

PATERNITY POLICY

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the legal rights and responsibilities of employees who wish to take paternity leave.

The church recognises that, from time to time, employees may have questions or concerns relating to their paternity rights. It is the church's policy to encourage open discussion with employees to ensure that questions and problems can be resolved as quickly as possible. As the paternity provisions are complex, employees should clarify the relevant procedures with the Congregational Federations HR Consultant to ensure that they are followed.

2. Paternity leave

An employee whose wife, civil partner or partner gives birth to a child, or who is the biological father of the child, is entitled to **two weeks' ordinary paternity** leave provided that he/she has 26 weeks' continuous service by the end of the 15th week before the week in which the child is expected.

Paternity leave is also available to adoptive parents where a child is matched or newly placed with them for adoption. Either the adoptive father or the adoptive mother may take ordinary paternity leave where the other adoptive parent has elected to take adoption leave. A separate policy is available in respect of adoption leave. In respect of an adopted child, the employee must have 26 weeks' continuous service by the week in which the child's adopter is notified of having been matched with the child for adoption.

To qualify for ordinary paternity leave, the employee must also have, or expect to have, responsibility for the upbringing of the child and be making the request to help care for the child or to support the child's mother.

Paternity leave is granted in addition to an employee's normal annual holiday entitlement. Ordinary paternity leave must be taken in a single block of one or two weeks within eight weeks of the birth or adoption of the child. If the child is born early, it must be taken from the time of the birth but within eight weeks of the expected date of childbirth. Ordinary paternity leave can start either from the date the child is born or placed for adoption or from a chosen number of days or weeks after that date.

3. Notification of paternity leave

Where an employee wishes to request ordinary paternity leave in respect of a birth child, he/she must give his/her line manager 15 weeks' written notice of the date on which his/her partner's baby is due, the length of ordinary paternity leave he/she wishes to take and the date on which he/she wishes the leave to commence.

In the case of an adopted child, the employee must give written notice of his/her intention to take ordinary paternity leave no later than seven days after

the date on which notification of the match with the child was given by the adoption agency. The notice must specify the date the child is expected to be placed for adoption, the date the employee intends to start ordinary paternity leave, the length of the intended ordinary paternity leave period and the date on which the adopter was notified of having been matched with the child.

If an employee subsequently wishes to change the timing of the ordinary paternity leave, he/she must give 28 days' written notice of the new dates. The employee must also, if so requested, complete and sign a self-certificate declaring that he/she is entitled to ordinary paternity leave and ordinary statutory paternity pay.

4. Statutory paternity pay

Pay during ordinary paternity leave will be at a rate set by the Government for the relevant tax year, or at 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings, if this figure is lower than the Government's set weekly rate. However, employees whose average weekly earnings are below the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions will not be eligible for ordinary statutory paternity pay.

Statutory paternity pay is treated as earnings and is therefore subject to PAYE and national insurance deductions.

Statutory paternity pay can start from any day of the week in accordance with the date the employee starts his/her paternity leave.

5. Time off for antenatal care

Employees have the right to take time off to accompany a pregnant woman with whom they are having a child at up to two antenatal appointments. This time off will be unpaid.

To be eligible to take this form of time off, the employee could be the husband or civil partner of the pregnant woman, or could be living with the pregnant woman in an enduring family relationship. In addition, the employee will be eligible for the time off if he is the biological father of the expected child. The antenatal appointment must be made on the advice of a registered medical practitioner, midwife or nurse. The church expects that normally no more than half a day is needed for an antenatal appointment, but the employee's leave includes the time needed to travel to the appointment and any waiting time needed at the appointment, and can be for a maximum of six-and-a-half hours on each occasion.

Employees who would like to make a request for time off to accompany someone at an antenatal appointment should in the first instance contact their line manager.

The employee should endeavour to give his/her line manager as much notice as possible of when he/she needs the time off for the antenatal appointment and, wherever possible, try to arrange them as near to the start or end of the working day as possible.

6. Time off to attend adoption appointments

Employees who are adopting a child are entitled to take time off to attend adoption appointments.

Where an employee is part of a couple jointly adopting a child, the couple can elect for one of them to take paid time off to attend up to five adoption appointments. The other can elect to take unpaid time off to attend up to two adoption appointments.

The purpose of the appointment is to enable the employee to have contact with the child (for example, to bond with him/her before the placement) or for any other purpose connected with the adoption (for example, to meet with the professionals involved in the care of the child).

The appointment must have been arranged by or at the request of the adoption agency. The time off must be taken before the date of the child's placement for adoption with the employee.

7. Adoptions from overseas

If an employee has adopted a child from overseas, he/she may still be entitled to additional paternity leave provided again that the primary adopter has returned to work. Special rules apply in these circumstances. For further information, please contact the Congregational Federation's HR Consultant.