UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

Shared Parental Leave Policy

1. Introduction

The University of Aberdeen is committed to fully supporting members of staff whose partners (including same sex partners) are pregnant or have just given birth or who are adopting children. The Shared Parental Leave policy outlines your rights and responsibilities and shared parental leave and pay benefits you can expect to receive.

The following definitions are used throughout this policy:

**Mother**: the woman who gives birth to a child or the adopter (the adopter means the person who is eligible for adoption leave and/or pay. They can be male or female).

**Partner**: the child’s biological father or the partner of the mother/adopter. This can be a spouse, civil partner or a partner who is living in an enduring relationship with the mother and the child.

**SPL**: Shared Parental Leave

**ShPP**: Statutory Shared Parental Pay.

**Continuous Leave**: a period of leave that is taken in one block e.g. four weeks’ leave.

**Discontinuous Leave**: a period of leave that is arranged around weeks where the employee will return to work e.g. an arrangement where an employee will work every other week for a period of three months.

**SPLIT day**: Shared Parental Leave in Touch Day.

2. Shared Parental Leave

Shared Parental Leave enables eligible parents to choose how to share the care of their child during the first year of birth or adoption. Its purpose is to give parents more flexibility in considering how to best care for, and bond with, their child. All eligible employees have a statutory right to take Shared Parental Leave. There may also be an entitlement to some Shared Parental Pay. This policy sets out the statutory rights and responsibilities of employees who wish to take statutory Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP).

The University recognises that, from time to time, employees may have questions or concerns relating to their shared parental rights. The University encourages open discussion with employees to ensure that questions and problems can be resolved as quickly as possible. Employees can clarify the relevant entitlements with their HR Partner.

3. Shared Parental Leave

3.1 Eligibility for Shared Parental Leave

In order to be eligible for Shared Parental Leave you must be:

- The mother/adopter or
  - the father of the child (in the case of birth) or
  - the spouse, civil partner or partner of the child’s mother/adopter.

Both parents must share the main responsibility for the care of the child at the time of the birth/placement for adoption.

Additionally you must satisfy each of the following criteria:
• the mother/adopter of the child must be/have been entitled to statutory maternity/adoption leave
• or if not entitled to statutory maternity/adoption leave they must be/have been entitled to statutory maternity/adoption pay or maternity allowance and must have ended or given notice to reduce any maternity/adoption entitlements;
• must still be working for the University at the start of each period of SPL;
• have a minimum of 26 weeks’ service at the end of the 15th week before the child’s expected due date/matching date;
• the employee’s partner must meet the ‘employment and earnings test’ requiring them in the 66 weeks leading up to the child’s expected due date/matching date have worked for at least 26 weeks and earned an average of at least £30 (this is correct as of 2015 but may change annually) a week in any 13 of those weeks;
• correctly notify the University of your entitlement and provide evidence as required.1,2

3.2 The Shared Parental Leave entitlement

If you are an eligible employee you may be entitled to take up to 50 weeks SPL during the child’s first year in your family. The number of weeks available is calculated using the mother’s/adopter’s entitlement to maternity/adoption leave, which allows them to take up to 52 weeks’ leave. If they reduce their maternity/adoption leave entitlement then they and/or their partner may opt-in to the SPL system and take any remaining weeks as SPL.

A mother/adopter may reduce their entitlement to maternity/adoption leave by returning to work before the full entitlement of 52 weeks has been taken, or they may give notice to curtail their leave at a specified future date.

3.3 Those not entitled to Shared Parental Pay and /or Shared Parental Leave

Only employees are entitled to shared parental leave. Agency workers, self-employed parents or parents who are not employed are not entitled to shared parental leave. However where a mother/adopter qualified for statutory maternity/adoption pay or maternity allowance, her partner would be entitled to shared parental pay if he (or she) qualified for statutory paternity pay.

Individuals who have questions in this regard should contact their HR Adviser/Partner.

3.4 Taking Shared Parental Leave:

• If you are the mother you can take SPL after you have taken the statutory minimum of two weeks of maternity leave immediately following the birth of your child
• If you are the adopter you can take SPL after taking at least two weeks of adoption leave
• If you are the father/partner/spouse you can take SPL immediately following the birth/placement of your child, but may first choose to exhaust any paternity leave entitlements (as the father/partner cannot take paternity leave or pay once they have taken any SPL or ShPP).

Where a mother/adopter gives notice to curtail their maternity/adoption entitlement then the mother/adopter’s partner can take leave while the mother/adopter is still using their maternity/adoption entitlements.

If the employee is eligible to receive it, Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) may be paid for some, or all, of the SPL period.

SPL must end no later than one year after the birth/placement of the child. Any SPL not taken by the first birthday or first anniversary of placement for adoption is lost.

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1 Shared parental leave and shared parental pay may also be available for parents whose child is born through a surrogacy arrangement if they are entitled to adoption and/or statutory adoption pay.
2 Employees on ‘Zero Hours’ contracts may be eligible if they meet the relevant criteria.
4. Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP)

Eligible employees may be entitled to take up to 37 weeks ShPP while taking SPL. The amount of weeks available will depend on the amount by which the mother/adopter reduces their maternity/adoption pay period or maternity allowance period. ShPP may be payable during some or all of SPL, depending on the length and timing of the leave.

4.1 Eligibility for Shared Parental Pay

In addition to meeting the eligibility requirements for SPL, an employee seeking to claim ShPP must further satisfy each of the following criteria:

- the mother/adopter must be/have been entitled to statutory maternity/adoption pay or maternity allowance and must have reduced their maternity/adoption pay period or maternity allowance period;
- the employee must intend to care for the child during the week in which ShPP is payable;
- the employee must have an average weekly earnings for the period of eight weeks leading up to and including the 15th week before the child’s expected due date/matching date are not less than the lower earnings limit in force for national insurance contributions;
- the employee must remain in continuous employment until the first week of ShPP has begun;
- the employee must give proper notification in accordance with the rules set out below.

Where an employee is entitled to receive ShPP they must, at least eight weeks before receiving any ShPP, give their line manager written notice advising of their entitlement to ShPP. This should be included as part of the notice of entitlement to take SPL.

If you wish to claim ShPP you must complete form 'Shared Parental Leave Form' which includes:

- the start and end dates of any maternity/adoption pay or maternity allowance;
- the total amount of ShPP available, the amount of ShPP you and your partner each intend to claim, and a non-binding indication of when you expect to claim ShPP;
- a signed declaration confirming that the information you have given is correct, that you meet, or will meet, the criteria for ShPP and that you will immediately inform the University should you cease to be eligible.

This form is included as Appendix 1.

You must provide by a signed declaration from your partner confirming:

- their agreement to you claiming ShPP and for the University to process any ShPP payments to the employee;
- (Where your partner is the mother/adopter) that they have reduced their maternity/adoption pay or maternity allowance;
- (Where your partner is the mother/adopter) that they will immediately inform you should they cease to satisfy the eligibility conditions.

The University provides several options in relation to Shared Parental Pay. The entitlement is based on:

- Your earnings during a specific period before the shared parental leave
- Your length of service with the University of Aberdeen
- Whether or not you intend to return to work following your period of Shared Parental Leave

The University provides 2 options for shared parental pay entitlements with varying levels of benefits.

The options available to you are outlined below:
Occupational Shared Parental Pay (OShPP) (Option 1).

If you have been continuously employed by the University for 52 weeks prior to the birth/adoptive of your child and you indicate that you intend to return to work following your shared parental leave, any statutory entitlements may be supplemented by the University's Occupational Shared Parental Pay.

The pay which you will receive during this period will include any statutory entitlement to Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) from the Government. Where you agree that you will return to post for a minimum of 6 months following your period of Shared Parental Leave, you are entitled to receive a maximum of:

18 weeks full pay followed by 19 weeks at the appropriate rate of statutory ShPP.

Please note that you will only receive the balance of untaken Occupational Maternity Pay (OMP) at the full pay rate i.e. if you have already taken 6 weeks OMP you would receive a maximum of 12 weeks OShPP.

If both parents work for the University then the total number of weeks OMP and OShPP shared between them is 18 weeks.

You should also note that if you qualify to receive Occupational Shared Parental Pay and decide that you do not wish to return to work after your Shared Parental Leave or if you leave the University before the end of 6 months, you will only be eligible to receive Statutory Shared Parental Pay. Therefore you will be required to repay the occupational elements of your shared parental pay, prorated to the amount of time (if any) you returned to work.

Statutory Shared Parental Pay (Option 2)

You may be entitled to up to 37 weeks of statutory Shared Parental Pay. Any ShPP due will be paid at a rate set by the Government for the relevant tax year.

Please contact your HR Partner for clarification and guidance on the pay arrangements and documentation you must complete.

5. Procedure Notifying the University of an Entitlement to Shared Parental Leave

5.1 Notification

If you are entitled and intending to take SPL you must give your line manager notification of your entitlement and intention to take to SPL, at least eight weeks before you take any period of SPL.

- Part of the eligibility criteria requires you to provide the University with formal notification using the form at Appendix 1.

You must also provide the University with a signed declaration from your partner as per form ‘Shared Parental Leave Form’ Section F, Appendix 1.

5.2 Requesting further evidence of eligibility

The University reserves the right, within 14 days of the SPL entitlement notification being given to request:

- the name and business address of your partner’s employer and a copy of the child's birth certificate.
- Or where the child is adopted, documentary evidence of the name and address of the adoption agency, the date on which you were notified of having been matched with the child and the date on which the agency expects to place the child for adoption

You must produce this information within 14 days of the University’s request to be eligible to for SPL and receive ShPP.
5.3 Fraudulent claims

The University can, where there is a suspicion that fraudulent information may have been provided or where the University has been informed by the HMRC that a fraudulent claim was made, investigate the matter further in accordance with the usual investigation and disciplinary procedures. Such investigations are permissible, without acting in a discriminatory manner in relation to any of the protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.

6. Discussions regarding Shared Parental Leave

If you are considering taking SPL you are encouraged to contact your HR Partner to arrange an informal discussion as early as possible regarding your potential entitlement, to talk about your plans and to enable the University to support you.

The HR department may upon receiving a notification of entitlement to take SPL seek to arrange an informal discussion with you and your line manager to talk about your intentions and how you plan to use your SPL entitlement.

The purpose of the meeting is to discuss in detail the leave proposed and what will happen while you are away from work. Where it is a request for discontinuous leave the discussion may also focus on how the leave proposal could be agreed, whether a modified arrangement would be agreeable to you and the University, and what the outcome may be if no agreement is reached.

7. Booking Shared Parental Leave

In addition to notifying the University of entitlement to SPL/ShPP, you must also give notice to take the leave. Usually notice to take leave will be given at the same time as the notice of entitlement to SPL using form ‘Shared Parental Leave Form’. This should also be used for additional requests.

You have the right to submit three notifications specifying leave periods you are intending to take. Each notification may contain either (a) a single period of weeks of leave; or (b) two or more weeks of discontinuous leave, where you intend to return to work between periods of leave.

SPL can only be taken in complete weeks but may begin on any day of the week. For example if a week of SPL began on a Tuesday it would finish on a Monday.

You must book SPL by giving the correct notification at least eight weeks before the date on which you wish to start the leave and (if applicable) receive ShPP.

7.1 Continuous leave notifications

A notification can be for a period of continuous leave, which means a notification of a number of weeks taken in a single unbroken period of leave (for example, six weeks in a row).

You have the right to take a continuous block of leave notified in a single notification, so long as it does not exceed the total number of weeks of SPL available to you (specified in the notice of entitlement) and you have given at least eight weeks’ notice.

You may submit up to three separate notifications for continuous periods of leave.

7.2 Discontinuous leave notifications

A single notification may also contain a request for two or more periods of discontinuous leave, which means asking for a set number of weeks of leave over a period of time, with breaks between the leave where you return to work (for example, an arrangement where an you will take six weeks of SPL and work every other week for a period of three months).
Where there is concern over accommodating your notification, the University or you may seek to arrange a meeting to discuss the notification with a view to agreeing an arrangement that meets your needs and the needs of the University. You may, if you wish request to bring your Trade Union Representative to this meeting.

The University will consider a discontinuous leave notification but has the right to refuse it. If the leave pattern is refused, you can either withdraw it within 15 days of giving it, or can take the leave in a single continuous block.

**7.3 Responding to a Shared Parental Leave notification**

Once HR receives the leave booking notice, it will be dealt with as soon as possible, but a response will be provided no later than the 14th day after the leave request was made.

All notices for continuous leave will be confirmed in writing.

All requests for discontinuous leave will be carefully considered, weighing up the potential benefits to the employee and to the University against any adverse impact to the operation.

Each request for discontinuous leave will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The request may be granted in full or in part: for example, the University may propose a modified version of the request.

If a discontinuous leave pattern is refused then you may withdraw the request without detriment on or before the 15th day after the notification was given; or may take the total number of weeks in the notice in a single continuous block. The leave cannot start sooner than eight weeks from the date the original notification was submitted. If you do not choose a start date then the leave will begin on the first leave date requested in the original notification.

**7.4 Variations to arranged Shared Parental Leave**

You are permitted to vary or cancel an agreed and booked period of SPL, provided that you advise the University in writing at least eight weeks before the date of any variation. Any new start date cannot be sooner than eight weeks from the date of the variation request.

Any variation or cancellation notification made, including notice to return to work early, will usually count as a new notification reducing your right to book/vary leave by one. Any variation will be confirmed in writing by the University.

**8. Shared Parental Leave in Touch Days ‘SPLIT Days’**

We may make reasonable contact with you from time to time during your SPL period e.g. to make arrangements for your return to work or to notify you of developments in your School/Section, or promotion opportunities etc.

You are able to work (including attending training or conferences) for up to 20 days during SPL without bringing your period of SPL or ShPP to an end. These are known as “Shared Parental Leave In Touch” or “SPLIT” days. If you undertake such work during your SPL period you will receive a full day’s pay for each day worked. You are not obliged to undertake any such work during this time.

If you wish to utilise ‘SPLIT’ Days you should contact your Line Manager in the first instance. Your Line Manager will notify HR of any work which you undertake as a SPLIT day and appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure that your receive payment for them.

The University is under no obligation to offer you any work, during your SPL. An employee taking a SPLIT day will receive full pay for any day worked. If a SPLIT day occurs during a week when you are receiving ShPP, this will be effectively ‘topped up’ so that you receive full pay for the day in question. Any SPLIT days worked do not extend the period of SPL.
9. Terms and Conditions of Employment During Shared Parental Leave and Pay

All the terms and conditions of your employment remain in force during your Shared Parental Leave, with the exception of those relating to normal pay and pension benefits.

9.1 Continuity of Service

The date of your continuous service with the University is not affected by any period(s) of SPL which you take; this means that there will be no break in service during your absence on SPL.

9.2 Pay

You will continue to receive all pay awards and any increments which are due to you during your SPL. If you are on a period of unpaid leave when such awards become due, your salary will be adjusted upon your return to work.

9.3 Annual Leave

Your contractual annual leave entitlement shall continue to accrue throughout the period of your SPL. Arrangements for carrying over annual leave entitlement should be discussed and agreed with your Line Manager.

9.4 Pensions

During any paid period of SPL the University will continue to pay employer's contributions to your pension scheme for as long as your continue to make contributions. The percentage paid will be based on what your earning would have been if you had not been on SPL. The period during which you receive paid SPL also counts towards your pensionable service.

During unpaid SPL the University will not make employer's contributions into your pension scheme. You do not have to make any contributions, but you may do so if you wish. It should be noted that if you choose to make these contributions you would be required to pay both employer and employee contributions to the scheme. If you choose not to make such contributions, your membership of the pension scheme will be suspended and the period of SPL does not count as pensionable service.

Further information about your pension benefits and how they will be affected by your shared parental leave is available from the Pensions Office (pensions@abdn.ac.uk).

9.5 Contact During Shared Parental Leave

Before your SPL begins, your Line Manager will discuss the arrangements for keeping in touch during your leave. The University reserves the right in any event to maintain reasonable contact with the employee from time to time during their SPL. This may be to discuss the employee's plans to return to work, to ensure the individual is aware of any possible promotion opportunities, to discuss any special arrangements to be made or training to be given to ease their return to work or simply to update them on developments at work during their absence.

9.6 Resignation

If you choose to resign from your post, you will continue to accrue contractual benefits (excluding normal pay), until the end of your notice period.

9.7 Returning to work after Shared Parental Leave

Shared Parental Leave is structured so that is does not adversely affect your position at work. When you return from SPL, you will normally return to your original job. In some cases a return to your original job may not be possible e.g. as a result of restructuring within your school/Section. In such circumstances, you will be guaranteed to return to a post with no less favourable terms and conditions. In all cases your return to work will be without loss of seniority or status.
It is recognised by the University that when you return from SPL it is important that reasonable steps are taken to facilitate a smooth re-integration to your workplace. In this connection, your Line Manager will provide you with appropriate support to ensure that you become familiar with any changes which have taken place in your absence and where appropriate, to re-focus your research and/or teaching profile.

10. Special circumstances and further information

In certain situations an employee’s rights and requirements regarding SPL and ShPP may change. In these circumstances the University will abide by any statutory obligations and an employee should refer to the documents listed below and/or clarify any issues or queries with the HR department.

Law relating to this document:
- The Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014
- The Shared Parental Pay (General) Regulations 2014
- The Maternity and Adoption Leave (Curtailment of Statutory Rights to Leave) Regulations 2014
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Child and Families Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010

Approved by the University Court on 24 March 2015
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