Neonatal Care Leave Policy
Human Resources Department

Document History

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1. Introduction

1.1 Neonatal care leave is designed to assist new parents of babies who are admitted into neonatal care.

1.2 In this policy, neonatal care means:

- Medical care that starts within 28 days of the baby's birth.
- Medical care that a baby receives in a hospital.
- Medical care that a baby receives in any other place providing:
    - The baby was previously admitted to a hospital as an inpatient and needs continuing care after leaving the hospital.
    - The care is under the direction of a consultant; and
    - The care involves ongoing monitoring and visits from healthcare professionals.
- Palliative or end-of-life care.

1.3 This policy sets out staff entitlement to neonatal care leave and pay following the birth of their baby.

1.4 The University recognises that that having a baby in neonatal care is an extremely stressful and challenging experience. The University is committed to supporting staff and helping to ensure that that staff can look after their baby alongside looking after their own health and wellbeing.

1.5 During the period of neonatal care leave, the member of staff is entitled to the benefit of all those contractual terms that they would have enjoyed had they not been absent.

2. Eligibility

2.1 All staff are eligible to take neonatal care leave regardless of length of service if at the date of the baby's birth:

- The baby is in receipt of neonatal care as outlined in Section 1.2.

- They are the baby's parent (biological, adoptive or of a child born to a surrogate) and have caring responsibility for the baby.
- They are the partner of the baby's mother/birthing parent, with shared caring responsibilities.

2.2 Further details for adoptive parents

If the staff member or their partner is an adoptive parent, they are eligible for leave and pay if they are taking the leave to care for the child and either of the following apply:

- the child has been placed with them for adoption (or they have been approved for adoption).
- They are the partner of the adopter and have shared caring responsibilities.

If the staff member or their partner are adopting a baby from overseas, they are eligible for leave and pay if they are taking the leave to care for the child and the following apply:

- they will have caring responsibility for the baby.
- the baby has been placed with them.
- they have the 'official notification' confirming they're allowed to adopt.

2.3 Further details regarding surrogacy

If the member of staff or their partner had the baby with the help of a surrogate, they are eligible for leave and pay if they:

- have responsibility for the upbringing of the child.
- apply for a parental order within 6 months of the child's birth.

2.4 Additionally, the following conditions must be satisfied:

- The baby was born on or after 6 April 2025.
- The baby started receiving neonatal care within 28 days after the date on which they were born (the 28 days are counted from the day after the baby is born).

- The neonatal care has lasted seven days or longer without interruption (the seven days are counted from the day after the neonatal care started).
- Staff have complied with the relevant notice and declaration requirements set out in this policy (please see Section 7).

2.3 The right to neonatal care leave is in addition to any other statutory leave that staff may be entitled to, such as maternity, adoption, paternity, shared parental, parental or compassionate leave.

2.4 For multiple births, parents are eligible to take the same amount of neonatal care leave even if more than one baby is taken into neonatal care. For example, twins taken into neonatal care for three weeks at the same time would result in three weeks leave. If the babies receive care at different times, then leave can be taken for each child.

3. Neonatal Care Leave Pay

3.1 Staff who are eligible for neonatal Care Leave (please see Section 2 for details) will continue to be paid their normal rate of pay while taking neonatal care leave. This will include statutory pay where staff meet the eligibility criteria set out below. However, all staff will receive full pay during their neonatal regardless of eligibility for statutory pay.

3.2 To be eligible for statutory neonatal care pay, the member of staff is required to have:

- at least 26 weeks' continuous service with the University by the end of the relevant week; and
- normal weekly earnings over an eight-week period ending with the end of the relevant week that are not less than the lower earnings limit for national insurance contribution purposes.
- The "relevant week" depends on the type of statutory family-related pay to which the staff member is entitled:
    - If the staff member is entitled to statutory maternity pay or statutory paternity pay (birth), the relevant week is the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

- If the staff member is entitled to statutory adoption pay or statutory paternity pay (adoption), the relevant week is the week in which they or the adopter are notified of being matched with the child for adoption purposes.
- Otherwise, the relevant week is the week immediately before the week in which the neonatal care begins.

4. The duration of neonatal care leave

4.1 Staff can take one week of neonatal care leave for every week their baby has spent in neonatal care without interruption. A week is defined as a period of seven days starting from the day after the neonatal care began.

4.2 The maximum number of weeks that staff can take as neonatal care leave is capped at 12 weeks.

4.3 Any neonatal care leave must be taken in blocks of at least one week.

4.4 Staff can take only up to 12 weeks' neonatal care leave, even if multiple children from the same pregnancy require neonatal care.

5. Timing of neonatal care leave

5.1 Staff can start leave on any day after their baby has received seven days of uninterrupted neonatal care that starts within 28 days from birth.

5.2 The seven days are counted from the day after the neonatal care started. For example, if their baby started receiving neonatal care on 7th April, the seven-day count begins on 8th April. This means that the staff member can start neonatal care leave on any day from 15th April.

5.3 Any neonatal care leave must end within 68 weeks of the baby's date of birth.

5.4 Staff can make use of Compassionate Leave if their baby receives fewer than seven days of neonatal care.

5.5 Where staff are taking other types of family leave (please see Tier 2 Leave in Section 6.1), they would complete this leave and then take Neonatal Care Leave. Any accrued annual leave could be taken after that as needed. Please note that maternity leave must be taken straight after birth and therefore staff using maternity leave would always use Neonatal Care Leave after their maternity leave. Maternity, paternity and adoption leave cannot be paused once started, so Neonatal Care Leave needs to be taken before or after this – please see Section 6 for more details.

6. How neonatal care leave may be taken

6.1 Neonatal Care Leave can be taken in two ways:

- **Tier 1 Leave.** Staff can take all or part of their Neonatal Care Leave while their baby is receiving neonatal care (i.e. immediately after birth) where other family leave is not used or not used straightaway. For example, paternity leave can be taken at any point in the 52 weeks after the baby is born or adopted so a staff member could take neonatal care leave first and then take paternity leave at a later date. If staff take neonatal care leave in the Tier 1 period, they can take it in one continuous block or several non-continuous blocks of a minimum of one week at a time.

- **Tier 2 Leave.** Staff can take all neonatal care leave or any remaining leave (within 68 weeks after their baby's date of birth) that is not part of the Tier 1 period after any other family leave has been taken or after the staff member has returned to work (provided it is within 68 weeks of birth). For example, maternity leave must be taken immediately after birth, so the neonatal care leave could take place after this. Staff can make their request for Tier 2 Leave when deciding on the end date of their other family leave. If staff take neonatal care leave during the Tier 2 period, they must take the leave in one continuous block.

6.2 Please note that the relevant notice requirements differ depending on whether staff take leave in the Tier 1 or Tier 2 period (see How to apply for neonatal care leave below).

7. How to apply for neonatal care leave

7.1 In order to notify the University that they are taking neonatal care leave, the staff member should complete the 'Neonatal Care Leave' Employee Request, available on the Staffing Requests tab of their Employee Dashboard on CORE Portal. If they have decided to take their leave in separate blocks, they will be required to complete separate Employee Requests for each period of leave. Their Line Manager will authorise the request and an email Notification will be sent to the Head of Department as confirmation. Once approved, the request will be sent to the Payroll Team in Human Resources for processing.

7.2 Please note that staff taking maternity or adoption leave should complete a 'Return to Work' employee request on CoreHR, before submitting their request for Tier 2 neonatal care Leave.

7.3 If a member of staff has more than one appointment they should notify their secondary Head of Department by email.

7.4 Please note that there is no expectation on staff to complete this request straightaway while their baby is receiving neonatal care. However, it should be made as soon as it is reasonably practicable.

8. Notice periods for taking neonatal care leave

8.1 Notice during Tier 1 Leave

For each week of neonatal care leave that staff wish to take in Tier 1, they should notify their line manager by telephone or email, preferably before their first day of absence in that week. However, it is recognised that this is likely to be a challenging time, so notice can be given as soon as is reasonably practicable to do so.

8.2 Notice during Tier 2 Leave

If staff wish to take neonatal care leave in the tier 2 period, they should inform their line manager at the earliest opportunity for the purposes of departmental planning.

If staff are taking a single week of neonatal care leave, they should inform their line manager and submit an Employee Request at least 15 days before the first date that they wish their leave to start, or if this is not possible, as soon as it is reasonably practicable.

If staff are taking two or more consecutive weeks of neonatal care leave, they should inform their line manager and submit an Employee Request at least 28 days before the first date that they wish their leave to start, or if this is not possible, as soon as it is reasonably practicable.

8.3 Late notice

It is recognised that having a baby in neonatal care is an incredibly difficult time for parents. Please be assured that if it is not possible for staff to meet the timeframes for giving notice as set out in this policy, the University will accept later notice than this and, in some cases, may waive notice requirements altogether.

9. Changing neonatal care leave plans

9.1 If staff need to cancel neonatal leave, they should notify their line manager and change their leave plans via the Employee Request tab of their Employee Dashboard on CoreHR.

10. If staff suffer a bereavement

10.1 Staff who have accrued entitlement to neonatal care leave can still take the neonatal care leave that they have accrued if their baby passes away.

10.2 Staff will be eligible to take other family leave (e.g. maternity leave) if their baby passes away. Please see each family leave policy for details on this.

10.3 Staff can also access compassionate leave via the Special Leave policy.

10.4 The University's Employee Assistance Programme can provide support to staff during this difficult time.

11. Support for staff

11.1 The University recognises that this will be a stressful time for staff. Staff are encouraged to use the Employee Assistance Programme which is a confidential counselling and information service available to assist them with personal or work-related problems that may be affecting their health and wellbeing.

12. Contact during neonatal care leave

12.1 Managers and colleagues may wish to contact the staff member during neonatal care leave to check on their wellbeing. This should be undertaken in a sensitive manner and with the staff member's consent.

12.2 Managers may also need to make reasonable contact with the staff member to discuss plans for taking leave, to discuss any arrangements to support time away from work, or to update them on developments at work during their absence.

13. Returning to work after neonatal care leave

13.1 Staff have the right to resume working in the same job and on the same terms and conditions if returning to work from a period of isolated neonatal care leave.

13.2 If staff return from a period of neonatal care leave that follows on immediately from another period of statutory leave (such as maternity, adoption, paternity or shared parental leave) and their total time on leave is more than 26 weeks, they have the right to return to the same job wherever possible. However, if this is not reasonably practicable, the University will offer them a suitable alternative job on terms and conditions that are no less favourable.

13.3 Staff returning to work may wish to explore flexible working arrangements such as a phased return to work or permanent change to contracted hours, in accordance with the conditions set out in the Flexible Working Policy.