**Family Friendly Policy**

A person smiling for a picture

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

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**People & Culture Director**

**Purpose**

This document is to be used as a guide for expectant parents. The contents may change dependent on legislation and Government guidance. Any changes will be notified to employees. The Company reserves the right to amend and change all contents as they deem necessary.

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**Congratulations on your new baby**

Congratulations on your news! This will be a very exciting time for you. In order to make things as easy as possible from a work point of view, we have designed this handbook. This will tell you what you as an expecting parent need to do in terms of keeping us informed, as well as informing you of your rights, what you can expect financially, and in terms of leave.

**You are individual**

Scientific Group offers enhanced Family Friendly policies and uses current legislation as the basis for our guidance. We do encourage those interested in the details of this booklet to discuss their individual situations with us to ensure we provide the support you need. We are all individual and celebrate this, so whilst one solution may suit someone, this may be different for you. Do talk to us about what works for you.

**While you are still at work**

As you know the Company has a duty to take care of the health and safety of all employees. The Company is also required to carry out a risk assessment to assess the workplace risks to women who are pregnant, have recently given birth or are breast-feeding. We will arrange to do this as soon as conveniently possible. If the assessment reveals that the employee would be exposed to health hazards in carrying out her normal duties, the Company will take such steps as are reasonably necessary to avoid those risks, such as altering the employee's working conditions. You can find additional information on this from the HSE guidance leaflet “**New and expectant mothers who work**” or “**New and expectant mothers**” which can be downloaded from the HSE website.

**Entitlements**

Maternity leave refers to the time off, either paid or unpaid, which you are entitled to around the expected week of childbirth (EWC).

Maternity pay refers to what you are entitled to in financial terms. You must notify the Company of your intention to take maternity leave by week 15 before your EWC (unless this is not reasonably practicable), informing the Company: that you are pregnant; the week you expect the baby to be born, and when you want your maternity leave to start. You will be able to change your mind about when you start maternity leave providing you give at least 28 days’ written notice, where reasonably practicable. If this is not reasonably practicable, e.g. your doctor/midwife advises against you continuing to work, then shorter notice can be given.

The Company encourages employees to attend their antenatal care appointments to promote healthy pregnancy and you are entitled to reasonable time off for antenatal care without loss of pay. Except in the case of your first appointment, the Company has the right to request proof of antenatal appointments, such as a medical certificate or appointment card should we deem necessary.

**Maternity Leave**

There are three types of maternity leave: Compulsory, Ordinary and Additional.

**Compulsory Leave**

By law you cannot return to work for at least two weeks after the birth.

**Ordinary Leave**

You are entitled to 26 weeks’ maternity leave, whatever your length of service. You do not have to give notice of your return from ordinary maternity leave (it will be calculated automatically) unless you choose to return early. You must give at least 7 days’ notice if you intend to return early.

**Additional Leave**

This starts after the end of ordinary maternity leave and continues for a further 26 weeks in line with your contract of employment. You may continue to accrue annual leave throughout the time you are taking maternity leave. Please provide 8 weeks’ written notice confirming your intention to return from additional leave, and the date you intend to return to work.

If you are unable to return to work after maternity leave due to sickness you must notify the Company. If you do this you will be deemed to have exercised your right to return from maternity leave and be placed on sick leave. You will then be entitled to company or statutory sick pay. Otherwise you will be absent without leave.

**KIT (Keeping in Touch) leave**

During your maternity leave, you are able to carry out up to 10 days’ work without your maternity leave period coming to an end. ‘Work’ may include training or any activity for the purpose of keeping in touch with the workplace. Such days are referred to as KIT days (i.e. Keeping in Touch days).

Each day on which any such ‘work’ is carried out counts as one of the 10 KIT days, i.e. we cannot agree that you will work 20 half days; the number of KIT days is to be 10 regardless of the amount of time you spend working on any one of those days. We cannot by law request you to come to work or to attend meetings, etc. – KIT days must be by agreement between both parties.

Statutory maternity pay continues to be paid during any week in which such a KIT day takes place. Whether any additional payment is to be paid to you is a matter for agreement between you and us.

**Paternity Leave**

There are two types of Paternity leave: Ordinary and Additional.

**Ordinary**

To enable you to take time off to support the mother or carer for the baby and intend to be fully involved in their upbringing, these are additional to your standard Annual Leave. To qualify for Paternity leave you must have been with us for at least 26 weeks by the 15th week before the start of the week when your baby is due. During this time you will receive an enhanced paternity pay of full pay for up to six consecutive weeks depending on how long you choose to take Ordinary Paternity Leave for. This can be taken as two non-consecutive blocks and at any pont in the first year after the birth or adoption of your child, and we encourage you to discuss this with your manager. Please note, Scientific Group provides an enhanced Paternity leave compared to statutory two weeks, and is paid through your normal payroll.

**Additional Paternity Leave**

If you are a new father and your partner is returning to or has returned to work since 3 April 2011 you may be entitled to up to 26 weeks’ Additional Paternity Leave. If your partner has returned to work, the leave can be taken between 20 weeks and one year after your child is born. You may be entitled to receive Additional Statutory Paternity Pay during your partner's Statutory Maternity Pay, Maternity Allowance or Adoption Pay period. Statutory pay is currently £184.03 per week effective 7 April 2024 and £187.18 per week effective 6 April 2025.

For you to qualify for Additional Paternity Leave you must be taking the time off to care for the child, and the child's mother or adopter must:

* Have been entitled to one or more of the following – Statutory Maternity Leave, Statutory Maternity Pay, Maternity Allowance or Statutory Adoption Leave or Pay
* Have started working again so that any relevant pay has stopped

If you plan to take Paternity Leave please discuss with our People & Culture Director.

**Parental Leave**

Parental leave is for employees to take time off work to look after a child's welfare and is unpaid. You are entitled to 18 weeks’ leave for each child and adopted child, up to their 18th birthday.

The limit on how much parental leave each parent can take in a year is 4 weeks for each child.

You must take parental leave as whole weeks (e.g. 1 week or 2 weeks) rather than individual days, unless your child is disabled. You don’t have to take all the leave at once. You must have completed one year’s service with an employer to qualify.

* Employees will need to request leave giving at least 21 days’ notice before the intended start date
* The Company asks for the notice to be in writing

**Shared Parental Leave**

Shared Parental Leave came into force on 1 December 2014. Shared Parental Leave enables eligible mothers, fathers, partners and adopters to choose how to share time off work after their child is born or placed.

* Employed mothers will continue to be entitled to 52 weeks of Maternity Leave and 39 weeks of statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance
* If they choose to do so, an eligible mother can end her maternity leave early and, with her partner or the child’s father, opt for Shared Parental Leave instead of Maternity Leave. If they both meet the qualifying requirements, they will need to decide how they want to divide their Shared Parental Leave and Pay entitlement
* Paid Paternity Leave of six weeks will continue to be available to fathers and a mother’s or adopter’s partner; however, Additional Paternity Leave will be removed (Shared Parental Leave will replace it)
* Adopters will have the same rights as other parents to Shared Parental leave and pay
* Shared Parental Leave may be taken at any time within the period that begins on the date the child is born/date of the placement and ends 52 weeks after that date
* Statutory Shared Parental Pay is currently paid £184.03 per week effective 7 April 2024 and £187.18 per week effective 6 April 2025, or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower)

To qualify, the mother or adopter must be entitled to, and have given notice to curtail their, maternity or adoption entitlements and must share the main responsibility for caring for the child with the child's father or their partner. For a parent to be eligible to take Shared Parental Leave they must be an employee and they must pass the continuity of employment test. In turn, the other parent in the family must meet the employment and earnings test.

* Continuity of employment test: the person must have worked for the same employer for at least 26 weeks at the end of the 15th week before the week in which the child is due (or at the week in which an adopter was notified of having been matched with a child or adoption) and is still employed in the first week that Shared Parental Leave is to be taken
* Employment and earnings test: the person must have worked for at least 26 weeks in the 66 weeks leading up to the due date and have earned above the maternity allowance threshold of £30 week in 13 of the 66 weeks

If an employee wishes to take Shared Parental Leave, they must provide their employer with a notice of entitlement to take Shared Parental Leave. The notice must be given at least eight weeks before the start of a period of Shared Parental Leave and must include:

* How much leave is available
* How much leave they are entitled to take
* How much leave the parent is intending to take
* How they expect to take it

Any notice of booking Shared Parental Leave must be given at least eight weeks before the leave is due to start.

**Commencement of Maternity Leave**

Maternity leave will normally commence on the date notified by you. However:

* If childbirth occurs before the notified date then the ordinary maternity leave will commence on the date of childbirth. Childbirth is defined as: ‘the birth of a living child or the birth of a child, whether living or dead, after 24 weeks of pregnancy’. You must notify the Company of the date of the birth of the child as soon as is reasonably practical
* If you are absent after the beginning of the fourth week before the expected date of childbirth for reasons connected with the pregnancy, the Company may decide that you have commenced your maternity leave from that date
* If you are absent after the beginning of the sixth week before the expected date of childbirth for reasons not connected with the pregnancy, maternity leave will not automatically commence, and you will continue to receive statutory sick pay until you notify the Company of the commencement of your maternity leave or you give birth

**Contractual Rights**

All contractual terms, except those concerning benefits and remuneration, are continued throughout maternity leave. This means that you will be entitled to accrue statutory annual leave entitlement. You will also still be bound by duties of trust and confidentiality.

**Right to return**

**Ordinary Leave**

* You have the right to continue in your current job when you return to work after ordinary leave.

**Additional Leave**

* You have the right to return to the same job after additional leave. However, this has wider definitions and refers to job title, rather than specific duties. If it is not practicable to keep the specific position open for the whole period of extended leave, a suitable alternative must be offered. This must be comparable as regards duties, terms and conditions, pay and location.

**Protection from Dismissal**

* It is unfair to dismiss anyone automatically, for any reason relating to their pregnancy/maternity during the period from first notification of pregnancy to the employer through until you return from maternity leave. There is no minimum service qualification and no exception for a woman who is incapable of doing her normal work due to pregnancy.

* Dismissals for the usual reasons of redundancy, capability or conduct are still possible. However, the reasons for dismissal must be provided in a written statement.

* Effective from 6 April 2024, employees who return from maternity leave will receive an extended period of protection against redundancy which will last 18 months. This 18-month time frame will begin from the date that the baby’s is born or the expected week of childbirth if the exact date has not been disclosed. Employees are only eligible for this protection extension if Scientific Group was made aware of the pregnancy or started maternity leave on or after 6thApril 2024, or, if they are already on maternity leave as of 6th April 2024.

For further information about redundancy protection during leave, please use the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/employee-rights-when-on-leave>

**Maternity Pay**

Scientific Group is pleased to confirm that we offer an enhanced maternity leave arrangement. The enhanced maternity arrangement is made up of 26 weeks at 100%, followed by 13 weeks at Statutory Maternity Pay, currently £184.03 per week effective 7 April 2024 and £187.18 per week effective 6 April 2025. You must have been employed for six months at 15 weeks before the expected week of childbirth.

**Statutory maternity pay (SMP)**

In order to be eligible for SMP you must:

* Have earned at least the lower National Insurance [NI] earning limit for the eight weeks up to the calculation date
* Have been continuously employed for six months at the calculation date
* The calculation date is 15 weeks before the expected week of childbirth

The expected week of childbirth is certified on Form MATB1, which will be given to you by either your midwife or doctor.

SMP cannot be paid prior to the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth.

**Maternity Allowance**

If you are not eligible for statutory maternity pay, you will still be entitled to maternity allowance from the DSS, providing you earn at least £30 per week. This is a contribution-based state benefit payable for 39 weeks, starting (at your choice) between the 11th and 6th week before the baby is due. The Company should complete and give you the Department of Social Security form SMP1 (an explanation of why SMP is not payable). This will help you to claim any maternity allowance that is due to you.

To qualify for maternity allowance you must have paid National Insurance contributions for at least 26 weeks of the 66 weeks ending at the end of the 15th week before the EWC. Your National Insurance (N.I.) contributions could have been either Class 1 (as an employee) or Class 2 (as self-employed).

The time for which maternity allowance is paid is basically the same as for SMP – i.e. up to 39 weeks. If you are not eligible for either statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance you may still be eligible for incapacity benefit.

**Miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal death**

This section is challenging but we want to ensure you are supported throughout your journey. To clarify, if your baby is born dead before the 24th week of pregnancy, it is called a miscarriage; if your baby is born dead after the beginning of the 24th week of pregnancy it is called a stillbirth; and if your baby died within the first 28 days of life this is considered to be a neonatal death. We hope this does not happen but in the tragic event of a miscarriage, stillbirth or neonatal death, we are here to support you.

If your baby was born alive, at any time during your pregnancy, but did not survive, you are entitled to maternity leave, and any maternity pay that you qualify for. You will also receive enhanced parental bereavement leave/pay. Whilst you are not entitled to maternity leave, paternity leave or shared parental leave if you miscarry, we can offer you support at this time and so encourage you to talk to HR with regards to compassionate leave.

If you are already on maternity leave, you do not have to take any action. However, if the birth happened before you intended to start maternity leave, or before you gave notice of maternity leave, your maternity leave will start the day after the birth and you will need to inform us as soon as you can.

If your baby dies or is stillborn before the end of the qualifying week for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), special rules apply in determining whether you will qualify for SMP. The eight-week test period used to calculate your average earnings runs to the last payday in or before the week in which the birth/stillbirth occurred, and you will be treated as though you had 26 weeks’ service by the end of the qualifying week if you would have had, had the baby not been born early.

If you are entitled to Maternity Allowance (MA), but have not yet claimed it, you should claim it as soon as you can, explaining on the form what happened. If you have claimed MA but are not yet receiving it (for example, because you were not planning maternity leave to start yet) you must let Jobcentre Plus know what has happened.

If you return to work within six months of the birth, you are entitled to the same health and safety rights as others who have given birth within the last six months.

If your partner is eligible for paternity leave, they will still be entitled to take this after a stillbirth. This leave should be completed within 56 days of the birth. However, if the baby was born early, the leave must be completed within the period from the actual date of birth to 56 days after the expected week of birth. Statutory Paternity Pay also applies in the same way if they are entitled to it.

The rules are slightly different for Shared Parental Leave and Pay if your baby passes away. If you or your partner had given notice before the birth of the baby to take Shared Parental Leave and the baby is born but then dies, you or your partner are entitled to take the leave that has already been booked.

To cancel any Shared Parental Leave that has already been booked, you should give at least eight weeks’ notice. The law says if you want to make changes such as to reduce the amount of leave booked or vary blocks of leave into a single period of shared parental leave, you can give one notice of variation, subject to eight weeks’ notice. However, we can come to an agreement that you will take less leave than you had planned if this is what you choose to do.

If your baby dies before you or your partner have given notice to book Shared Parental Leave, then unfortunately any further entitlement to Shared Parental Leave will be lost, as you cannot give a notice to book leave after the baby has died.

Scientific Group will provide you with 2 weeks of parental bereavement leave during the year following your baby’s death. This is available to both parents, regardless of how long you have worked for us. You can take it in one block of 2 weeks or 2 blocks of 1 week each. Whilst on parental bereavement leave, you will receive full pay.

**Neonatal Care Leave**

Neonatal Care Leave (NCL) is coming into effect from **6th April 2025**.

Neonatal Care Leave will apply to parents whose babies, born on or after 6 April 2025, have been admitted into neonatal care within the first 28 days of their life and have remained within the hospital for at least 7 consecutive days.

This new entitlement will be a day one right for employees and will allow both parents to take up to 12 weeks of paid leave alongside any maternity or paternity pay they may be entitled to. This entitlement can be taken in week blocks but must be used within 68 weeks of the child’s birth. **These 12 weeks of paid leave will be based on the statutory rate of £187.18 per week.**

The NCL is applied using a tiered system, depending on the time in which the NCL is used.

**Tier 1** is neonatal care leave taken by parents while the child is in neonatal care or within the first week of the child being discharged. This tier allows flexibility for parents as it allows them to pause NCL pay, use any prior pre-booked leave and then go back to NCL pay. This leave should be taken in weekly blocks but does not have to be continuous.

**Tier 2** is the neonatal care leave taken by parents after the Tier 1 leave has been taken. Again, this should be taken in week blocks but continuously. Tier 2 leave should be taken once a child has left neonatal care so they can plan this leave in advance.

There is a maximum of 12 weeks of Neonatal Care Leave in total which can be taken over both tiers.

Even though NCL will be a day one right for employees, in order to qualify for Statutory Neonatal Care Pay, an employee must have been employed for a minimum of 26 weeks before requesting the leave.

Please note, we may ask for medical evidence or written medical confirmation before you proceed with NCL.

**Returning to Work**

When you return to work after Ordinary Maternity Leave (the first 26 weeks of your Statutory Maternity Leave), you have a right to the same job and the same terms and conditions as if you hadn’t been away.

This also applies when you come back after Additional Maternity Leave (the last 26 weeks of your Statutory Maternity Leave). However, if it is not reasonably practicable to return to your original job (e.g. because the job no longer exists) you do not have the same right. In that case, you will be offered alternative work with terms and conditions as if you hadn’t been away. This will be discussed with you should this situation arise.

**Giving notice of your return to work**

As your employer, we will assume that you will take all 52 weeks of your Statutory Maternity Leave. If you take the full 52 weeks, by law you don’t need to give notice that you are coming back. However, it’s a good idea to do so ensuring that you keep in touch with your team and any changes within the company that could affect your position.

It is ideal that you check-in with us 8 weeks prior to the end of your Statutory Maternity Leave to discuss your return to work and any extension you wish to make to this with your line manager and the HR department. Should you extend your maternity leave, another check-in date will be set for 8 weeks prior to the end of Additional Maternity Leave.

If you wish to return earlier, for example, when your Statutory Maternity Pay ends, you must give us at least eight weeks’ notice. As your employer, we can insist that you don’t return until the eight weeks have passed. You must tell us that you:

* Wish to return to work early
* Want to change the date of your return

If you decide not to return to work at all, you must give notice in the normal way, in this case our standard 8 weeks apply.