

NEONATAL CARE LEAVE

GUIDANCE

According to the charity Bliss, one in seven babies born in the UK are admitted to neonatal care shortly after birth because they have either been born prematurely (before 37 weeks of pregnancy) or full term but sick.

Neonatal Care Leave is an entitlement to time away from work in addition to other parental leave (Maternity, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave) to assist parents to cope with additional worries relating to work and finances during a time when they should be able to focus on their baby or babies.

ELIGIBILITY

Employee's will qualify for Neonatal Care **Leave** if:

- Your baby is born on or after 6 April 2025; and
- Your baby spends at least 7 continuous days receiving neonatal care that starts within 28 days of their birth.

Employee's will qualify for Neonatal Care **Pay** if in addition to the criteria above:

- You have at least 26 weeks' continuous service; and
- You earn above the lower earnings limit for national insurance contributions (£125 per week from 6 April 2025).

Neonatal Care Leave is available to people with a parental relationship to the baby/babies, whether they are the mother or birthing parent, father or other non-birthing parent such as non-birthing mother, spouse, civil partner or adoptive parent. If both parents work for the council, both parents are entitled to Neonatal Care Leave and Pay (if eligible).

Entitlement to Neonatal Care Leave and Pay does not increase in the event of multiple births.

The right to Neonatal Care Leave and Pay also applies to adoptive parents and parents who have a child through a surrogacy arrangement.

LENGTH OF NEONATAL CARE LEAVE

Employees can take one week's neonatal care leave for every uninterrupted week their baby receives neonatal care, up to a maximum of 12 weeks. Leave must be taken in weekly blocks.

TIMING OF NEONATAL CARE LEAVE

Neonatal care leave must be taken within 68 weeks of the baby's date of birth.

Neonatal Care Leave is in addition to other types of parental leave and the 68 week cut off enables an employee to stay on maternity leave and add neonatal care leave onto the end of their maternity leave. Similarly, the 68 week cut off date allows fathers/partners to take Neonatal Care Leave after they have finished their paternity leave.

How you take the leave depends on if your baby is still in hospital:

- While your baby is still in hospital and for seven days after neonatal care ends - Leave can be taken in non-continuous blocks of a minimum of one week, and only requires notice before you would normally start work on the first day of the leave.
- Any other period after neonatal care has ended and up to 68 weeks after the birth - Leave must be taken in one continuous block and notice in writing must be provided no later than 15 days before the first day of leave.

NEONATAL CARE PAY

Neonatal Care Pay will be paid at the same rate as other family-related statutory payments (£187.18 per week from April 2025).

EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION

Employees who take neonatal care leave will have the same employment protections as those associated with other forms of family-related leave (such as maternity or paternity leave). These include protection from dismissal or detriment as a result of taking the leave.

INFORMING YOUR MANAGER

You should notify your manager as early as possible of your need to take Neonatal Care Leave and the dates on which you plan to take the leave. If you are taking the leave after the neonatal care has ended you must give at least 15 weeks notice in writing. A Neonatal Care Leave form will be available for this purpose.

ACTION FOR MANAGERS

Where an employee notifies you of a need to take Neonatal Care Leave while their baby is still receiving neonatal care, you should complete a Neonatal Care Leave form on behalf of the employee and submit to hchanges@weslothian.gov.uk to ensure appropriate pay arrangements are made.

Where an employee completes a Neonatal Care Leave form to request leave with notice, you should authorise the leave as appropriate and submit the completed form to hchanges@weslothian.gov.uk

Human Resources
19 March 2025