

Keeping **HR** Simple

Guide to Parental Bereavement Leave

As of 6th April 2020, the UK government has made it a legal requirement for employers to allow employees to take up to two weeks Parental Bereavement Leave should they unfortunately experience the loss of their child.

We understand that you will want to treat this situation as sympathetically as possible as it will be the worst period a parent can do through. The last thing a parent will be thinking about is returning to work, so a gentle and kind approach to their return will be appropriate.

Statutory Minimum

The minimum you must give is the statutory entitlement to Parental Bereavement Leave however this doesn't mean you need to stick to the minimum. If you would like to enhance the employee's pay to full pay for 2 weeks or longer, that is at your discretion and there is **nothing stopping you going above the statutory entitlement if you wish.**

The particulars of Parental Bereavement Leave (the minimum that is required from you as the employer):

- 2 weeks' leave which can be split into 2 separate weeks, i.e. 2 weeks can be taken in total but they don't have to be taken consecutively;
- Leave must be taken up to 56 weeks after the date of the child's death. This is so that the employee can take time off around the anniversary of their child's death or any event they would find difficult, e.g. Christmas;
- This will be paid at statutory rate (£148.68 per week for 2019/2020) if the employee has been working with the company for over 26 weeks continuously;
- Employees who do not have 26 weeks service are still entitled to take 2 weeks unpaid leave;
- There is no advance notice period for taking this leave from the date of the child's death up until 56 days afterwards. If the employee wants to take one week in the period and then one week after 56 days of the death, they are required to give one week's notice. Again, please remember this is a traumatic situation, so we would advise to accommodate requests after 56 days of the child's death as much as possible.
- Carers can also take this leave if they were responsible for the child. This includes adoptive parents, foster carers and Kinship carers;
- Parents can take bereavement leave for a child's death from 24 weeks of pregnancy until the age of 18.

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General Notes

- Offer your condolences to the employee and their family. You may wish to send a card and/or some flowers to their home address.
- We would advise not to contact the employee by phone or email whilst they are on Bereavement Leave in case they may start to worry about work commitments.
- Assure the employee that all work commitments will be taken care of and they do not need to worry about work should they notify you of their need to take bereavement leave.
- Remember – no parent will ever get over the death of a child. Grieving time depends on the individual and some may need longer than others. Once the employee returns to work, make sure to subtly check in with them often and encourage them to be open to their manager about how they are feeling or coping. Offer continued support as you feel necessary.
- Even though the statutory legislation states that Parental Bereavement leave is for the death of children up until the age of 18, we would still advise that you allow grieving parents adequate time off if they unfortunately lose a child after this age.
- Male parents who have lost a child are often referred to as 'The Forgotten Grievers' as they normally think they have to stay strong for other family members. Bear this in mind if employees (male or female) return to work and appear 'normal'. Encourage them to grieve and get support in a safe environment to prevent personal destructive behaviour.

Support

You could recommend Bereavement charities and organisations in the UK for the employee to contact to get support:

A Child of Mine - www.achildofmine.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK - <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

The Compassionate Friends - <https://www.tcf.org.uk/>

SLOW (Surviving the loss of your world) - <https://slowgroup.co.uk/>

Cruse - <https://www.cruse.org.uk/>

SANDS (stillbirth and neonatal death)- <https://www.sands.org.uk/>