

Policy



Paternity Leave and Pay (Maternity-Adoption Support)

URN: J-P-076

Version: 2.1
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Host Force: Dorset Police
Host Policy Unit: Dorset Police Legitimacy Team
Policy Owner: Alliance Head of People – HR Operations
Policy Author: Alliance Head of Employee Relations

Policy Area: Family Leave

Associated documents: [J-Pr-082 Paternity Leave \(Maternity - Adoption Support\)](#)

Applicable to:

Devon & Cornwall Police	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Dorset Police	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
OPCC Devon & Cornwall	<input type="checkbox"/>
OPCC Dorset	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Officers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

PRINTED VERSIONS SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON. THE MOST UP TO DATE VERSION CAN BE FOUND ON THE [FORCE DOCUMENT LIBRARY](#).

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the arrangements for Paternity Leave (also known as Maternity Support and Adoption Support Leave). This leave is available to help care for the child or support the child's mother / primary carer.
- 1.2 The provisions relating to paid leave for police staff are described in the Police Staff Council Handbook. Police Regulations 2003 apply for police officers.
- 1.3 This policy describes how Police Regulations and the handbook provisions will be applied in Devon & Cornwall Police and Dorset Police and provides additional clarity for individuals and managers.
- 1.4 Changes under the Employment Rights Act 2025 in respect of paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave entitlement will apply to eligible individuals where the expected week of birth falls on or after 5 April 2026, or the date of birth / adoption placement / child's entry into Great Britain falls on or after 6 April 2026. Individuals should refer to Section 2.0 of this policy to determine 'Eligibility and Entitlement'. **Please note:** A notice of intention to take paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave under the new provisions may be submitted from 18 February 2026. To enable a period of transition to the new provisions, the government have temporarily reduced the usual notice period set out at 3.2 to 28 days, where the expected week of birth falls between 5 April and 25 July 2026.
- 1.5 A summary of the paternity (maternity - adoption support) leave principles is available via J-Pr-082 Paternity (maternity - adoption support) Leave procedure, Section 12.0 'Appendix One'.

2.0 Eligibility and Entitlement

- 2.1 Paternity (maternity - adoption support) leave can apply where an individual and their partner are:
 - having a baby,
 - adopting a child,
 - approved for a 'Fostering for Adoption' arrangement,

- having a baby through a surrogacy arrangement.
- 2.2 To qualify for paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave, the individual must be the father, the husband or partner of the mother (or adopter), the child's adopter or the intended parent. They will 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 / primary carer.

Qualifying individuals with an expected week of birth beginning prior to 5 April 2026, or the child's date of birth / adoption placement / entry into Great Britain falls prior to 6 April 2026.

- 2.3 To be eligible for paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave and pay, the eligible individual must have 26 weeks' continuous service with their current Force by the end of the 15th week before the week in which the child is expected or ending within the week in which the child's adopter is notified of having been matched with the child for adoption.
- 2.4 Where the child is born early, the individual will remain eligible for paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave where they meet the qualifying period of working continuously for at least 26 weeks with their current Force by the qualifying week.
- 2.5 Where a child is born prematurely or in cases of baby loss, the individual may also be entitled to compassionate leave or parental bereavement leave. For additional information, please refer to J-P-160 Compassionate Leave Policy, available via the People Portfolio A-Z pages of the intranet.
- 2.6 Where the baby is admitted into neonatal care before they are 28 days old for a continuous period of at least seven days, there may be an entitlement to Neonatal Care Leave (NCL) and Neonatal Care Pay (NCP). The entitlement is available for up to 12 weeks and in addition to paternity (Maternity – Adoption Support) leave and pay, subject to meeting the relevant eligibility criteria. Please see J-Pr-330 Neonatal Care Leave and Pay procedure, available via Section 9.0 'Other Associated Documents'.
- 2.7 In the case of multiple births, e.g., twins, paternity (maternity – adoption support) entitlement will remain the same.
- 2.8 Parents intending to have a child through a surrogacy arrangement may be eligible for Statutory Paternity Pay and Leave if they have applied for, or intend to apply for, a parental order in the first six months following the baby's birth.
- 2.9 Where the child's mother, adopter or intended adopter dies during childbirth, or within 12 months of the birth or adoption placement, the eligible father, husband, or partner of the mother (or adopter) will be entitled to paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave from day one of service / employment. Eligibility for paternity (maternity – adoption support) pay will be subject to the continuous service criteria set out at Section 6.0.

2.10 Where an individual is requesting to take both paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave and shared parental leave (SPL), paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave must be taken first. In circumstances where the child’s mother, adopter, or intended adopter dies, paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave may be taken following a period of SPL, subject to the eligibility criteria (see 2.4). An individual cannot take paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave if they have already taken a period of SPL in relation to the same child. For additional information, please refer to J-P-052 Shared Parental Leave Policy, available via Section 9.0 ‘Other Associated Documents’.

Qualifying individuals with an expected week of birth beginning on or after 5 April 2026, or the child’s date of birth / adoption placement / entry into Great Britain falls on or after 6 April 2026.

2.11 The entitlement to paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave is available from day one of service / employment, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria set out in 2.1 and 2.2.

2.12 Where the child is born early, the individual will remain eligible for paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave from day one of service / employment, subject to the eligibility criteria.

2.13 Eligibility for paternity (maternity – adoption support) pay will be subject to the continuous service criteria set out at Section 6.0.

2.14 Where a child is born prematurely or in cases of baby loss, the individual may also be entitled to compassionate leave or parental bereavement leave. For additional information, please refer to J-P-160 Compassionate Leave Policy, available via Section 9.0 ‘Other Associated Documents’.

2.15 Where the baby is admitted into neonatal care before they are 28 days old for a continuous period of at least seven days, there may be an entitlement to Neonatal Care Leave (NCL) and Neonatal Care Pay (NCP). The entitlement is available for up to 12 weeks and in addition to paternity (Maternity – Adoption Support) leave and pay, subject to meeting the relevant eligibility criteria. Please see J-Pr-330 Neonatal Care Leave and Pay procedure, available via Section 9.0 ‘Other Associated Documents’.

2.16 In the case of multiple births, e.g., twins, paternity (maternity – adoption support) entitlement will remain the same.

2.17 Parents intending to have a child through a surrogacy arrangement may be eligible for Statutory Paternity Pay and leave if they have applied for, or intend to apply for, a parental order in the first six months following the baby’s birth.

2.18 Where an individual is eligible to take both paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave and shared parental leave (SPL), paternity (maternity – adoption support) leave may be taken before or after the period of SPL. For additional information, please refer to J-P-052 Shared Parental Leave Policy, available via Section 9.0 ‘Other Associated Documents’.

3.0 Paternity Leave – Birth Parents and Surrogacy Arrangements

- 3.1 Individuals are entitled to up to two weeks' of paternity (maternity support) leave, which should be taken within 52 weeks of the date of birth, or the first day of the expected week of the birth, where the baby is born early. The individual can choose to take either one or two weeks' leave, which can be taken as a single period of leave of either one week or two weeks, or two non-consecutive periods of leave of a week each.
- 3.2 The individual must notify the line manager in writing of their entitlement to take paternity (maternity support) leave, including a declaration that they meet the criteria as set out in 2.2, on or before the qualifying week, which is the 15th week before the expected week of birth, or where this is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable. **Please note:** Where the expected week of birth falls between 5 April 2026 and 25 July 2026, a reduced notice period of 28 days will apply (see 1.4).
- 3.2 Paternity (maternity support) leave must not start before the birth and the start date must be one of the following: the actual date of birth, a specified number of days after the birth, or a pre-determined date after the expected week of childbirth which must end within 52 weeks of the birth date.
- 3.3 The individual must provide 28 days' notice to the line manager of the intended start date and duration of the leave, including a declaration that the leave will be used for the intended purpose, as set out in 2.2. The notice provided must be either 28 days before the first day of the expected week of childbirth, 28 days before the specified date, or 28 days before the pre-determined date.
- 3.4 Where the individual is at work on the day the child is born and has planned to commence paternity (maternity support) leave on the birth date, the leave will begin the day after the date of birth.
- 3.6 Individuals will remain eligible for paternity (maternity support) leave and pay where the baby is stillborn from 24 weeks of pregnancy or the baby is born alive at any point within the pregnancy, but later dies. The leave must be taken within 52 weeks of the birth, or in the case of an early birth, no later than 52 weeks following the first day of the expected week of birth.
- 3.7 In the case of a surrogacy arrangement, individuals will remain eligible for paternity (maternity support) leave and pay where the time limit in which to apply for a parental order expires, the application for a parental order is refused, withdrawn, or terminated, or the child dies. The leave must be taken within eight weeks from the last date of the week in which the event occurred.

4.0 Adoption (including adoption from overseas)

- 4.1 Individuals are entitled to up to two weeks' of paternity leave (adoption support) which should be taken within 52 weeks of the adoption placement, or in the case of overseas adoption, the child's entry into Great Britain. The individual can choose to take either one or two weeks' leave, which can be taken as a

single period of leave of either one week or two weeks, or two non-consecutive periods of leave of a week each.

- 4.2 In the case of adoption, the individual must notify their line manager in writing of their entitlement to take paternity (adoption support) leave within seven days of notification of being matched with the child, or where this is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable. The notice must include:
- a declaration that they meet the criteria, to include that the leave will be used for its intended purpose, as set out in 2.2,
 - the date in which they were notified of being matched with the child,
 - the date in which the child is expected to be / has been placed, and
 - the intended start date and duration of the leave.
- 4.3 In the case of adoption from overseas, the individual must notify their line manager in writing of their entitlement to take paternity (adoption support) leave no later than 28 days' after being notified of being matched with a child, or within 28 days of completion of 26 weeks' continuous service with the Force, whichever is later (or where this is not possible, as soon as reasonably practicable). **Please note:** Where the child's entry into Great Britain falls on or after 6 April 2026, continuous service criteria will not apply. The notice must include:
- a declaration that they meet the criteria as set out in 2.2,
 - the date in which they were notified of being matched with the child, and
 - the date in which the child is expected to enter Great Britain.
- 4.4 Paternity (adoption support) leave cannot start before the date of the adoption placement or the child's entry into Great Britain and the start date must be one of the following: the date of the adoption placement or the child's entry into Great Britain, an agreed number of days after the date of the adoption placement or the child's entry into Great Britain, or a pre-determined date after adoption placement or the child's entry into Great Britain. The leave must end within 52 weeks of the adoption placement or the child's entry into Great Britain.
- 4.5 In the case of overseas adoption, the individual must provide 28 days' notice to the line manager of the intended start date and duration of the leave, including a declaration that the leave will be used for the intended purpose, as set out in 2.2. The notice provided must be either 28 days before the date in which the child is expected to enter Great Britain, or 28 days before the pre-determined date.
- 4.6 Proof of adoption must be provided to qualify for paternity (adoption support) pay, which can be in the form of a letter from their adoption agency or their matching certificate.
- 4.7 In the case of adoption, an individual will remain eligible for paternity (adoption support) leave and pay where the child, is no longer placed, dies, or is returned following the placement. The leave must be taken within eight weeks from the last date of the week in which:

- the individual is notified that the adoption placement will no longer take place, or
- the child dies, or
- the child is returned following placement.

4.8 In the case of overseas adoption, an individual will remain eligible for paternity (adoption support) leave and pay where the child dies or ceases to live with the adopter. The leave must be taken within eight weeks from the last date of the week in which:

- the child ceases to live with adopter, or
- the child dies.

5.0 Cancelling or Varying Paternity Leave Dates

5.1 In the event of a change in circumstances, an individual is entitled to cancel or vary the start and end dates of their paternity leave, providing they give 28 days' notice in advance of the original intended date, or the new intended date of leave, whichever is earliest.

5.2 Where the child is not born / not placed / has not entered Great Britain on or before the intended date of leave, the individual must substitute the original date for a later date. The actual date of birth / adoption placement must be provided to the line manager as soon as reasonably practicable (or in the case of overseas adoption, within 28 days of the child entering Great Britain, or as soon as reasonably practicable).

6.0 Pay

6.1 Eligibility to receive paternity (maternity - adoption support) pay will be subject to satisfying minimum earnings and continuous service criteria of 26 weeks' continuous service with their current Force by the end of the 15th week before the week in which the child is expected, or ending within the week in which the child's adopter is notified of having been matched with the child for adoption.

6.2 Paternity (maternity - adoption support) pay will be at full pay for the first week (including statutory paternity pay), with the second week paid at the current statutory paternity pay rate.

7.0 Regulatory Background

The principle documents regulating this aspect are:

- a. The Paternity and Adoption Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2014.
- b. Regulation 33 Annex S of Police Regulations 2003.
- c. The Paternity and Adoption Leave Regulations 2002.
- d. The Police Staff Council Handbook.

Both Forces are also obliged to abide by all relevant legislation and other guidance as appropriate:

- [Code of Ethics](#) (DCP)
- [Code of Ethics](#) (DP)
- [Equality Act \(2010\)](#) including the Public Sector Equality Duty
- [Freedom of Information Act 2000 \(FOIA\)](#)
- [Human Rights Act \(1998\)](#)
- [Records Management](#) (DCP)
- [Records Management](#) (DP)
- [The Health and Safety at Work Act \(1974\)](#)
- [UK General Data Protection Regulation / Data Protection Act \(2018\)](#)
- [Our Purpose](#) (DCP)
- [Vision, Purpose & Priorities](#) (DP)
- [Standards of Professional Behaviour](#)

8.0 Monitoring, Review, Enquiries and Feedback

Review and amendments will be coordinated by the Policy Unit.

The Alliance Head of Employee Relations – HR Operations is responsible for overseeing this policy to ensure a consistent Force approach is maintained. Monitoring will be primarily carried out subject to force processes of continuing review and in line with force governance requirements.

This policy will be reviewed every two years subject to legislation / process changes.

Please note: Where legislation / guidance changes have occurred / scheduled to occur or operational needs demand it, ahead of the revised review date, Alliance People policies and associated procedures / step by steps will be applied in line with prevailing legislation / guidance.

For day to day enquiries relating to this policy please contact [HR Operations - Admin \(D&C\)](#) or [HR Ops Dorset - Admin](#)

We welcome any comments or suggestions you wish to share about the content or implementation of this policy. If you would like to make contact to discuss further, please email: [.Policies@dorset.PNN.police.uk](mailto:Policies@dorset.PNN.police.uk)

9.0 Other Associated Documents

A range of policies, procedural guidance and step by steps are available in support of this policy available via the following links:

SharePoint

- [J-P-054 Adoption Leave and Pay Policy \(Officers\)](#)
- [J-P-056 Adoption Leave and Pay Policy \(Staff\)](#)
- [J-Pr-160 Compassionate Leave Policy](#)
- [J-P-080 Dependants Leave Policy](#)
- [J-P-048 Pregnancy and Maternity Leave Policy \(Officers\)](#)
- [J-P-050 Pregnancy and Maternity Leave Policy \(Staff\)](#)

- [J-Pr-330 Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Step by Step](#)
- [People Portfolio A-Z](#)
- [J-P-052 Shared Parental Leave Policy](#)
- [J-P-078 Unpaid Parental Leave Policy](#)

10.0 Version History

Version: 1.0
Date: 21/06/2021
Reason for Amendments: Initial Document.
Amended by: Employee Relations – HR Operations
Approved by: Board – See Governance
Date Approved: 13/05/2021
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.1
Date: 03/05/2022
Reason for Amendments: New point 3.5 – Expectant Parents and renumbering of existing 3.5 to 3.10) – Established COVID principles
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: Employee Relations
Date Approved: n/a
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.2
Date: 20/12/2023
Reason for Amendments: Fit for purpose review completed, clarity provided, key change - 26 weeks qualifying service applies to the current Force. Updated to latest template.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: HoD
Date Approved: 18/12/2023
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.3
Date: 08/03/2024
Reason for Amendments: Updated to reflect new paternity regulations which are due to come into effect on 8 March 2024 and will apply to births and adoptions falling on or after 6 April 2024.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: not required - Legislative
Date Approved: n/a
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.4
Date: 25/03/2024
Reason for Amendments: Minor amends have been made now that further online guidance and the updated forms are available.
Amended by: Employee Relations
Approved by: not required - Legislative
Date Approved: n/a
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 1.5
Date: 07/04/2025
Reason for Amendments: Fit for purpose review completed.
Amended by: Strategy & Policy Lead – Employee Relations
Approved by: HoD
Date Approved: 26/03/2025
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 2.0
Date: 15/01/2026
Reason for Amendments: Amendments made to reflect the introduction of the Paternity Leave (Bereavement) Act, which came into Force on 29/12/2025.
Amended by: Strategy & Policy Lead – Employee Relations
Approved by: Strategy & Policy Lead – Employee Relations
Date Approved: 14/01/2026
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

Version: 2.1
Date: 16/02/2026
Reason for Amendments: Paternity Leave Legislation updates.
Amended by: Strategy & Policy Lead – Employee Relations
Approved by: Strategy & Policy Lead – Employee Relations
Date Approved: 16/02/2026
Quality Assured: Legitimacy Team

11.0 Governance

The details below are only required for new documents, major amendments subject to consultation.

Present Portfolio Holder: Alliance Head of People (HR Operations)

Present Document Owner: Alliance Head of Employee Relations
Present Owning Department: Alliance People Portfolio
Name of Board: Strategic People Board
Chief Officer Approving: Assistant Chief Officer (D&C) and Assistant Chief Officer (Dorset)
Date Approved: 13/05/2021

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