

Neonatal Care Leave & Pay Policy

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1. Introduction

Welcoming a new child is an exciting time, but if your baby is born prematurely or is unwell and requires neonatal care it can also be a very emotional and challenging time.

In this policy you'll find all the information that you need about your entitlements to neonatal care leave and the support that we offer you as a parent or partner of a baby that requires neonatal care.

Please note, if this policy refers to additional guidance, FAQs, online forms, or training, these are accessible to University colleagues on our [People Hub](#).

2. Who is Covered by this Policy?

This policy applies to all University employees who are parents or the partner of a baby's mother whose baby is born after 6 April 2025 and needs to spend 7 or more days in a row in neonatal care.

It also applies to employees who are the intended parent through surrogacy or who have a baby placed with them for adoption.

3. What Is Neonatal Care?

Neonatal care is the name given to care for newborn babies within the first 28 days of their life. The different types of care that this can include are:

- Hospital care
- Medical care that is provided by a consultant after leaving the hospital. This type of care will include ongoing hospital visits arranged by the hospital where your baby was treated.
- Palliative or end of life care.

4. What Time Off Is Available?

You are entitled to Neonatal Care Leave for a period of up to 12 weeks to care for your baby. It doesn't matter how long you have worked at the University or the hours you work.

You're entitled to take one week of neonatal care leave for each week (7 days) that your baby receives neonatal care. Just so you know, this must be one uninterrupted week and the week begins the day after the care starts.

The maximum number of weeks that you can take as neonatal care leave is 12 weeks. If you have twins, you can take neonatal care leave for each baby, however this is still capped at 12 weeks in total.

Any neonatal care leave that you wish to take must be used within 68 weeks of the date your baby is born.

In the unfortunate event your baby is admitted to neonatal care for at least 7 days, is discharged and then readmitted for another period of at least 7 days (within the first 28 days of your baby's life) both instances will count towards neonatal care leave.

5. Ways in Which You Can Take Neonatal Care Leave

You are entitled to take neonatal care leave in addition to any other family leave that you might already be on or have arranged to take, for example, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption or Shared Parental Leave.

Neonatal care leave is available to take in two tiers, commonly referred to as Tier 1 and Tier 2. The differences between the tiers and the way in which you can take the leave is explained below.

- The **Tier 1** period – This begins when your baby starts receiving neonatal care and ends on the seventh day after they are discharged. If you want to take neonatal care leave in the Tier 1 period, you can take it in one continuous block or in non-continuous blocks of a minimum of one week at a time to allow you to stop work at short notice to care for your baby.
- The **Tier 2** period – This is any remaining period (within 68 weeks after your child's date of birth) outside of the Tier 1 period that you wish to use your leave. If you take neonatal care leave during the Tier 2 period, you must take the leave in one continuous block.

There are different notice periods, depending on which tier of leave you wish to take. You can read more about the notice you have to give in section 8 Letting Us Know You Want to Take Leave below.

You are also entitled to take neonatal care leave in the tragic event your baby passes away. In these circumstances you should refer to our [Pregnancy & Baby Loss Policy](#) for guidance. You will also be entitled to parental leave under our [Bereavement & Compassionate Leave Policy](#).

6. Neonatal Care and Other Family Leave

When your baby enters neonatal care, you may already be on, or due to start, another form of family leave. This could be Maternity, Paternity, Adoption or Shared Parental Leave.

If you are on a period of maternity leave and you become eligible for neonatal care, you can apply to take your neonatal care at the end of your maternity leave. You need to use your maternity leave first. The same applies for adoption leave. You will be requesting to take your leave in the Tier 2 period. For example, if you are on a period of maternity leave and your baby receives neonatal care for a period of 4 weeks you could apply for 4 weeks neonatal care leave to be taken at the end of your maternity leave before returning to work, if it was within 68 weeks of the baby's birth.

If you have not started a period of paternity or shared parental leave yet, you can still apply to take neonatal care leave. You can choose to take this before you start your paternity or shared parental leave and remaining unused neonatal care leave can be taken at the end of your other statutory leave. You just need to ensure that you can, wherever possible, give the required notice.

You might find our [Neonatal Care Leave Scenarios](#) (staff login required) helpful to understand how you can use your neonatal care leave depending on your circumstances.

7. Pay During Your Leave

You may also be entitled to pay while you're on neonatal care leave. To qualify for Statutory Neonatal Care Pay (NCP) you'll need to:

- Have been employed by the University for 26 weeks or more at the beginning of the qualifying week. The qualifying week is the 15th week before the week your baby is due, or you have been matched for adoption. If you're employed on a fixed-term basis and have had a break in contracts of one calendar month or less, this won't count when calculating your length of continuous service.

- Earn at least an average of £125 a week. This is based on what you have been paid during the eight-week period that ends on the qualifying week.

Statutory Neonatal Care Pay (NCP) is paid at a [current flat rate](#) set by the Government or 90% of your average weekly earnings, whichever is lower. If you don't qualify for pay, you are still entitled to take neonatal care leave, but this will be unpaid.

8. Letting Us Know You Want to Take Leave

There are different notice requirements depending on which tier of neonatal care leave you wish to take. It is always helpful to let your line manager know if your baby has been admitted to neonatal care so they can offer you support and understand how you might want to use your leave. You should also advise them when the neonatal care ends.

If you wish to request leave in the Tier 1 period, you should contact your line manager by telephone or email, ideally before the time you usually start work or as soon as you can after that.

After speaking to your line manager, we also ask that you complete the [Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Request Form](#) (staff login required). This is to make sure we can gather all the information needed. You do not need to this straightaway, but it should be completed within 28 days of the first day of your leave. This form will be sent to Human Resources, with notification to your manager. If you have any problems completing the form you can contact a member of the HR Team for support.

You also need to complete and submit the Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Request Form if you are requesting leave in the Tier 2 period. If you would like to take a single week of leave you should complete and submit this form to give at least 15 days' notice of your leave starting. If you wish to take two or more consecutive weeks, you should give notice of at least 28 days.

We know that you may be going through a difficult and challenging time when you need to apply for leave so it might not always be practical to give the required notice, and we will always be as supportive as possible.

If your plans change and you no longer wish to take leave in the Tier 2 period, you should notify your line manager as soon as you can. Your line manager should then contact Human Resources to update them on the change.

If, in exceptional cases, your request for delayed neonatal care leave cannot be approved at the time you have asked for it, due to business needs, your manager will provide you with a clear reason for this. They will work with you to arrange the earliest possible start date.

9. During Your Neonatal Care Leave

When you're off on neonatal care leave you will continue to be employed by us and your service will not be broken. You'll return to the same job on the same terms and conditions you had before you started your leave. If for any reason, there is a need for your role to change you will be fully consulted with.

9.1. Annual Leave and Public Holidays

You'll continue to accrue annual leave and public holiday entitlements as normal while you're on neonatal care leave. You might wish to talk to your line manager about using your annual leave entitlement to extend your period of leave, for example, if you are on a period of paternity leave.

9.2. Pensions

If you're a member of a pension scheme, you'll continue to be a member during your neonatal care leave and your pension benefits won't be impacted.

9.3. Other Benefits

If there are any other benefits that you contribute to through a salary sacrifice arrangement, like childcare vouchers or the cycle to work scheme, these won't be impacted while you're on neonatal care leave.

10. What Should I Do?

If you're a member of staff:

- Let your line manager know when your baby is admitted to neonatal care to allow them to offer you support. You should also let them know when neonatal care ends.

- Complete the Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Request Form at the earliest opportunity (and within the required notice period) even when your line manager is aware of your situation.

If you're a manager:

- Familiarise yourself with this policy and the supporting [FAQs](#) (staff login required) which provide examples of how neonatal care leave can be used in different scenarios.
- Email Human Resources with the required information for any requests that you receive to take neonatal care leave.
- Ensure that you offer and discuss any support needs with staff, ensuring sensitivity and confidentiality as far as possible. It may be helpful to consider the use of annual leave, agile working or other forms of leave in the situation.
- You should signpost staff to additional available support, including confidential counselling through our Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and other resources on our [Wellbeing Hub](#).
- You should, as far as possible approve all requests for neonatal care leave, only delaying the intended start date in exceptional circumstances. You should seek advice from Human Resources if this situation arises.

11. Returning to Work

At the end of your neonatal care leave and/or another form of family leave you might find it helpful to review our [Family Leave Work Planning Guidance](#) (staff login required) which offers advice on transitioning back to work.

We understand that returning to work can be a difficult time for parents, particularly those who have experienced a traumatic and upsetting time seeing their baby in a neonatal ward. Your baby may also have ongoing medical needs requiring regular hospital appointments and check-ups when you return to work. We offer time off with pay to allow parents to attend these appointments. You may also wish to review our [Carers' Leave Policy](#) for further information.

I2. Further Information and Support

If you have any queries about this policy please talk to your manager or contact [Human Resources](#). Further information and guidance for both staff and managers including FAQs and external sources of support, can also be found on our People Hub.

I3. Policy Review

This policy is reviewed by Human Resources on a regular basis. To see when the next review is due, please see our [Policy Review Schedule](#) (staff login required) on our People Hub.