

Freedom of Information – Response – 26653

Please supply the following:

1. A copy of your current paternity-leave policy, including any variations depending on employee status (e.g. full-time, part-time, length of service). Please clearly state the standard entitlement (number of weeks) and the rate of pay (full pay, statutory pay, enhanced pay, etc.) across that entitlement.

All employees who are dads, or partners with parenting responsibility, are eligible for four weeks' paternity leave, regardless of length of service, as part of SCC's occupational enhancements.

All employees eligible for paternity leave as laid out above receive 100% pay for the first week and 90% for the following 3 weeks. The first week is paid at 100% pay, in line with the contractual provision of Maternity/Adoption Support Leave. The 90% rate of pay thereafter mirrors the rate of pay for the first few weeks of maternity leave.

For those eligible for Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP), if the rate of SPP is higher than 90% pay, the employee will receive that, for the second week only.

The statutory weekly rate of Paternity Pay is £187.18, or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). - [Paternity pay and leave: Pay - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/paternity-pay-leave)

2. For the most recent three financial years (or calendar years) for which data is held: a) the number of employees who took paternity leave, and b) the average number of weeks taken per employee, and c) if available, a breakdown of take-up by type of pay (e.g. full pay vs statutory pay).

Response below is in calendar year (Jan – Dec)

2025 January - December

- a) 47 employees
- b) (Average number of weeks leave is) 3.2 weeks
- c) Cannot provide salary breakdown but during this period of the 47 employees, 42 received Paternity Birth/Adoption leave, 39 received Additional Paternity Leave and 32 received both elements of leave

2024 January - December

- a) 56 employees
- b) (Average number of weeks leave is) 3.4 weeks
- c) Cannot provide salary breakdown but during this period of the 56 employees, 56 received Paternity Birth/Adoption leave, 41 received Additional Paternity Leave and 41 received both elements of leave

2023 January - December

- a) 43 employees
- b) (Average number of weeks leave is) 3.1 weeks

- c) Cannot provide salary breakdown but during this period of the 43 employees, 41 received Paternity Birth/Adoption leave, 27 received Additional Paternity Leave and 25 received both elements of leave

3. *The median (or mean) gross pay of all council employees*

As at 16/12/2025 the median gross pay is £32,622.15.

Our published Median gross salary in the Pay Policy Statement is £36,124.00

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/pay-policy-statement.pdf>

Paternity Policy

Document Owner : Jeanette Bray
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Table of Contents

PAGE

1	INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE.....	3-4
1.1	STATEMENT OF INTENT	4
1.2	SCOPE.....	4
2	POLICY DETAIL	4-9
3	DOCUMENT CONTROL	10

1 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE

1.1 Statement of intent (applies to all parental policies)

Suffolk County Council supports balanced parenting and wants to enable all and each of its staff who are parents to find the right work/life balance for them, and to be able to have time off work following the birth or adoption of a child.

All parent employees of SCC are entitled to the below, as a day 1 right:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to a year's leave, following the birth or adoption of a child. * • Up to 39 weeks of paid parental leave (see pay rates in policy) – enhanced equally for parents of any gender. * • No requirement to repay if you do not return to work following leave. • Paid time off for antenatal appointments/ pre-adoption care. • Extra fully paid leave for parents of premature babies (at least 3 weeks). • Days to keep in touch whilst on parental leave, fully paid as long as you work at least half your hours. • A buddy scheme to support parents. • A culture where flexible working is the default expectation. • A reasonable amount of unpaid emergency dependent's leave when your child is sick or childcare arrangements fall through, and/or the ability to work flexibly or use annual leave for this purpose at short notice. • Up to 18 weeks unpaid parental leave per child, up to the age of 18.
<p>Many of these go over and above what is required by law. (NB: the asterisked entitlements must be shared if being used by more than one parent.)</p>

The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to treat someone less favourably because of pregnancy and maternity, or on the grounds of sex. The Council extends this principle to all types of parental leave. SCC does not tolerate unfair discrimination against any employee on the grounds of being, having been or intending to become a parent; being, having been or intending to become pregnant; or taking, having taken or intending to take maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave.

Examples of less favourable treatment include:

- Exclusion from training and development activities
- Not keeping an employee informed of key job changes, such as restructures
- Detrimental change in job duties
- Abuse or derogatory remarks.
- Exclusion from applying for jobs.

We expect all managers, colleagues, suppliers, and customers to treat our staff inclusively.

NB: Our parental policies avoid the use of gendered language as much as possible. They do continue to refer to maternity and paternity leave, pay and entitlements, as they have legal definitions. Trans and non-binary staff may not identify with these words, so, where relevant, managers should ask what the appropriate language to use in discussion is.

1.2 Scope

This policy covers Single Status (Green Book), Fire (Grey Book) and Soulbury (Blue Book) employees. Where staff on other terms and conditions (such as teachers or the NHS) have a policy that covers the same or similar, their own policy will apply. If they do not, then this policy will apply to them as well. Please also see the Family Friendly Toolkit and Shared Parental Leave Policy for additional guidance.

2. POLICY DETAIL

2.1 Paternity leave and pay

From 1 September 2022, SCC has enhanced its offer to ensure that all SCC employees who are dads or partners with parenting responsibility (including same sex partners) to a newly born or adopted child are entitled to 4 weeks of paternity leave with pay.

When comparing this to the statutory entitlement, the SCC offer is:

- twice the statutory entitlement in terms of leave,
- ensures a higher rate of pay than the statutory for most people (which only offers 90% pay if this is lower than the statutory amount),
- extends the pay for two weeks longer, and

removes the legal criteria for eligibility linked to length of service.

2.1.1 Paternity leave

From 1 September 2022, all employees who are dads, or partners with parenting responsibility, will be eligible for four weeks' paternity leave, regardless of length of service, as part of SCC's occupational enhancements.

Employees are eligible for statutory paternity leave following the birth or placement of a child if they:

- Expect to have responsibility for bringing up the child; **and**
- Are the other biological parent, or the partner¹ of the birth parent, or adopter; **and**
- Will be taking leave to care for the child and/or support the birth parent or adopter; **and**
- For the period of statutory leave, have a minimum of 26 weeks of SCC service, at the 'qualifying week'. For births, this is the 15th week before the estimated week of birth, or, in the case of adoption, it is the end of the 'matching week' (the week the child is placed, enters the UK or your paternity pay starts); **and**
- Are employed continuously by SCC from the qualifying week up until the actual date of birth or placement.

For children born on or after 6 April 2024:

The period of two weeks of statutory paternity leave cannot start prior to the birth and must end within 52 weeks after the birth. The additional two-week occupational entitlement can extend the period in which paternity leave can be taken up to 54 weeks after the birth but

¹ In the statutory definition, a partner is someone who lives with the birth parent or adopter in an enduring family relationship but is not an immediate relative.

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cannot be taken until after the first 2 weeks statutory paternity leave. Both the statutory and occupational paternity weeks can be split, and these can be taken in blocks or split into separate weeks.

For children born on or before 5 April 2024:

The period of two weeks of statutory paternity leave cannot start before the birth and must end within 56 days after the birth. The additional two-week occupational entitlement can extend the end of paternity leave until up to 70 days after the birth. For clarity, this means the latest any period of paternity leave that is over two weeks long can start is 42 days after the birth.

The paternity leave can be taken from the date of the actual birth, or from the date the baby was due – this will be particularly relevant for premature birth, as some people will prefer to take the leave after the baby is at home (see extending paternity leave section below).

For adoption, if the primary adopter is not named on the matching certificate, the two adopters can choose who is to be the primary adopter. The secondary adopter can take paternity leave.

For Children Adopted on or after 6 April 2024:

The statutory period of leave cannot start before the date of the placement, or, for overseas adoptions, before the child arrives in the UK, and it must end within 52 weeks after the date of placement or arrival in UK. The additional two-week occupational entitlement can extend the period in which the paternity leave can be taken up to 54 weeks after the date of placement or arrival in the UK. . Both the statutory and occupational paternity weeks can be split, and these can be taken in blocks or split into separate weeks.

For children Adopted on or before 5 April 2024:

The statutory period of leave cannot start before the date of the placement, or, for overseas adoptions, before the child arrives in the UK, and it must end within 56 days after the date of placement or arrival in UK. The additional two-week occupational entitlement can extend the end of paternity leave until up to 70 days after the date of placement or arrival in the UK. For clarity, this means that the latest any period of paternity leave that is over two weeks long can start is 42 days after the date of placement or arrival in the UK.

For surrogate parents, the statutory period of leave cannot start before the day the child is born, or the day after, if the employee was working on the day of the birth.

Flexibility/discontinuous leave

We encourage people to take the leave close to the date of birth or adoption, which is often beneficial to aid the bonding process and support the other parent.

In line with the statutory requirements, the first two weeks of paternity leave must be taken in a period of either one or two whole weeks.

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With regards to the additional two weeks of occupational entitlement, the usual expectation is that leave will be taken in one continuous block, or at least in blocks of whole weeks. Subject to operational need and ability to arrange cover where necessary, managers have discretion to apply flexibility within the 54-week parameter, if the employee requests it, and their operational service needs allow. This may for example allow staff to use the leave to return to work more flexibly, over a longer period of time. Managers should not pressure employees to take discontinuous leave if it is not their preference.

2.1.2 Paternity pay

From 1 September 2022, all employees eligible for paternity leave as laid out above will receive 100% pay for the first week and 90% for the following 3 weeks.

The first week is paid at 100% pay, in line with the contractual provision of Maternity/Adoption Support Leave (see section below). The 90% rate of pay thereafter mirrors the rate of pay for the first few weeks of maternity leave.

For those eligible for Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP), if the rate of SPP is higher than 90% pay, the employee will receive that, for the second week only. (The weekly SPP rate can be found [here](#).)

. Employees will need to add the planned absence details to Oracle, where, after approved, notification will be sent to HR. When the Date of Birth is known employees or managers will need to add the Date of Birth and actual dates taken to Oracle as paternity cannot start until the baby is born.

Employees who qualify for statutory paternity leave will also qualify for statutory paternity pay, provided they are earning at least the lower earnings limit for national insurance by the end of the qualifying week.

2.1.3 Maternity and adoption support leave

Maternity or adoption support leave of 1 week with pay is available to people who are the nominated carers of the mother or primary adopter, to support them at or around the time of the birth or placement. There is no continuous service requirement.

Hence, maternity/adoption support leave can be taken by those with other relationships than the partner of the mother of the child, who do not qualify for paternity leave and pay, or by people who do qualify but wish to start the leave before the date of the birth or placement, since paternity leave cannot start beforehand.

NB: Maternity or adoption support leave will not increase the overall entitlement to leave or pay under this policy, the maximum of which is 4 weeks.

2.1.4 Extending paternity leave

Staff who wish to extend their period of leave following the birth or placement of a child can supplement their paternity leave with:

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- annual leave,
 - and/or shared parental leave,
 - and/or unpaid parental leave
- (the last two options must be taken in blocks of whole weeks).

Managers are expected to make all efforts to accommodate any request in this respect. Employees are encouraged to make the leave requests as early as is reasonably possible to enable the manager to plan for their absence.

Please see the Shared Parental Leave and Pay Policy, and the Parental Leave Policy as needed.

2.2 Notification

Employees must request Paternity Leave in writing, informing of the estimated week of childbirth (or the actual date of birth or placement date), the length of the period of leave required, and the date from which the leave is requested. Employees should notify their managers of their intention to take paternity leave in reasonable time.

Requests should be submitted to the manager by the 15th week before the expected date of childbirth or placement, if known. It is possible to subsequently change the nominated leave dates by giving 28 days' written notice.

Employees who are not eligible for Statutory Paternity Leave but wish to take Maternity or Adoption Support Leave should contact their manager and HR.

2.3 Time off for antenatal appointments.

From 1 April 2020, Suffolk County Council has chosen to go further than the statutory minimum and offer employees who are partners (including same-sex partners) of someone who is pregnant, or expectant fathers, paid time off for up to two antenatal appointments of up to 6.5 hours each. Extra time can be taken from annual leave. Proof of the appointment cannot be requested, as it is the property of the person who is pregnant, but the manager can require a signed declaration confirming the appointment.

Antenatal care includes appointments with a registered medical practitioner, midwife, or health visitor. It may also be extended to include reasonable time for relaxation classes and parenting classes. Employees should give their manager reasonable notice of antenatal appointments, where possible.

2.4 Termination of Pregnancy

Managers and colleagues are expected to act supportively towards colleagues whose partner or co-parent is undergoing, or intending to undergo, abortion.

They should not seek to influence the decision in any way, but to support the individual, through what can be a difficult time, mentally and emotionally. If this causes a conflict within

themselves, they are asked to remember that they are not being asked to support the act, but the person. We all have a duty of care towards each other at work.

Co-parents, partners, or other close people can take unpaid emergency dependent's leave, to support the person who has had the abortion. As with other types of emergency dependent's leave, it is recommended they be allowed to upgrade this to annual leave, if they wish to avoid loss of income, waiving any usual requirements of notice for the annual leave. If the person is also themselves directly emotionally affected by the abortion, compassionate leave may apply.

2.5 Surrogacy

Surrogacy is when a third party agrees to undergo a pregnancy on behalf of other people, of a child they do not intend to parent, and who they may not be genetically related to.

The receiving parents are likely to be entitled to adoption, paternity and/or shared parental leave.

Surrogacy is a relatively new area and can create uncertainty and complicated emotions for all parties. Any employee going through this, whether giving or receiving, should have regular welfare check-ins and support from their managers.

2.6 Baby loss, and parental bereavement leave and pay

Baby loss during pregnancy or birth happens in 1 in 4 pregnancies.² Based on national pregnancy rates³, that means a significant number of our employees are likely to be suffering baby loss every year.

Baby loss can have lasting mental and emotional effects for any parent. Managers and colleagues are expected to support staff who experience baby loss. They may benefit from:

- time off, including for medical appointments,
- increased flexibility of hours or location for a fixed period of time to ease a return to work,
- counselling,
- a mental health first aider,
- a referral to Occupational Health,
- being signposted to our Parents Together buddy scheme,
- and, most importantly, a sympathetic and listening ear.

² See: <https://www.tommys.org/baby-loss-support/pregnancy-loss-statistics>

³ [ONS statistics](#) show the fertility rate was 55.8 live births per 1000 women in 2021. Given this is ¾ of all pregnancies, it means there would be 18.6 baby losses per 1000 women in the same time period. This does not take into account pregnancies from people who are not women, nor the effects of baby loss on partners. It is also including pensioners in the statistics; therefore, the rate of live births, and baby loss, will be higher when confined to women of working age.

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In the case of miscarriage, i.e., baby loss before 24 weeks, employees have recourse to use the contractual compassionate leave entitlement of up to 10 days (2 weeks pro rata) with pay. This can be used by any parent, and potentially by other people in the family who may be affected by the loss of the child.

From 6 April 2020, there is a new statutory entitlement to parental bereavement leave of two weeks following the death of a child under 18, or a stillbirth after 24 weeks.

The right to leave extends to employees who are parents, adopters, foster parents, and guardians, as well as close relatives or family friends who have taken responsibility for the child's care.

Leave can either be taken in one block or in two separate blocks of one week. It can be taken within a 56-week window from the child's death, to allow time for moments such as anniversaries. Notice requirements will be flexible so leave can be taken without prior notice, although employees will need to tell their manager at the time of taking the absence that they will be off work, and the reason for the absence.

Employees or workers who have worked for SCC for at least 26 weeks on the Saturday before the child's death will receive 2 weeks' pay at the statutory rate. Other staff will be entitled to unpaid leave. SCC's contractual compassionate leave entitlements of up to 10 days with pay may be used instead to avoid any loss of pay, or for those who do not meet the service criteria, with manager authorisation. Alternatively, the two can be used consecutively to enable a longer period of leave.

Sick leave (which is usually paid) may also be relevant for longer periods of absence. Employees should be supported by their manager and are likely to need a referral to occupational health, and potentially a phased return, to support them back to work when they are ready to return.

2.7 Premature babies

From 1 April 2020, Suffolk County Council has signed up to the 'The Smallest Things: Employer with Heart' charter, which means that it will give extra fully paid time off for employees who are parents or adopters of premature babies. This includes employees who are partners with parenting responsibility.

This recognises the strains and pressures of this unique situation, and the additional support that both the child and parents need at this time.

Babies are considered to be 'term' at 37 weeks gestation, and premature if born before that. A standard pregnancy is for 40 weeks. Therefore, employees who are parents of babies born before 37 weeks, who require hospital treatment, are entitled to the same number of extra days of leave on full pay as the number of days that their child is born early. An early birth will always be calculated backwards from the full term of 40 weeks, regardless of whether it was medically planned to happen earlier. This means anyone who qualifies will

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get at least 3 extra fully paid weeks, and potentially more – SCC has not placed a cap on the maximum amount.

Legally, the leave cannot be designated as maternity or paternity leave, so it will instead be added as a period of paid leave at the end of the period of parental leave – but the payment for it can be made earlier at the request of the employee.

There may be tax, NI, and pensions implications, so individuals are advised to speak to Payroll when they are able to, before making a request about when and how the extra pay is to be received.

In terms of proof, the expectation would be that managers have been supporting their employees, and keeping in touch with them, so would already know when the baby was due, and when it was actually born. Managers can require the employee to provide proof of a baby's due date and hospital treatment, but this will usually be taken on trust.

2.8 Pension during paternity leave

Please see Ask HR for detailed information about how paternity leave interacts with pensions.

There is also information available for Local Government Pension Scheme members on the [LGPS site](#).

2.9 Annual leave during paternity leave

Employees will accrue annual leave during their leave period, including for public holidays they would have been entitled to. Wherever possible, leave should be taken during the current leave year; where this is not possible, leave can be carried forward, without the usual restrictions. HR can assist with calculating the amount of leave to be carried over.

2.10 Returning to work

To support employees before, during, and upon their return from parental leave, please see the 'Parental Leave Toolkit for Managers', which is in the Family Friendly Toolkit.

Employees whose total leave period amounts to 26 weeks or less are entitled to return to the same job upon their return, with the same terms and conditions. For those whose leave exceeds 26 weeks, where it is not reasonably practicable for them to return to the same job, they must be offered another one that is both suitable and appropriate, and on no less favourable terms and conditions.

Employees can also ask for flexible working – more details can be found in the Flexible Working Policy. This could include increased flexibility of hours or location for a fixed period of time to ease their return to work.

2.11 Breastfeeding/Lactation⁴

SCC is committed to supporting breastfeeding/lactating parents. We are aware there are some cases where people who the paternity policy applies to may be breastfeeding/lactating. If this applies to you, please see the Maternity Policy for the types of support you can request, which will apply equally to people covered by this policy.

⁴ Note: trans or gender diverse people who are not women to whom this section applies may prefer the term 'lactation' or 'chest-feeding'. The term 'breastfeeding', when applied to themselves, can cause feelings of gender dysphoria.

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3. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Changes History

Issue No	Date	Amended By	Summary of Changes
1.0	29 Nov 2021	Gita Banerji	Simplification of front box, summary of entitlements. Clarification re employee/worker status. Clarification of entitlements around parental bereavement leave. Addition of breastfeeding support information. Move into new policy template. Removal of pensions information – replaced with signposting to updated Ask HR question and LGPS site.
2.0	25 May 2022	Gita Banerji	Addition of sentence clarifying premature baby leave always to be calculated from full term of 40 weeks.
3.0	21 July 2022	Gita Banerji	Enhancing paternity offer to 4 weeks with pay
3.a	7 March 2023	Gita Banerji	Adding sections on surrogacy and abortion, and info about support for miscarriage and baby loss, tweaks for clarity. Additional flexibility for extra paternity leave added to enable more flexible return to work. Tweaks for clarity.
3b	18 April 2023	Gita Banerji	Minor tweaks following stakeholder feedback, for clarity and to widen scope to include staff on other T&Cs where no similar provisions apply
3c	4 April 2024	Victoria Gibbons	Updating the period in which paternity can be taken to 52 weeks for statutory and 54 weeks for occupational.

Authorisation (Responsible Owner)

Role	Name	Approval Date
Head of HR	Jeanette Bray	24 March 2023

Approval (Accountable Owner)

Role	Name	Approval Date
Trade Unions	Sent by Gita Banerji	1.0 Final changes circulated by email on 6 Dec 2021 2.0 Circulated by email on 25 May 2022 3.0 Principle of enhancement agreed on 20 July 2022, new policy wording agreed on 23 August 2022 3.b Signed off at the Corporate Change Forum on 26 April 2023

Reviewers (Consulted)

Role & Review Responsibilities	Name	Approval Date
Staff Partnership Board TU reps	Sent by Gita Banerji	1.0 Sent by email on 23 Sep, 4 Nov and 6 Dec 2021 2.0 Sent by email on 25 May 2022 3.0 Agreed at Corporate Change Forum in principle on 20 July 2022, policy agreed on 23 August 2022 3.b Signed off at the Corporate Change Forum on 26 April 2023
HR Lead Team	Sent by Gita Banerji	24 March 2023
HR Payroll	Sent by Gita Banerji	9 March 2023

Distribution List - Once authorised (Informed)

Name	Organisation
1.0 Published on Ask HR, HR Need to Know, referenced in Inside SCC & manager webinar. 2.0 Shared with specific staff where there was perceived ambiguity, and staff in HR. 3.0 Corporate comms re new entitlement, will ensure HR Support, Advice and Payroll teams in particular are aware. Intention to follow up with case studies from people who have taken up at some point in 2023. 3b. Published on Ask HR, HR Need to Know, item on manager webinar on 10 May 2023	Suffolk County Council

Review Period

Date Policy to be Reviewed	By whom
April 2025	SCC HR

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Corporate Services Controlled Documentation Scheme
