

Managing the Maternity Chaos



Introduction

Inevitably, at some stage, you will have an employee going on maternity leave for anything up to a year. By considering how this can be managed in advance, you can help to reduce any negative impacts, provide clarity and continuity of the contribution they make and ensure your employee feels valued and motivated to return. Options may include the employment of a temporary worker, temporary redistribution of duties to existing employees or providing development opportunities for other employees.

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Managing the Maternity Leave Period

Before the maternity leave starts, agree how, what and when you will communicate with the employee. Ensure they remain included on all information sources such as any departmental updates, internal memos, newsletters and any internal vacancies. If there is a need to discuss something new, you should contact them directly with the aim of conveying news that may have an impact on them. If appropriate, offer to meet up with them.

General enquiries:
enquiries@hrinsight.co.uk

Legal Department:
legal@hrinsight.co.uk

Keeping in touch days are not compulsory but a maternity leaver can attend work for up to 10 days during the maternity leave period without affecting any of their statutory rights. This is particularly useful for training and can help the employee re-integrate into the workforce. Your employee should be paid in full for these days.

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When the employee returns to work, put in place an appropriate handover process or welcome back for the returning employee. If you receive a flexible working request, don't forget to follow the statutory procedure and carefully consider their request.

The Costs of Maternity Leave

Statutory maternity pay (SMP) is payable for 39 weeks. The first 6 weeks are paid at 90% of their normal earnings and the remaining 33 weeks at the SMP rate (currently £123.06 per week) or at 90% of earnings if this is a lower sum. Most of this is reclaimed by you in your PAYE scheme.

Employees on maternity leave continue to receive all their benefits and discretionary company bonuses whilst they are on maternity leave. An area of confusion however links to pay increases, as these are applied retrospectively (hitting the 90% of earnings period) even if the collective pay increase is agreed way after the employee has gone on leave!

STOP PRESS. SWINE FLU. STOP PRESS. SWINE FLU. STOP.

As cases appear to escalate, employers should consider how they might respond to a potential swine flu pandemic. This will include ways of reducing face-to-face contact (making use of home-working, teleconferencing and video links) and looking at ways the business can still operate whilst being encouraged to restrict travel movements. Failing in our 'duty of care' to employees, may leave employers open to claims.

Need further help?

If we can help with either of these topics or indeed any issue associated with the employment or performance of your employees, simply call us on **01708 758958** or visit us at www.hrinsight.co.uk.