



MATERNITY LEAVE – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS HR 31(b)

CONTENTS

If your baby is due on or after 6th April 2003, then this information applies to you. Please click below on any of the topics listed for a direct link to the information you need:

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BEFORE YOUR BABY IS BORN

What time off can I have?

You can have reasonable time off to keep appointments for antenatal care based on the advice of your doctor, midwife or health visitor.

What does antenatal care include?

Antenatal care includes medical examinations, relaxation classes and parent-craft classes.

Will I be paid for time I have to take off?

Yes.

What information do I need to give my line manager?

You must give as much notice of your appointment as possible and, if asked, your appointment card.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Before the birth

We have a general responsibility to ensure that your work environment is healthy and safe. This is especially important for pregnant women and there are a few extra precautions that we need to take. To help us do this, HR will issue you a questionnaire to fill in so we can assess if any changes need making.

After the birth

We also need to assess any risks that your work may pose to you as a [new mother](#) therefore a further questionnaire will be sent to you prior to your return to work. Please answer the questions and return to HR.

Privacy for expressing milk

If you require privacy to express milk, you can use the First Aid Room; please arrange access through the Facilities Management Helpdesk.

MATERNITY LEAVE

How much maternity leave am I entitled to?

This depends on how long you have worked at the channel. Click below to see what your entitlements are.

If you have less than 26 weeks' continuous service at the beginning of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

[Click here](#)

If you have 26 weeks' continuous service (or more) at the beginning of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

[Click here](#)

MATERNITY LEAVE –Cont'd

I have less than 26 weeks' continuous service at the beginning of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

- You are entitled to a maximum of 26 weeks maternity leave. This is known as **ordinary maternity leave**.
- You can take less than 26 weeks' leave if you wish, but you must take a period of 2 weeks' maternity leave following childbirth. This is for your health and safety.

When can I start my maternity leave?

You can start your maternity leave any time from the 11th week prior to the expected week of childbirth.

To take advantage of the right to maternity leave you must ensure that you give us the correct notification.

MATERNITY LEAVE Cont'd

I have 26 weeks' continuous service (or more) at the beginning of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

- You are entitled to up to 52 weeks' maternity leave. This includes 26 weeks **ordinary maternity leave** followed by a period of 26 weeks' additional maternity leave.

You can take less than 52 weeks' leave if you wish, but you must take a period of 2 weeks' maternity leave following childbirth. This is for your health and safety.

When can I start my maternity leave?

You can start your maternity leave any time from the 11th week prior to the expected week of childbirth.

To take advantage of the right to maternity leave you must ensure that you give us the correct [notification](#).

NOTIFICATION

What notification must I give?

The sooner you can give us notice of your pregnancy the better, so that we can make preparations for your departure and leave cover. However, we need to know during the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth *at the very latest** :-

- That you're pregnant
- When your baby is due (the [expected week of childbirth](#)). You will be given a MATB.1 certificate by your doctor or midwife which will confirm the exact date. This is usually issued round about week 30 of your pregnancy.
- The date when you want to start your maternity leave and start receiving maternity pay. (The earliest you can begin your maternity leave is the beginning of the 11th week before the expected week of childbirth).

You may give these notifications at different times. You can notify us by letter or e-mail or by using our [maternity leave notification form](#).

Please note that if you wish to change the start date of your maternity leave, you must give us at least 28 days' notice.

*If you are eligible for SMP, you will need to ensure that you give us at least 28 days' notice of the intended start date of your maternity leave to ensure that your maternity payments commence at the start of your maternity leave.

MATERNITY PAY

What am I entitled to?

Like maternity leave, there are a number of factors that we need to consider in calculating maternity pay. Therefore the information below is given as a general guide. Individual eligibility/entitlement will be confirmed as part of the maternity process.

Having said that, all women will receive **at least one month's full pay** under the channel's maternity pay provisions.

Women with more than 12 months service as at the expected date of childbirth will additionally qualify for an extra three months full pay (four in total).

There may also be an entitlement to [Statutory Maternity Pay \(SMP\)](#) but this will depend on length of service. Channel 4 maternity pay includes any entitlement to SMP.

Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)

To be eligible for SMP: -

- You must have been continuously employed for 26 weeks up to and including your [qualifying week](#)
- You must, on average earn at least as much as the lower earnings limit for National Insurance. From 6th April 2003, this is £77.00 per week.

SMP is payable for up to 26 weeks from the start of your maternity leave. Channel 4 maternity pay is inclusive of any SMP entitlement. The first 6 weeks of SMP are paid at 90% of your average weekly earnings. The remaining 20 weeks of SMP are paid at a lower flat rate. From 6th April 2003, the flat rate is £100.00.

If you do not qualify for SMP, we will give you a SMP1 form which explains why we think you don't qualify. You should take this to the Benefits Agency to make a claim for [Maternity Allowance](#).

Maternity Allowance

Maternity Allowance is a weekly benefit paid by the Jobcentre Plus Office or the Department for Social Security. It can be paid direct into your bank or building society account or at your post office by order book, giro cheque or payment card. This is only paid if you are not eligible for SMP. To receive this allowance: -

- You must have been employed or self-employed in at least 26 weeks during a test period.
- You must have earned, on average, at least £30 per week but less than £66 per week in 13 weeks during the test period.

For further details about Maternity Allowance, contact your local [Benefits Agency](#).

CHILD BIRTH

What do I have to do after my baby is born?

Let your line manager know. You should also let your HR Officer know when the baby is born so that if you are covered by BUPA, you can claim your £100 payment upon the birth of the baby. Your HR Officer will write to you so that you know how to claim your payment.

In addition, you may wish to amend your BUPA cover to include insurance cover for your baby. Following the birth, a letter will be sent to you to confirm how you should go about increasing your cover if needed.

You may also wish to amend your expression of wish to include your baby as a beneficiary in the event of your death.

PENSION

What happens to my pension during maternity leave?

Channel 4 Staff Pension Plan

- **Your pension during paid maternity leave**

During paid maternity leave, your contributions will be deducted as usual, based on your maternity pay. Your paid maternity leave period will automatically count as [pensionable service](#). Your benefits will be calculated as if you had worked normally and received normal pay.

- **Your pension during unpaid maternity leave**

During unpaid absence, contributions into the pension scheme will cease as you will not be paid a salary from which they can be deducted and the absence will not count towards pensionable service. Your pensionable service before this period and any pensionable service after this period will, however, be treated as continuous.

If you wish, you can make up the missed contributions when you return to work. If you decide to make contributions for your unpaid absence you will have up to 6 months to make the back payments. This period will then be credited as pensionable service in full for the purposes of calculating your benefits. Upon your return to work, your HR Officer will meet with you to discuss your repayment options. Due to the rules of the pension scheme this option is only available if you return to work, and the payments can only be made retrospectively, i.e., you cannot make the payments while you are still on leave.

If you do not return to work then you will be treated as having left the pension scheme on the first day of the unpaid period.

For a Pension Repayment Form, [click here](#).

Stakeholder Pension Scheme

If you make your contributions through the payroll, these will cease during unpaid maternity or parental leave periods but you can start them again when you return to work. You could, in the meantime, switch to a direct debit arrangement in order to maintain your contributions.

If you already make your contributions by direct debit from your own bank account, then these can continue if you wish. Alternatively, you could stop your contributions during your leave and start again when you return to work. It's up to you.

If you decide not to return to work, you can continue to pay into your stakeholder pension via a direct debit from your bank account, since you do

not need to work for Channel 4 (or be in work at all) in order to maintain this kind of pension.

BENEFITS

Am I still entitled to holiday during my maternity leave period?

You will continue to accrue holiday during your maternity leave at 25 days per calendar year ([see annual leave policy](#)). You can take any pro-rata entitlement outstanding at the start of your maternity leave period. Leave which accrues during the maternity leave period can either be taken at the end of the maternity leave period if there is time to do so before the end of the calendar year (and subject to the usual limit of 5 days being carried over from one year to the next) or, paid in lieu monthly on a pro rata basis during your maternity leave. Your HR Officer will discuss arrangements with you as each case will be different.

What about my childcare allowance?

If you are in receipt of childcare allowance, you will need to confirm in writing that you are going to continue your current childcare arrangements while you are on maternity leave. If so, your childcare allowance will continue to be paid throughout.

Will I be eligible for BUPA during my maternity leave?

Yes, you will continue to be eligible for private health care throughout your maternity leave.

You might find it useful to know that BUPA does not cover any private treatment related to pregnancy, but they will cover you for an emergency caesarean section. You can also claim a maternity grant upon the birth of your baby, which is currently £100 and a cash allowance for any nights you stay in an NHS hospital.

What will happen to the contributions I make if I have extended my BUPA cover to include my partner and family?

We will continue to deduct your monthly payments during your paid maternity leave.

During any unpaid leave, your extended cover will continue so long as you continue to pay the extra subscription. You can send us a cheque (or a series of post dated cheques) at the start of your unpaid maternity leave.

Or, if you have opted to receive holiday pay during your unpaid maternity leave deductions can be taken from your holiday pay.

Alternatively you could opt out of the scheme for the period of unpaid leave. You will need to write a note to your HR Officer to that effect.

What happens to my life assurance?

You will continue to be covered during your maternity leave.

What happens to my season ticket loan?

If you don't wish to make use of your season travel ticket during your maternity leave, you should hand back your ticket and reclaim any outstanding amount from the relevant transport company. You will need to repay the outstanding balance back to Channel 4 before you go on maternity leave.

If you wish to continue using your season ticket throughout your maternity leave, loans will continue to be deducted monthly from your maternity pay. However, you will need to ensure that we receive a lump sum in advance to cover the months when you will receive no maternity pay.

What happens to my car allowance?

You will continue to receive this benefit throughout your maternity leave.

What will happen to my gym membership?

You may continue your gym membership throughout your maternity leave. Deductions will be made throughout your paid leave. However, if you wish to continue your membership during your unpaid maternity leave, you will need to send a cheque made payable to Channel 4 Television to your HR Officer.

Will I continue to receive my bonus?

If you are eligible to receive a bonus in your contract of employment, you will continue to be eligible for bonus payments throughout maternity leave, subject to the terms and conditions of the bonus scheme from time to time in force.

Will I continue to receive First Aid Allowance?

So long as your first aid certificate remains valid during your maternity leave, you will continue to receive this benefit throughout your maternity leave.

RETURNING TO WORK

When do I have to return to work?

You are expected back at work after you have taken your complete maternity leave period.

If you want to come back early we'll be delighted but you need to give us at least **28 days' notice** of the date you intend to return.

Don't forget – you can't come back within 2 weeks of your baby's birth.

Am I entitled to return to my old job?

Yes, you are entitled to return to your old job if you are returning from ordinary maternity leave. However, if you take a period of additional maternity leave, you are entitled to return to the same job, or, if it is not reasonably practicable, to a suitable, alternative job.

If I decide to leave at the end of my paid maternity leave do I have to pay back any maternity pay to the channel?

No. Some companies do request this. However, at Channel 4, there are no ties into you receiving maternity pay and having to remain at the Channel or make repayments for benefits received.

Will the Channel provide any assistance regarding childcare upon my return?

If your salary is less than £42,000 per annum you can apply for a discretionary childcare allowance. The allowance is currently £145 per month, which will be paid monthly in addition to your salary. An application form will automatically be sent to you following the birth of your baby.

Can I apply to work flexibly on my return?

Yes. [Click here](#) to view our flexible working application procedure. Please note that you must allow plenty of time for your line manager to consider any application before you are due to return to work.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Expected week of childbirth

The 'expected week of childbirth' is the week, starting Sunday, in which the baby is expected to be born. A MATB.1 certificate issued by a doctor or midwife will confirm the exact date.

New Mother

A new mother is a member of staff who has given birth within the previous 6 months or who is breastfeeding.

Ordinary Maternity Leave

A period of 26 weeks maternity leave which all women are entitled to.

Additional Maternity Leave

This is the period of maternity leave following the 26 week ordinary maternity leave period is called additional maternity leave. The maximum additional maternity leave you can have is 26 weeks. Only women who have a minimum of 26 weeks' continuous service by the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth are eligible for it.

Pensionable Service

The number of years and months of continuous service you complete as a contributing member of the Plan.

Qualifying Week

The Qualifying Week is the point at which you will be 15 weeks away from you expected week of Childbirth, i.e., you will be 25 weeks pregnant. This is the threshold used to calculate SMP.