

Associated Guidance



Returning from Family Leave

Introduction

This associated guidance has been developed to provide both line managers and returning mothers additional information to support their return to work following Maternity Leave, or Shared Parental Leave (SPL), including accommodating breastfeeding individuals in the workplace and undertaking the relevant risk assessments.

Please use this guidance in conjunction with the Maternity Leave Step by Step, Maternity Policy (Officer / Staff) and/or Shared Parental Leave Step by Step, policy and associated additional information documents. For individual's returning from Adoption Leave please use the guidance alongside the Adoption Leave Step by Step, policy and associated additional information documents. You should also familiarise yourself with the Family Leave policy and the Generic Risk Assessments (Expectant Mother) (Officer / Staff as applicable).

Frequently asked questions regarding all Force guidance and resources regarding Maternity and other Family Leave provisions can be accessed through the Family Leave Support Pages.

Returning to Work

Transitioning back to work after an extended period of time away from the workplace, having experienced a significant change in their life; they may be navigating new feelings and priorities, which can be difficult and overwhelming. It's so important that both the individual and line managers are aware of the Force guidance and support available to make the transition back to work as easy as possible.

The line manager and the individual are both responsible for keeping in touch during the Maternity Leave/Adoption Leave/Shared Parental Leave, which may or may not include 'Keeping in Touch' (KIT/SPLIT) days. Appropriate contact should be maintained right up to the point the individual returns to work. This contact should be utilised to discuss any welfare/development needs. The line manager should also inform the individual of any relevant new roles or promotion opportunities and keep them abreast of important organisational changes.

Early contact should be made by the individual to the line manager to discuss and agree the plan to return to work. The aim of these early discussions is to ensure the line manager is clear on the needs and concerns of the individual prior to returning, expectations can be

managed, and preparations can commence, including any Temporary Family Friendly Hours arrangements or Flexible Working requests that should be discussed and agreed with the appropriate notice. The key principle is that there should be ‘no surprises’, and both the individual and line manager know what to expect on the first day back.

The Maternity Step by Step and Shared Parental Leave Step by Step sets out some of the considerations that should form part of these early return to work discussions and plan. Much of this will also apply to those returning from Adoption Leave. These include:

- Temporary family friendly hours (up to three months) to accommodate family needs with a return to the workplace and can be a good way to trial what works for the individual and the business (more information provided in this guidance and the relevant Maternity Leave policies)
- Flexible Working to alter their hours/pattern formally
- Annual leave and Public/Bank Holiday accrual, taking leave during a break in occupational maternity leave or prior to their return to work
- Uniform, a potential assessment of body armour, if applicable, including arranging a re-fitting. Contact Central Stores as required and ideally, arrange this prior to their return.
- New/breastfeeding mother risk assessment to identify any post pregnancy/birth complications or adjustments that need to be made to the workplace environment or working hours for the individual.
- How the individual is doing and feeling about their return, any concerns, anxieties or stressors. These may include but are certainly not limited to leaving their child, adjusting to new working hours, relationships within the team or breastfeeding / expressing at work, changes to ways of working.
- Occupational Health referral where required.

There are a wide range of conditions associated with perinatal mental health which can affect anyone – having a safe and open conversation to ensure the relevant support is in place is so important. Engaging with individuals and creating a positive workplace is key, as stigma attached to perinatal mental health, including a lack of understanding and negativity, can have an adverse effect on recovery, absence management and performance. (NPCC, 2021)

More information on perinatal mental health has been provided in the [NPCC Family Support Guidance](#).

Other considerations:

- Department / Team updates and start thinking about planning potential training / development required for when they return to work. Be mindful of planning too much too soon. Line managers could consider a temporary mentor.
- Office location and the individual’s work station as this may have changed. Would the individual benefit from a reminder of where the facilities are (kitchen, fridge, toilets etc.)
- Locating any other required equipment or personal belongings that were left or stored before Maternity, in advance of their return.

Line Manager actions to be mindful of:

- Ensure the individual has all appropriate IT access (access should be retained throughout the period of Maternity/Adoption/SPL).
- Ensuring ID access is all in place as required (check with Access and IDs)

- RMU / Duties notification to place the individual on 'non-threshold' for their first week back at work (or longer considered, based on the individual circumstances)

Managers should contact [HR Operations - Admin \(D&C\)](#) or [HR Ops Dorset – Admin \(Dorset\)](#) for support in calculating leave accrued during Maternity leave.

The line manager should provide a copy of the relevant Return to Work from Maternity Leave/Adoption Leave/Shared Parental Leave form to the individual to complete and return, emailing this to HR Operations - Admin, in advance of the individual's return to work (**at least 28 days**). The line manager should also hold a return to work discussion, tailored towards the individual's needs, ensuring all relevant practical arrangements are in place to support the individual, at least 28 days in advance of the individual's return date to ensure all the preparation for any adjustments and plans to transition the individual back to work have been done or at least commenced with plenty of notice prior to the day of return. The [Return to Work Discussion form](#) sets out some key considerations within a checklist format, to ensure a meaningful and supportive conversation. The form is not intended to be restrictive and some points may not apply in the circumstances. The line manager can choose to discuss anything additional and capture a summary of the discussion and actions within the form.

The individual has been away from the workplace for a prolonged period of time and there may be new systems, processes or knowledge they need to be aware of to ease some anxieties and support them returning to their role. Where appropriate, the line manager may therefore undertake a Training Needs Analysis, ensuring arrangements are put in place to address any training, mentoring or familiarisation requirements. Any mentor or peer support should be readily available on the first day back.

Regular, open communication between the individual and the line manager is so important during this time to ensure the line manager is informed of any changes or needs as the individual settles back into the workplace, the return to work plan still meets the needs of the individual and that they have the necessary support. The first few weeks can be the most difficult time for a new parent and support will be vital.

Temporary family friendly hours

Temporary family friendly hours may be requested, for a period of up to three months, via the line manager. This is an informal, local arrangement to allow flexibility and support childcare needs with a return to the workplace.

This option provides an opportunity to trial a working pattern(s) to identify an arrangement that is suitable, prior to submitting a formal flexible working request, and avoiding a reduction in pay through the use of annual leave and/or flexi/time on card, to cover any reduction in hours. Individuals also have the option to utilise unpaid leave or unpaid parental leave to cover a reduction in hours however, this will result in a reduction in pay. A combination of all the above mentioned leave provisions may be used to cover the reduction in hours over the agreed period.

Parental leave subject to eligibility, provides a maximum of 18 weeks' leave which can be taken in respect of each child and adopted child up to their 18th birthday. Parental leave applies to the child and not the job, therefore where a proportion of the leave has been used in previous organisations, this will count towards the 18 week leave entitlement for that child. Parental Leave may be an option to accommodate some or all of the period

upon returning to work should they not wish to use Annual Leave, flexi/time on card or unpaid leave.

Unpaid leave allows for up to 31 days leave per financial year (pro rata for part time), where annual leave entitlement for the leave year in question has been exhausted.

Individuals are encouraged to work a minimum of 50% of their standard weekly working hours. The request must be discussed and agreed with the line manager prior to the individual's return to work, with the arrangement commencing on the individual's physical return to the workplace.

With reasonable notice before the end of the Temporary Family Friendly Hours arrangement, where a formal Flexible Working Request has been discussed and agreed, this should be submitted to the line manager, copying in HR Operations – Admin to commence that process. It is recognised the three months notice required of the Flexible Working process may not be achievable owing to this potential trial period.

Temporary Family Friendly Hours is intended to be a supportive option upon returning to work from Maternity, Adoption, Shared Parental Leave, however, an individual may already know the pattern they would like to work and may decide to submit their request in advance of their physical return to the workplace.

Alternatively, where an individual does not wish to utilise their annual leave or flexi/time on card, or where they require additional flexibility to support childcare needs for a period exceeding three months, they may wish to request a short term / temporary flexible working arrangement via the line manager in accordance with Flexible Working Procedure. Towards the end of the temporary arrangement, they can review and discuss their pattern/hours with their line manager, amend and re-submit their request as required. Please note this should be submitted in line with the Flexible Working procedure (not less than 3 months prior to the intended start date) with the relevant sign off, and any reduction in hours would result in a reduction in pay.

In other circumstances, an individual returning from Maternity Leave may intend to return to their full duties and/or contracted hours but have difficulties adjusting back to work for a variety of reasons which may require Occupational Health intervention. A phased return may be considered on a case by case basis subject to Occupational Health recommendations. Any phased return must be notified to HR Operations – Admin confirming the agreed period and return plan.

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments must be conducted by the line manager with the expectant / new mother both after notification of pregnancy, and reviewed and updated regularly (**at least once a month**) as the pregnancy progresses and circumstances change. Line managers must then conduct a risk assessment upon notification of the individuals return to work and should review and update this while the new mother is breastfeeding where applicable.

A risk assessment is an opportunity to discuss working conditions so that action can be taken to reduce, remove or control any potential risk to both the member of staff and their baby. During early pregnancy there is a unique opportunity to talk to the staff member and understand any issues or concerns they have. (NPCC, 2021)

The line manager in conjunction with the expectant / new mother will determine the additional risks to their health and safety posed by their pregnancy or return to work. The identified risks and associated control measures must be agreed and understood by both the line manager and expectant/new mother.

The line manager should use the force Generic Risk Assessments (GRAs) for officers or staff, as a reference, in accordance with guidance given in the Family Leave Policy and the Maternity Leave Step by Step guidance.

Once agreed, send a copy to HR Operations - Admin (D&C) or .HR Ops Dorset – Admin (Dorset).

The individual should make early contact with their line manager to discuss and agree their return to work including notifying them of their intention to breastfeed as soon as this is known. Among the other actions as detailed in the Maternity Step by Step, the line manager should conduct a new/breastfeeding mother risk assessment, located within the Generic Risk Assessment, to identify any post pregnancy/birth complications or adjustments that need to be made to the workplace environment or working hours for the individual, ideally with enough notice to ensure all the provisions are in place and can be implemented in advance of their return. A referral to Occupational Health can be made to support this. Further information on breastfeeding and accommodating breastfeeding at work has been provided within this guidance.

The Generic Risk Assessments provide additional information and provide a table of risk associated with the work activities of an officer or staff member, but it is not exhaustive. The document also provides suggested control measures, but again they are not exhaustive.

Common Risks

The below table should be utilised in conjunction with the more detailed guidance and suggested control measures in the relevant Generic Risk Assessment documents.

Risk	Guidance	Line manager considerations
<p>Posture & position</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectant mothers and new mothers may be more prone to injury due to higher amounts of progesterone and relaxin (both hormones) for those who have recent given birth and people who are breastfeeding – this softens joints and relaxes ligaments around joints. • Static posture can increase discomfort and back pain due to the change in posture and use of muscles required to support the abdomen. • Standing and sitting for prolonged periods in these positions can increase the risk of varicose veins and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the expectant or new mother is not sitting or standing for long periods. • Appropriate work station with support from Health & Safety to identify any adaptations or alterations to equipment. This should be continuously reviewed.

	<p>haemorrhoids. The growth of the abdomen may make achieving good posture at workstations difficult and increase the risk of musculoskeletal problems through increase in muscle fatigue.</p>	
Lifting & manual handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy lifting has been associated with babies being born prematurely or of low birth weight. The mother has a reduced capacity in the cardiovascular and respiratory systems and therefore physical exertion can reduce blood flow to the placenta and may affect the development of the foetus. • Carrying, pushing or pulling moderate or heavy weights may increase the risk of abdominal injury and increase abdominal pressure and therefore risk to the development of the foetus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the expectant or new mother is not lifting or carrying heavy loads. • After a caesarean section it may be necessary to limit the amount of lifting, carrying and stretching
Fatigue/Tiredness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical and mental fatigue generally increases during pregnancy and following birth although not all expectant / new mothers will be affected in the same way. • Long hours, shift and night work can have a significant impact on the expectant / new mother's health and their baby. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid excess hours • Consider alternative hours/reduction in hours and/or Flexible working • Frequent breaks • Suitable rest facilities • If night working gives rise to difficulties for breastfeeding mothers, the assessing manager should give welfare consideration to this and accommodate for these problems as far as possible
Work-related stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excessive stress can be particularly dangerous during pregnancy when the woman's body and foetus are undergoing major and rapid changes. The physical effects of stress upon the body can increase the risk of miscarriage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be aware of other factors that may contribute to an increase of stress due to or during the pregnancy, i.e. domestic problems, financial worries, work concerns and changes in health. • Regular monitoring and discussions about workload • Reallocation of work if necessary

<p>Temperature</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectant mothers are less tolerant of heat and therefore more at risk of fainting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff rotation or temporarily moving individual • Withdrawing individual from work environment • Additional or extended work breaks if exposed to heat. • Ensure plenty of fluids available
<p>Risk of injury</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The duties of an expectant / new mother may carry additional risk which can have significant consequences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the risk assessment to identify any additional control measures for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lone working ○ Working at height ○ Work-related violence ○ Exposure to vibration (aircraft/boat/low frequency driving/off-road driving)
<p>Exposure to harmful substances</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exposure to chemical or biological agents can cause harm to expectant / new mothers including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lead ○ Radioactive material ○ Toxic chemicals like mercury and pesticides ○ Infectious diseases ○ Antimitotic (cytotoxic) drugs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please use the Generic Risk assessment for suggested controls for expectant mothers and further considerations for breastfeeding mothers.

There are also additional risks associated with risk of injury both for non-operational but more significantly for operational officers and staff. **The Generic Risk Assessments provide more associated risks and control measures to consider.**

When and where it is no longer possible to continue undertaking their substantive duties safely with the control measures put in place, suitable alternative work should be allocated and both the line manager and the expectant / new mother should come to an acceptable working arrangement that fully addresses the health and safety risks to the expectant / new mother and their baby.

Any alternative work must be suitable and appropriate, generally this should be commensurate with the pay, skills and experience of the expectant / new mother's substantive duties and the same days/hours, subject to any other adjustment of hours/working pattern implemented. Where the alternative work can only be provided for duties of a lower pay grade, the expectant / new mother will continue to be paid in line with their terms and conditions.

Line managers can seek support and advice from the Family Support Group (D&C) or Support Networks (Dorset) to ensure they write meaningful risk assessments.

The expectant / new mother should be encouraged to discuss the risks with their GP and other medical advisors in order to obtain the most relevant advice about eliminating or reducing the risk in the workplace. Support is also available via the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) and Occupational Health (OH).

The line manager must inform to HR Operations - Admin (D&C) or HR Ops Dorset – Admin (Dorset) of any adjusted duties/hours that are put in place. Support is available from Occupational Health (OH) and Health and Safety (H&S) in relation to working hours and environment.

[Generic Risk Assessment \(Expectant Mother\) – Police Officer](#)
[Generic Risk Assessment \(Expectant Mother\) – Police Staff](#)

Breastfeeding

Individuals must be able to return to work safe in the knowledge that they will be able to continue to breastfeed their child. Having this security will possibly empower them to return to work earlier than expected. If an individual feels that a flexible supportive environment exists, they are more likely to return to work earlier. Skills and experience are retained within the organisation without incurring extra recruitment costs. National research has shown that supporting individuals who want to continue breastfeeding once they have returned to work has lowered absenteeism, improved staff retention, increased morale and loyalty and promoted a family friendly reputation. (NPCC, 2021)

Returning to work may be the first time they have been separated from their baby for long periods. It can be a difficult time for both mother and baby and it's important that line managers are aware of this. Breastfeeding can support mothers emotionally through this time, maintaining that close relationship and providing extra comfort to their baby. There are many reasons to breastfeed, including health benefits, but a mother may choose to breastfeed simply because they want to. There may also be circumstances where an individual chooses not to, or is unable to breastfeed.

Where an individual is able to and makes the decision to breastfeed, upon their return to work, they will need an appropriate space and adjustments to accommodate regular breaks to express milk. The frequency of breaks and the time required will be dependant on the individual and their needs, therefore it's important for the individual and line managers to be informed and discuss these needs through the risk assessment and return to work discussions.

It is up to the individual to decide how long they want to breastfeed therefore ongoing communication is key between the individual and line manager to ensure arrangements are in place and continue to meet the needs of the individual and the department.

If an individual is a surrogate and will be expressing for the parent(s), the same rights apply.

Accommodating Breastfeeding in the workplace

Workplace regulations require employers to provide suitable facilities where pregnant and breastfeeding mothers can rest. In line with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), as an employer, we should seek to provide a private, healthy and safe environment for breastfeeding mothers to express and store milk where we are notified of the returning mother's intention to breast feed.

Devon & Cornwall and Dorset Police are committed to supporting breastfeeding and mothers returning to work. It is expected that line managers and work colleagues will assist in providing a supportive and understanding approach to facilitating breastfeeding individuals.

Individuals should expect the necessary support to ensure an appropriate space is identified to express while at work and for any other workplace adjustments to be put in place as reasonably required.

When the line manager has been notified of the individual's intention to return to work, the date of return, and have been informed of their intention to breastfeed, the line manager should conduct a new/breastfeeding mother risk assessment, located within the Generic Risk Assessment. Line managers may have already received the request to breastfeed at work as part of the normal KIT (keeping in touch) meetings held with an individual whilst they are on maternity leave. This will give the the line manager an opportunity to discuss how to best to accommodate the arrangements in line with the requirements of their role, to enable the individual to return to work more easily and effectively.

As part of this risk assessment, it is the responsibility of the individual to raise and keep their line manager informed of their needs to ensure appropriate accommodations can be made. The line manager should upon notification, seek to identify an appropriate space for the individual to express milk that is:

- comfortable,
- lockable,
- private,
- hygienic,
- ideally has an electrical outlet for any equipment required,
- has appropriate clean and secure fridge facilities for storing expressed breast milk while at work either within the space or near,
- ideally has facilities for washing, sterilising and storing receptacles either within the space or near.

It is recognised that there may not be an immediate option that provides all of the above. Every building has a designated Building Controller who should be aware of an appropriate space. This could be an unoccupied office or an area used for meetings that can be discreetly screened. Please contact HR Operations – Admin to identify the Building Controller where this is unknown and they can provide general advice on identifying an appropriate space.

There maybe a space that could be appropriate with some adaptations, for example provision of a fridge, lock, a comfortable chair or blinds. The line manager may need to contact Buildings & Estates to advise on the ability to provide a separate fridge or secure blinds for a space. A Health & Safety advisor can also support with assessing the suitability of a space should you need additional advice.

It's important to keep the individual informed of any identified space and facilities to ensure they are comfortable with the arrangements. It is also good practice to discuss storage preferences with the individual.

Individuals are responsible for purchasing and maintaining all their own breast pump equipment. Storage of milk and cleaning of breast equipment should be undertaken as recommended.

As part of the request, an individual may also request additional breaks to express milk. These requests should be considered on what is reasonable and organisational impact. There may be occasions where the additional break/s cannot be supported, however alternative options could be explored, for example, considerations to extending existing breaks or leaving early. Breastfeeding needs including breaks could be accommodated through temporary adjustments which can be recorded using Flexi-time or TOIL, or through other local agreements.

Any arrangement to support breastfeeding / expressing upon returning to work, should be discussed and agreed with the individual and can be reviewed periodically to ensure the arrangements still meet the needs of the individual and business. It would be important to note however that there should not be a fixed period, with exception to Family Friendly hours, as an individual's circumstances or decision may change during their Breast feeding journey and a time limit on such arrangements may cause unnecessary additional stress.

It is good practice for the line manager to keep a short note of any requests and the decision reached with the individual, whether this forms part of ongoing risk assessments, or summarised within an email.

Other support for returning mothers

Breast Buddies	<p>Devon & Cornwall and Dorset Police have a network of Breast Buddies. Breast buddies can support officers and staff with their breast feeding journey. Each woman will be at a different place in their journey. Breast buddies are available to women who are pregnant, those on Maternity Leave or Shared Parental Leave, and officers and staff who have returned to work and are breastfeeding or expressing. Support is also offered to partners who are themselves supporting their partner to breastfeed or express.</p> <p>You can find more information on the Breast Buddies page within the Family Leave Support Pages.</p>
Contacts	<p>HR, the Family Support Group (FSG), Trade Union, Federation and Superintendants Association representatives, are also available to support both line managers and individuals in ensuring the appropriate support and arrangements are put in place for their return to work.</p> <p>It is encouraged that contact is made at the earliest opportunity to commence preparations for the individual's return, but recognising some queries or issues may arise upon their return based on the ongoing regular discussions taking place as the individual transitions back to work.</p>
National Police Breastfeeding network	<p>The Police Breastfeeding Network aims to support our families to make informed decisions about breastfeeding and be here as a source of support. They look to build awareness around breastfeeding, the barriers faced within the Police and actively seek</p>

	<p>to break these down. The network seeks to drive policy changes and ensure forces follow the same practices.</p> <p>They have produced a helpful Breastfeeding guide which can also be made accessible in the identified space for expressing upon returning to work.</p>
NPCC Family Support Guidance	<p>This guide is the product of extensive canvassing and has picked up best practice from across all forces. It is designed to act as a guide for forces seeking to establish an inclusive working environment and provide consistency across the country. The document also seeks to explain the complexities of the issues facing the modern family within policing and provides guidance on systems of support which have been established in some areas.</p> <p>The guide also includes signposting, further reading and additional advice and support.</p> <p>NPCC Family Support Guidance</p>
External Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oscar Kilo – resilience programme • RedArc Councillor services through Police Federation Insurance • Wellbeing ‘Wiser mind’ programme

Support available & other contacts

[Family Support Group \(D&C\)](#)

[Support networks](#)

[Breast buddies](#)

[Trade Union Support](#)

[Police Federation \(D&C\) / Police Federation \(Dorset\)](#)

[HR Operations - Admin \(D&C\) or .HR Ops Dorset – Admin \(Dorset\)](#)

[Central stores](#)

Supporting links and guidance:

[Family Leave Support Pages](#) - This is an internal SharePoint page providing all resources, information and guidance for the Family Leave provisions

[Family Leave Provisions](#) - Access to all current Policies, Step by Steps, associated guidance and forms

[Unpaid Leave](#)

[Occupational Health Referral](#)

[Baby loss procedural guidance](#)

Useful external links and guidance

[ACAS – Accommodating breastfeeding employees in the workplace](#)

[Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\) – Protecting pregnant workers and new mothers](#)

[NHS Expressing and storing breast milk](#)

[NHS Breastfeeding and going back to work](#)

[NPCC Family Support Guidance](#)