or to look after your children when they are simply sick and off school or nursery, even if it is not an emergency!

If your child (or someone else who depends on you for their care) is sick and you need to take time off work for this, please let your line manager know what has happened and how much time do you think you will need. You may be able to continue some work WFH while looking after them or make up your hours within that week. If not, that is okay. For anything up to two days of absence at a time, please agree this time off with your line manager and review your work plan for the week, how you will manage your priorities and who may be able to help cover your absence if needed. For longer absences related to looking after an ill dependent, please notify the People and Culture Manager who will work with you and your line manager to find a solution on case-by-case basis.

Emergency time off

A dependant could be a spouse, partner, child, grandchild, parent, or someone who depends on you for care. Please talk to your line manager and/or the People and Culture Manager if something else comes up that you need to deal with right away, and we will work with you to ensure we agree reasonable time off. Note that emergency time off for dependants does not cover situations you know about in advance, such as pre-booked hospital appointments. Talk to us about these too as you might be able to take parental leave or Carer's leave or work out another arrangement with your line manager and the People and Culture Manager.

Carer's leave

Your Statutory Rights

Under the Carer's Leave Act 2023, you are entitled to one week of unpaid leave per year to provide or arrange care for a dependent in the following circumstances:

- a physical or mental illness or injury that means they need care for more than three months
- a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010
- care needs because of their old age.

You need to notify us in writing if you intend to take carer's leave. Please speak to your line manager and the People and Culture Manager.

Carer's leave can be taken on consecutive or non-consecutive half days or full days.

OG's enhanced carer's pay

We offer enhanced pay for carer's leave – two weeks of leave at full pay. You can also request additional unpaid leave.

If you need more time off to provide care for others for example loved ones with long term illness that isn't covered by any of the paid leave listed in this policy, please reach out to your line manager and the People and Culture Manager to discuss your needs.

Compassionate Leave

Our compassionate leave aims to allow our employees the time off they need following the loss of a loved one – usually a parent, partner, child, sibling or grandparent – but it could also be someone else who was close. We know that everyone will be affected by these situations differently, and that people will grieve in different ways and so we want you have the space and time needed to ensure your wellbeing.

Your Statutory Rights

There are no legal requirements for employers to pay compassionate leave nor are there any requirements about the length of time off, with the exception of the loss of a child. In this case, parents who suffer the death of a child under the age of 18 years old or a child is still born after 24 weeks of pregnancy, have the right to two weeks off. Employees may also be eligible for parental bereavement pay.

Opportunity Green's Enhanced Compassionate Leave

Opportunity Green offers up to two weeks (8 days, given our 4 day working week) of paid compassionate leave. This does not have to be taken consecutively and can be used in half day blocks – for example to make arrangements for a funeral. You will need to speak to your line manager/ People and Culture Manager as soon as possible to be clear what time off you might need, both for practical matters but also your own emotional wellbeing, but we recognise that time off might also be needed at short notice in such situations.

If you feel you need more than two weeks off, please be open with your line manager / People and Culture Manager as there will be further options, including paid and unpaid leave, that can be considered to support you in your individual circumstances.

Related Policies

- Sickness absence management
- 4-day week
- Annual leave