

HR and Cultural Change

Neonatal care leave schools briefing note

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Accessibility

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Scope

The following guidance is for schools to understand how the new entitlement to Neonatal Care Leave and Pay can be managed.

Thousands of premature or unwell babies are born in the UK each year, requiring neonatal care. At Oxfordshire County Council, we recognise the significant impact these circumstances can have on our colleagues and their families, both financially and emotionally. If you are impacted by any of the circumstances discussed on this page, we encourage you to reach out to your line manager or the HR team to ensure you have access to suitable support and entitlements, further information can be found in the wellbeing and support section below.

Full details of neonatal care pay, leave and other entitlements are covered in the Schools Neonatal Care Leave and Pay Scheme.

Top tip!

Where there is text highlighted in pink in the policy, you should link to your schools' guidance and/or schemes.

Eligibility

From the 6th April 2025, neonatal parents will be eligible for neonatal leave and pay, if their child's admission to neonatal care lasts for a continuous period of seven days or more. A **neonatal parent** is defined as a primary caregiver for the baby and a primary carer's live-in partner.

Entitlement to pay and leave

Parents accrue one-week of neonatal care leave for each week the baby is in neonatal care up to a maximum of 12 weeks.

Colleagues with less than 26 weeks service on the date the baby is admitted to neonatal care

Employees are entitled to 12 weeks of statutory unpaid neonatal leave from day one of employment. The weeks can be taken continuously or in separate blocks of one week. There is no statutory pay entitlement until an employee has 26 weeks continuous service.

Colleagues with over 26 weeks service on the date the baby is admitted to neonatal care

The organisation offers an enhanced rate of Neonatal Pay for employees with over 26 weeks service on the date of the baby's birth. This includes either:

- 90% of the employee's average weekly earnings for the first six weeks,
- 50% of their average weekly earnings for the following six weeks,

OR

- £194.32 per week,

whichever is greater.

Top tip

The enhanced rate of pay is offered corporately by Oxfordshire County Council, to ensure equal pay for colleagues within schools, it's recommended that this rate is adopted within schools as well.

Taking the leave and the impact on other types of family leave

For maternity and adoption leave

If a parent is due to take maternity or adoption leave, they will automatically start this leave on the day of the baby's birth (or sooner). If the baby is then admitted into neonatal care, the parent will accrue neonatal leave and can take any accrued neonatal leave once the maternity or adoption leave ends. In these circumstances, the leave must be taken in one continuous block.

For paternity and shared parental leave

If the baby is admitted to neonatal care from birth, a parent may take neonatal leave prior to commencing paternity or shared parental leave. They can begin their paternity or shared parental leave at any point during the period, even if the baby remains in neonatal care, and take any remaining accrued neonatal leave once the paternity or shared parental leave ends.

Why is it different depending on what other type of family leave I'm taking?

In cases of maternity and adoption leave, these leave types have specific requirements on the dates they can be started (e.g., on the date of the baby's birth or the date of the child's placement). This means that either of these leave types will have already commenced by the time the baby has been in neonatal care for seven calendar days. Neither maternity or adoption leave can be paused and restarted once it has started. For this reason, the neonatal care leave and pay must be taken *after* the maternity or adoption leave ends. This is not the case for paternity and shared parental leave, both of which can be paused once they have started.

Notifying your manager

In many cases, the baby's admission to neonatal care is a sudden, unexpected event which parents are unable to plan for, this means very short, informal, notice will be accepted for Neonatal Leave. Colleagues should try to notify their manager as soon as possible if their baby is admitted to neonatal care. This will ensure all eligible colleagues are given any time off they are entitled to.

How to book

Neonatal care leave must be taken in blocks of one week.

An IBC enquiry should be submitted to notify the organisation of your intention to take neonatal care leave. This enquiry should be submitted once the child has been released from neonatal care and any payment will be backdated in the next available pay if necessary. This is because a parent only accrues an entitlement to neonatal care leave for every full seven calendar days that the child is in neonatal care, this means the parent will not know how much they have accrued until the baby has been released from neonatal care. This will likely not apply to those on maternity or adoption leave, where they will be taking neonatal care leave at the end of the other leave period.

This means that a colleague may be on IBC as ‘in attendance’ whilst they are on neonatal leave, with the absence amended and backdated once they have returned.

A manager is able to submit this form on a colleague’s behalf.

The enquiry should include:

- Employees full name
- Personnel number
- Child's date of birth
- The date the child was admitted to neonatal care
- If the child is no longer receiving neonatal care, the date that the care ended
- The start and end date of the period(s) you wish to take neonatal leave for (full weeks)
- Confirmation that the employee meets the parental relationship criteria (add link)

In terms of the drop downs to select, it would be as below and to add a title of Neonatal:

Type:	Employment/Salary/Pay	▼
Sub-type:	Family leave (Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Shared Parental)	▼
Enquiry:	Other family friendly leave	▼
Title:	Neonatal	

Returning to work

Employees on Neonatal Leave and their line manager will agree on the type, and frequency, of communication through the duration of the leave.

We understand that neonatal care is often unpredictable, so short notice can be given for an employee’s return to work. Line managers will complete a return to work and stress risk assessment to inform and implement any support an employee may need on their return.

If additional family leave is taken after neonatal leave, the notice periods in the relevant policy apply.

Top tip

Managers should consider other types of leave which may be available should an employee be experiencing any of the circumstances within the policy and supporting documentation. For example, compassionate leave or emergency leave.

Frequently asked questions

What if my child is not in hospital but is under neonatal care with a consultant visiting our home?

You are still eligible for neonatal care leave if your child is under neonatal care from a consultant and/or healthcare professional but isn't in hospital. Neonatal care is a specific type of care which hospitals and health care providers offer to babies born prematurely. This care is also provided to children born with an illness. Neonatal care is any care supervised by a consultant and/or healthcare professional(s), it doesn't necessarily just mean hospital stays. It can include periods outside of hospital, providing that the care is continuous

What if I've already taken annual leave to cover this period of time?

If you have already taken annual leave whilst your child was in neonatal care, you should cancel the leave on IBC and submit a neonatal care leave [notification form](#) to inform HR and IBC of your entitlement to neonatal care leave. This will then be added to your record and the annual leave will be returned to you.

What if my child is released and then readmitted to neonatal care before they turn 28 days old?

If you have already submitted your neonatal care leave [notification form](#) and the child is readmitted to neonatal care within the 28-day period, you can complete an additional notification form for the additional leave accrued.

What happens in the event of a bereavement?

Employees who have accrued entitlement to neonatal care leave can still take the neonatal care leave that they have accrued if their child passes away.

Employees may also be entitled to parental bereavement leave in these circumstances; more information can be found in the [parental bereavement leave](#) policy.

Employees may still have entitlements to other types of family leave (maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave), more information can be found in the [specific policies](#) for these leave types.

If an employee has suffered a bereavement, they can contact hradvice@oxfordshire.gov.uk to discuss other support which may be available and review the section below for further access to support.

Where can I access support?

For further support you can:

- access the [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\)](#);
- seek support from a specialised service; [Bliss](#), [London Neonatal Network](#), [Support for Sick Newborns and their Parents \(SSNAP\)](#), [Support for Bereaved Parents and Siblings in the UK](#), [The Compassionate Friends](#) | [For bereaved parents](#)
- access our [wellbeing resources](#) via the intranet,
- contact the HR Advice Desk by emailing hradvice@oxfordshire.gov.uk,
- your union can provide advice and support, details on how to contact them can be found on the [intranet](#).

What happens to my pension?

Pension contributions continue during paid periods of neonatal leave. For members of the Local Government Pension Scheme who take a period of unpaid leave, pension contributions are optional. You can contact your [pension scheme](#) for further information on pausing or restarting pension contributions.

What happens to my annual leave and any bank holidays during this time?

Colleagues will continue to accrue annual leave whilst they are on Neonatal Leave and should plan to take this by the end of the leave year, where possible. If this is not possible, employees can carry forward any remaining annual leave entitlement to the next leave year.

Any bank holidays which fall on an employee's normal working day during neonatal leave, can be taken as paid leave, in a single block, at the end of the leave period.

This block may be at the end of another type of family leave if an employee takes paternity, maternity, adoption or shared parental leave immediately after Neonatal Leave.

Further support

For further support you can:

- reach out to the HR Advice Desk by emailing EPS@hants.gov.uk

Feedback

If you have any feedback on this guidance, you can submit it using [this form](#). The form responses are regularly monitored, and updates are made where needed.

Version History and changes

Version	Date	Change
1.0	April 2025	New guidance

This guidance is not contractual, and it may be varied by the council from time to time.