

SECTION	People and Culture
POLICY	Adoption Leave Policy
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1. Introduction

The right to take adoption leave is available to men and women (whether married or single) who adopt a child through an approved adoption agency. Where you adopt a child with your partner, only one of you will be eligible to take adoption leave (it is your choice who takes that leave). In such a case, your partner may be eligible to take paternity leave if the relevant statutory criteria are met.

It is not usually possible to take adoption leave if you adopt a child you are currently fostering, unless you have specifically been matched under Local Authority Early Permanence and are fostering, or if you adopt your step child. Please contact the People and Culture department for further guidance.

You can take only one period of leave irrespective of whether more than one child is adopted by you within the same period of time.

This policy provides Employees with a general outline of the statutory provisions relating to adoption leave and pay. The statutory provisions are complex and in the event of any inconsistency will override the terms of this policy.

This policy reflects your legal rights but does not form part of your contractual terms of employment and may be amended at any time at the Company's discretion. Any abuse of this policy may render you liable to disciplinary action.

2. General

Subject to eligibility and notification requirements below, you may be entitled to:

- 52 weeks' adoption leave (i.e. up to a maximum of 26 weeks' ordinary adoption leave ("OAL"), followed by up to a maximum of 26 weeks' additional adoption leave ("AAL"); and
- 39 weeks' statutory adoption pay ("SAP")
- Up to five days additional paid time for any introductions or formal meetings.

3. Eligibility

To qualify for adoption leave, you must have:

- Been continuously employed by the Company for 26 weeks ending with the week in which you are notified of being matched with a child; and
- Notified your adoption agency that you agree to the child being placed with you on the expected date of placement.

4. Notification

If you wish to take adoption leave, you must provide your line manager no later than seven days after you have been notified that you have been matched with a child, or as soon as reasonably practicable, with the following:

- a) The date you wish your adoption leave to start; and
- b) Documentation to prove your entitlement to adoption leave, including the:
 - Name and address of the adoption agency;
 - Date on which you were notified that you had been matched with a child; and
 - Expected date of placement

Once you have notified your line manager of the date you wish to start your adoption leave, they will respond in writing and confirm the date that you are expected to return to work.

5. Starting your leave

You may start your adoption leave from the date of the child's placement or from a fixed date which can be up to 14 days before the expected date of placement. Leave can start on any day of the week.

If you wish to change the start date, you must provide your line manager with 28 days' prior notice unless this is not reasonably practicable.

6. Statutory pay

If you qualify for adoption leave on the above basis, you may be entitled to SAP. The rate of SAP will be the same as the standard rate of maternity pay (or 90% of your normal weekly earnings if this is less than this rate).

SAP is payable for up to 39 weeks and is paid in the same way as salary, being subject to deductions for tax and National Insurance Contributions. You will stop receiving SAP if you return to work or if your placement is disrupted (e.g. where you are told that the placement will not go ahead).

7. Terms and conditions during leave

During adoption leave, you will benefit from express and implied terms and conditions which would have applied had you been at work, except for those concerning remuneration, specifically wages and salary. Benefits in kind, such as life assurance, private medical insurance, permanent health insurance, gym membership, will continue during OAL and AAL.

You will continue to accrue your contractual holiday entitlement in the usual way. You are encouraged to take any outstanding holiday entitlement due to you before the commencement of the adoption leave.

We shall continue to pay employer contributions into any money purchase pension scheme in the usual way during OAL and paid AAL.

8. Keeping in touch

To enable you to keep in touch with the Company, you may agree with the Company to undertake work, training or activities for up to 10 days during your leave period without bringing that leave period to an end or losing your entitlement to SAP. These are known as “Keeping in Touch” days. Any work carried out on a day shall constitute a day’s work for these purposes, no matter how many hours are worked.

Keeping in touch days are not compulsory nor are we obliged to provide them. In any event, the Company may wish to maintain reasonable contact with you during adoption leave.

9. Returning to work

If you intend to return to work at the end of your full 52-week adoption leave and you have confirmed this to us, you do not need to notify us again before you return.

If you want to return to work earlier than the end of your full adoption leave, you must give at least eight weeks’ notice of the date on which you intend to return. If you do not do so, the Company may postpone your return date. If you wish to return later than the end of your adoption leave, you should contact your line manager. There is no automatic right to an extension, but all applications will be considered sympathetically.

On your return to work, you are entitled to the same job and terms of employment. However, if you have taken a period of AAL, you may be offered a different job which is suitable and appropriate if it is no longer reasonably practicable to offer you your old job.

Should you wish to return to work on a flexible working basis, you should make a flexible working application.

If you decide not to return to work, you should give notice in accordance with the terms of your contract. Failure to return to work at the end of adoption leave without proper explanation will be treated as unauthorised absence.

