



Think Business, Think Equality

# KEY MESSAGES: PREGNANCY, MATERNITY AND PARENTAL EQUALITY AT WORK

These key messages are part of a suite of resources for small and medium businesses who want to support their staff through pregnancy, maternity and parenthood at work. You can use this alongside our other *Think Business, Think Equality* resources on pregnancy, maternity and parental equality at work to make a positive change in your business.

You can use these key messages to inform your policies, shape internal procedures, or support conversations about how your business can better support staff during pregnancy, maternity, and parenthood. They can help you create a fairer, more inclusive workplace where all parents feel valued and supported to balance work and care.

## **1. Supporting staff during pregnancy, leave and return to work is good for your people and your business.**

Fair and inclusive practice improves retention, reduces recruitment costs, and builds your reputation as an employer of choice.

## **2. Staff have clear legal rights during pregnancy and parental leave – and discrimination is unlawful from day one of employment.**

These rights cover job applicants, new hires, and existing employees, regardless of how they become parents.



**3. Inclusive, up-to-date policies help everyone understand what they're entitled to and what steps to take.**

Clear policies support compliance and ensure consistent, fair treatment for all staff and managers.

**4. Planning and communication are key.**

Early, supportive conversations about leave and return to work help manage expectations, cover workload, and reduce the risk of problems.

**5. Flexible and shared leave supports equality at home and at work.**

Shared Parental Leave allows both parents to take time off in a way that works for their family – and supporting fathers and partners to take leave helps challenge gendered assumptions about care.

**6. Leave and pay entitlements apply to a wide range of workers – including agency staff, casual workers, and same-sex partners – if qualifying conditions are met.**

Make sure your approach is inclusive of all family types and contract types.

**7. Statutory pay and leave are minimums – you can offer more.**

Enhanced policies on maternity, adoption or shared parental leave show that you value your staff, and help attract and retain diverse talent.

**8. Staff continue to build up rights and benefits while on leave.**

This includes annual leave, pension contributions, and entitlement to bonuses, pay rises, and protection during redundancy processes.



**9. Requests for flexible or discontinuous leave must be handled fairly.**

While you can refuse certain patterns, the law requires genuine discussion and fair decision making. Being flexible supports a more diverse workforce.

**10. Staff must not be penalised for taking or requesting parental leave.**

This includes pregnancy, maternity, adoption, paternity, shared parental, and time off for dependants. Any unfavourable treatment could be discrimination or lead to tribunal claims.

**11. You can claim back most statutory payments from HMRC.**

Small employers can reclaim up to 103% of statutory maternity, adoption or shared parental pay, so supporting leave doesn't have to be a financial burden.

**12. Small, practical steps matter.**

Providing a private space to breastfeed, offering Keeping in Touch or SPLiT days, and supporting phased returns can help staff balance work and care and build a more equal workplace.



Close the Gap works in Scotland on women's labour market participation. We work with policymakers, employers and unions to influence and enable action that will address the causes of women's inequality at work.

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