



University of
St Andrews

Parental leave

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Scope (applies to)	All staff
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School / unit	Human Resources
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Key terms	Staff/Annual leave and other absence/Family friendly leave
Purpose	This policy sets out the circumstances where employees who have parental responsibilities may take unpaid time off work to look after their children who are under 18.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and School or unit	Date
1.6	Fix broken link to family leave checklist, link to new HR policy webpages, and migrate onto new policy template.	Published	Lisa Stewart	11/11/2025

- British Sign Language (BSL) users can contact us via the online BSL Video Relay Interpreting Service: <https://contactscotland-bsl.org>
- This document and forms associated with this document are available in an alternative format upon request.
- We encourage employees to access the [Parental webpage](#) to access information regarding the parental leave process. Line managers can

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access the [Parental leave guide for line managers](#) for support and guidance in managing this process.

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1. Statement

- 1.1 We are committed to supporting a positive work-life balance for all our employees and recognise that time with children is important. Eligible employees can take a period of parental leave to care for their child. Examples include (although not limited to), looking after the child during school holidays, settling a child into new childcare arrangements, enjoying more quality time with their child.
- 1.2 Parental leave should not be confused with other family leave provisions such as maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave.
- 1.3 This policy does not cover instances such as taking time off to deal with an unexpected event involving a dependant or taking time off due to carer responsibilities. These leave types are covered in the University's [Special Leave webpage](#).

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and support to employees which want to take parental leave to ensure they understand their rights, entitlements, and responsibilities.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all employees of the University who meet the eligibility requirements outlined below.
- 3.2 To qualify for parental leave, the employee must have:
 - 3.2.1 At least one-year continuous service with the University
 - 3.2.2 parental responsibility (or expect to have) for a child (birth or adopted) under the age of 18.
- 3.3 The University may request that the employee provides evidence of parental responsibility (e.g. a full birth or adoption certificate).

4. Entitlement

- 4.1 Employees can take up to 18 weeks unpaid leave for each child (up until their 18th birthday). If the University employs both parents, it would not be expected that both parents would take the same period of leave.

- 4.2 The limit on how much parental leave each parent can take in a year is 4 weeks for each child. (A week's parental leave is equal to the employee's weekly contracted hours). Parental leave must be taken as whole weeks rather than individual days unless the child is disabled.
- 4.3 The year will run from the date on which the employee became entitled to the leave.
- 4.4 Parental leave applies to each child and not to an individual's job therefore any leave taken with previous employers will count towards the employee's entitlement of 18 weeks. Current employees should therefore ensure that they notify [Human Resources](#) of any leave previously taken. The Recruitment team will request this information via the reference process during the appointment stage.

5. Procedures

5.1 Request to take a period of parental leave

- 5.1.1 Wherever possible, it is encouraged that employees inform their line manager of their intention to take family leave as early as practicable to provide appropriate time for the line manager to organise and plan how they will cover the workload during the period of leave.
- 5.1.2 Employees must provide reasonable notice to take a period of parental leave of at least 21 calendar days prior to the intended start date.
- 5.1.3 Employees can apply for parental leave using the [parental leave application form](#). All applications must be submitted to the line manager for review and consideration. The line manager should then notify the Head of School/Unit for awareness.
- 5.1.4 Once the line manager (in conjunction with the Head of School/Unit/or appropriate delegate) has considered the request, they will confirm the decision with the employee. The line manager/Head of School/Unit (or appropriate delegate) may request to meet the employee to discuss the request before making a decision.

5.2 Decision

- 5.2.1 If the request is granted, the line manager will submit the parental leave form to [Pay and Pensions](#) for processing. The employee will be issued a letter confirming the details of the leave.

5.2.2 There may be occasions whereby the University will have to postpone the leave (e.g. if the leave would cause serious disruption to the University). If the line manager or Head of School (or appropriate delegate) is considering refusing a request for parental leave, they must discuss the matter with their [HRBP](#) before making a decision.

5.2.3 If the decision is taken to postpone the leave, the line manager will meet with the employee to confirm the decision and the reason for the delay, and this will be followed up in writing. At this meeting, alternative parental leave dates will be jointly agreed with the employee. This leave must be taken within 6 months of the intended start date.

5.2.4 **Leave cannot be postponed if:**

a. This leave is being taken by the spouse, civil partner or partner of the person giving birth or primary adopter, who will share responsibility for the child's upbringing, immediately after the birth or adoption of a child.

b. It means an employee would no longer qualify for parental leave (e.g. postponing it until after the child's 18th birthday).

5.3 During the leave

5.3.1 All terms and conditions of employment, except normal pay, will continue and continuity of employment is not affected.

5.3.2 The employee will continue to be bound by the terms and conditions of the employment contract.

5.4 Returning to work

5.4.1 Employees have the right to resume working in the same job as before on terms and conditions that are no less favourable prior to the parental leave.

6. Support

6.1 The University offers a confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which is available to all employees to support with personal problems that can affect work life, home life, and general wellbeing. The service also gives free access to a digital Health and Wellbeing App which gives support and guidance on a wide range of resources on physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, work and productivity, movement sleep, financial wellbeing,

nutrition, hydration and energy. Contact details and how to register can be found on the [EAP website](#).

- 6.2 Employees have access to the [Staff Wellbeing webpage](#) which offers support on various matters.
- 6.3 Any questions employees have about matters raised in this policy should be raised with their [HRBP](#). Any work-related issues should be addressed directly with their line manager.
- 6.4 For internal support, [contact HR](#) or where an employee is a member of a [Trade Union](#), they can reach out to their representative for support and guidance.

7. Version control

- 7.1 This policy is non-contractual and may be amended at any time.
- 7.2 This policy may be reviewed in the light of operational experience, sector developments and changing organisational needs. As and when a full review is undertaken, trade union and representatives will be consulted in line with the [Policy Working Group Terms of Reference](#).
- 7.3 Any feedback on the policy content should be directed in the first instance to the [HR Policy Officer](#) or via the [HR Feedback Form](#).

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.0	Migration of policy to the Governance Zone.	Published	Lisa Stewart, Human Resources	13/06/2019
1.1	Change to review date	Published	Lisa Stewart HR	01/04/2021
1.2	Change to review date	Published.	Lisa Stewart HR	20/12/2021
1.3	Amend broken link to application form.	Published.	Lisa Stewart HR	11/01/2023
1.4	Minor policy review: Line manager to receive the parental application form.	Published.	Lisa Stewart HR	11/09/2023
1.5	Amending a broken link only.	Published.	Lisa Stewart HR	23/04/2024
1.6	Fix broken link to family leave checklist, link to new HR policy	Published	Lisa Stewart	11/11/2025

	webpages, and migrate onto new policy template.			
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