

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Department	HR
Policy	Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave Policy

1. Description

The Academy's HR department have updated the Academy's Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave Policy. It provides information about Maternity Leave, Paternity Leave, Shared Parental Leave, Ordinary Parental Leave and Neonatal Leave including entitlements to pay and the duration of leave. The policy applies to employees who are new and expectant parents and to managers responsible for facilitating parental leave arrangements.

The purpose of this EIA is to ensure compliance with relevant equality legislation, to identify and mitigate any adverse impacts on specific groups and to promote inclusivity and fairness in parental leave provisions.

There is a separate policy for new and prospective adoptive parents and employees who will become the legal parents of a child under a surrogacy arrangement.

2. Could the policy have an adverse impact on equality in relation to the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010?

- Age
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage or civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex

- Sexual orientation

No, the policy does not have a negative impact on the above protected characteristics.

However, the uptake of the provisions detailed in the section below should be monitored as differences between gender uptake may reinforce stereotypes e.g. women taking leave options more often than men. There is the potential for such unequal uptake of leave by genders to unintentionally reinforce stereotypes, such as women primarily being 'caregivers' and men prioritising 'work'.

It is also important that employees taking extended leave under these provisions do not face barriers in career progression or fear of discrimination from colleagues or management, thus making it necessary to monitor career progression for employees who take these leave options to ensure fairness and equality. This can be mitigated by providing guidance and training to managers in support of employees returning from leave.

3. Does this policy provide opportunities to make a positive impact on equality?

Yes, the policy strengthens gender equality by providing equal parental leave opportunities for all genders. It supports employees with diverse family arrangements, including single parents and LGBTQ+ families. It also encourages work-life balance and employee well-being.

The policy includes the following provisions which have a positive impact on equality:

- Keeping in Touch (KIT) Days - up to 10 optional KIT days are permitted for employees on maternity leave, which can be used for working at the Academy, undertaking training, or keeping in touch with a department and manager. These days can be used without bringing maternity leave or statutory maternity pay to an end and are paid at the employee's normal rate of pay. Utilising KIT days does not affect an employee's continuing entitlement to maternity leave.
- Health and Safety - pregnant and breastfeeding employees are required to notify the HR Department as soon as possible. This enables a risk assessment to be carried out, to ensure that both work and the working environment do not constitute a risk to the health and safety of the employee or child, and reasonable adjustments made wherever possible.

- Paternity Leave - leave applies to anyone who is a main carer for the child, and can include the mother's husband, the biological parent, same sex partner or joint partner.
- Shared parental leave - leave enables mothers to commit to ending their maternity leave and pay at a future date, and to share the untaken balance of leave and pay as shared parental leave and pay with their partner, or to return to work early from maternity and opt-in to shared parental leave and pay at a later date. 'Partner' is defined as the father of the child, or the person who, at the date of the child's birth, is married to, the civil partner of, or the partner of the mother. This includes someone, of either sex, who lives with the mother and the child in an enduring family relationship (which is specifically defined in the policy). During shared parental leave, all terms and conditions except normal pay will continue, e.g. holiday entitlement will continue to accrue. Employees can also agree to work for the Academy (or to attend training) for up to 20 days during shared parental leave without that work bringing the period of shared parental leave and pay to an end. These are known as "shared-parental-leave-in-touch" (SPLIT) days.
- Parental leave - is designed for an employee to be able to care for a child. It consists of an optional 18 weeks' unpaid leave. Parents working part-time receive a pro-rata entitlement of parental leave. Individuals remain employed during the parental leave period when all contractual terms continue to apply, except pay.
- Neonatal Care Leave (NCL) - supports parents of babies who require neonatal care before the baby reaches 28 days of life. The right to NCL is a 'day one' right, meaning all employees, regardless of length of service are entitled to up to twelve weeks of leave if their baby is admitted to neonatal care for more than seven consecutive days within the first 28 days of life. Any Neonatal care leave must be taken in blocks of at least one week. Statutory Neonatal Care Pay is either £187.18 per week or 90% of an employee's average weekly earnings, whichever is lower. Employees with at least 26 weeks of continuous service who are entitled to family leave under this policy will also be entitled to an additional period of Neonatal leave to add to the end of their family leave period.
- Urgent Family/Carers' Leave - is detailed in the Academy's General and Special Leave Policy and is subject to a separate EIA.

4. What evidence has been considered? What consultation has been undertaken?

The policy was developed in consultation with the following Academy staff, groups, departments:

- Acas, Brightmine and [Gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) websites
- Policy Review Group, which includes the Registrar and Director of Student Operations, Director of Finance and the Executive Assistant and Secretary to the Governing Body
- The HR Team
- The Equality Impact Assessment Sub-Committee

5. What actions have been agreed as a result of this EIA?

In summary, the policy strengthens gender equality by providing equal parental leave opportunities for all genders. It supports employees with diverse family arrangements, including single parents and LGBTQ+ families. It also encourages work-life balance and employee well-being. As the provisions outlined in the policy are complex, employees are encouraged to contact HR to discuss their options.

However, some monitoring and evaluation of both the policy, and the take of the leave provisions, may be required as detailed in the actions below: Progress on the actions detailed below will be reported to the Belonging Committee.

Action	Who	Timescale
Review leave provision uptake statistics to evaluate equality between genders and family types.	HR	Ongoing
Develop clear communication to ensure employees understand their rights and entitlements.	HR & Line managers	Ongoing
Provide training for managers to eliminate bias and to enable them to support employees effectively during leave options.	HR	Ongoing
Monitor employee feedback on uptake of leave provisions.	HR & Line Managers	Ongoing

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