



Leave for New Parent(s) and Parents Policies and Procedure

Introduction

Becoming a parent is one of the most exciting and wonderful experiences of your life and spending quality time with your child in those first months can help you to develop a bond with them that will last a lifetime.

Metaverse VR (MVR) is a family friendly employer, and as such both the health of you and your children is of the utmost importance to us and our policies have been written to reflect this. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please do not hesitate to discuss them with your line manager.

This policy is divided into 5 sections:

1. [Maternity Leave](#)
2. [Paternity Leave](#)
3. [Shared Parental Leave](#)
4. [Adoption Leave](#)
5. [Parental Bereavement Leave](#)
6. [Neonatal Care Leave](#)

Definitions

The following terms are used within this suite of leave policies and procedures:

EWC: The expected week of childbirth is the week, beginning on the Sunday, during which your baby's birth is expected.

MATB1: The maternity certificate, or form, which is provided to confirm a pregnancy and confirms the expected week of childbirth.

Qualifying week: The 15th week before the expected week of childbirth.

OML / AML: Ordinary Maternity Leave / Additional Maternity Leave

SMP / SPP / SMP: Statutory Maternity Pay / Statutory Paternity Pay / Statutory Adoption Pay

Section 1: Maternity Leave Policy

Policy Statement

At MVR, we endeavour to ensure all women are given support before, during, and on their return to work from maternity leave.

Your duties will be covered during maternity leave and your line manager will ensure you are kept fully informed and supported throughout your maternity leave, including benefit entitlements.

All employees taking maternity leave are covered by this policy, including those on part-time contracts.

Notification Requirements

Please notify us in writing as soon as possible of your pregnancy. Early notification is essential to enable us to take all reasonable steps to safeguard the health, safety, and wellbeing of your unborn child.

MVR cannot provide appropriate support, implement risk assessments or make necessary workplace adjustments if we are not informed of your pregnancy. All information relating to your pregnancy will be treated in confidence and shared only where required for health, safety or operational purposes.

To qualify for maternity leave please provide your line manager with written notification by the qualifying week, or as soon as reasonably practicable after this, with the following information:

- your pregnancy
- your EWC, and
- the date you wish to start your ordinary maternity leave period, which can be any time from the 11th week before the EWC.

Please also give your MATB1 to your line manager. You will normally be provided with the MATB1 at around the 20-week stage.

Once you have notified your line manager of your intended start date of ordinary maternity leave, we will confirm, in writing, the date we expect you to return to work after additional

maternity leave has ended. This confirmation will be sent to you within 28 days of your notification.

Your line manager will then arrange to meet with you to discuss your entitlements and any processes to be followed. During this conversation, your line manager will cover:

- the amount of leave you can take and the payment arrangements
- the information we will need from you to process your maternity leave and pay
- time off for ante-natal appointments
- risk assessments to ensure your role does not pose a risk to yours, or your baby's, health and safety
- your right to return after maternity leave to the same or a similar role
- the opportunity to request flexible working and how a request can be made.

In order to ensure good communication and a smooth transition in the time leading up to your maternity leave, and during the leave period itself, you will be informed of the arrangements for covering your work and also for remaining in contact whilst you are on leave. Your line manager will also discuss with you how your workload will be covered during your leave to enable a smooth handover.

We would like to keep you fully informed of any news or developments at work during your leave and we will continue to share organisation updates and information on social events with you. Your line manager will also keep you informed of any recruitment activity during your absence.

Health and Safety

So we may assess any potential risk your role poses to your health and safety, and the health and safety of your baby, you must notify your line manager as soon as you are aware you are pregnant. A Health and Safety Risk Assessment will be undertaken and action taken to eliminate any risk.

Mitigation may include making adjustments to your role or, if no adjustments can be identified to reduce or remove identified risks, you will be offered a suitable alternative role for the duration of your pregnancy.

Please speak to your line manager immediately if you are worried about your own health and safety at any time.

Time off for Ante-natal Care

You are entitled to paid time off during normal working hours to receive ante-natal care. Ante-natal care can include medical examinations, relaxation classes and parental classes as advised by a medical practitioner. Time off will be provided for any time spent travelling to and from these appointments, including any waiting time.

You will receive full pay for time taken to attend these appointments.

Time Off for Ante-natal Care (Qualifying Relationship)

An employee in a “qualifying relationship” with a pregnant woman or the child is entitled to take unpaid time off work on up to two occasions to accompany her to antenatal appointments. Up to six and a half hours off work can be taken on each occasion and the antenatal appointment must have been on the advice of a registered doctor, nurse or midwife.

You will meet the eligibility criteria for Ante-natal Care (Qualifying Relationship) leave if you:

- are the child’s father, the mother’s husband or partner (whether of the same or different sex), the child’s intended parent in a surrogacy arrangement.

If asked to by MVR, you must state in writing:

- the time and date of the appointment
- that the time off is to accompany the woman to an antenatal appointment
- the appointment is made on the advice of a registered doctor, nurse or midwife.

Length of Maternity Leave

Subject to meeting the notification requirements set out above, you are entitled to 52 weeks’ maternity leave in total, broken down as follows:

- 26 weeks’ ordinary maternity leave (OML), including a 2-week period of compulsory maternity leave
- 26 weeks’ additional maternity leave (AML), which starts immediately after OML.

Unless you tell us you wish to take a shorter period, we will automatically assume you are taking your full entitlement to 52 weeks, and will write to you to confirm your expected return date.

During periods of OML and AML, you are entitled to receive your normal contractual terms and conditions of employment, with the exception of remuneration. This includes contractual benefits, subject to the terms of these benefits.

Commencing Maternity Leave

You can start maternity leave at any time from the beginning of the 11th week before the EWC until the date of birth. You need to inform of us of the date you intend to start leave, however you may change this date as long as you provide at least 28 days’ notice of any change. Any application for a date change should be made in writing to your line manager.

Compulsory maternity leave commences on the day after the childbirth occurs. Its purpose is to ensure you have at least a 2-week period of leave after the birth of your baby.

There are 2 scenarios where your maternity leave period could be triggered automatically:

- Where childbirth occurs before the OML would otherwise commence. If this occurs, please notify us, in writing as soon as is reasonably practicable after the birth, of the date on which you gave birth. Your maternity leave period will begin automatically on the day following the date of the birth.

- Where you are absent from work, wholly or partly due to your pregnancy, after the beginning of the 4th week before the EWC. If this occurs, please notify us, in writing as soon as is reasonably practicable, to confirm your absence from work is wholly or partly due to your pregnancy and the start date of this absence. In these circumstances, your maternity leave period begins on the day following the first day of such absence.

Once you have notified your line manager your OML period has been triggered due to premature absence or premature childbirth, we will confirm, in writing, the date we expect you to return to work after the AML period has ended. This confirmation will be sent to you within 28 days of your notification.

Shared Parental Leave

You may be entitled to take shared parental leave, please refer to our [Shared Parental Leave Policy](#) section for further information on entitlements, eligibility and notice requirements.

Maternity Pay

Depending upon your length of service, you may be entitled to receive statutory maternity pay (SMP). If you do not qualify for such a payment, you may, dependent upon your circumstances, be eligible to receive state maternity allowance.

You will qualify for SMP if you meet the following criteria:

- you have been continuously employed with us for at least 26 weeks by the qualifying week
- your average weekly earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit relevant for national insurance purposes
- you are still pregnant at the 11th week before the EWC or have given birth by that time and
- you have complied with the relevant notification requirements.

The period for which SMP may be paid is called the maternity pay period. The maternity pay period may start at any time from the start of the 11th week before the EWC and can continue for up to 39 weeks, even if you do not intend to return to work.

Payment will be made at the rate of 90% of your average earnings for the first 6 weeks' of leave and then up to 33 weeks' at the Standard Rate of SMP or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

Your normal weekly earnings are calculated based on an average of your gross earnings for national insurance during the 'relevant period'. The 'relevant period' is the period ending on the last normal pay day before the qualifying week and starting with the normal pay day which is at least 8 weeks earlier.

Where you receive an increase to your gross salary, and the increase takes effect from the start of the relevant period and before the end of the AML period, it will result in a recalculation of your SMP. As a result of this recalculation, you may be entitled to a retrospective increase or may subsequently qualify to receive SMP.

Keeping in Touch (KIT) Days

You may, by mutual agreement, work for up to 10 days during your maternity leave period (but not during the compulsory maternity leave period) without losing statutory payments, or ending your entitlement to leave. Payment for KIT days will be discussed and agreed with your line manager in advance of these being worked.

For this purpose any work carried out on any day, even just an hour's work, is deemed to constitute "a day's work". Any KIT days done under this provision will not extend the total duration of your maternity leave period.

Stillbirth and Miscarriage

If you experience a miscarriage before 24 weeks of pregnancy, you will no longer be entitled to take maternity leave. It is however anticipated you may need some time off work in such circumstances and such time will usually be categorised as sick leave, in line with the Sickness Absence and Capability Policy and Procedure.

If you suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy, your entitlement to maternity leave and pay will not be affected and you will still be able to take the time off, and receive pay, as planned. Parental Bereavement Leave is also available for employees who suffer a stillbirth. You can read more information on this entitlement in the Parental Bereavement Leave section.

Holidays

You continue to accrue holidays whilst on maternity leave and as these holidays cannot be taken whilst you are on maternity leave, it is important you discuss and agree the arrangements for taking your holiday entitlement with your line manager, for example, you may wish to use some of your holiday entitlement to off-set your transition back to work.

Private Medical Cover

Continuing with your private medical cover at your own cost during your maternity leave period will be dependent upon you making the appropriate contributions before commencing maternity leave.

Returning to Work

If you return to work at the end of your OML period, you are entitled to return to the same role, with the same terms and conditions, in which you were employed before your absence.

If you return to work after a period of AML, you are entitled to return to the same role in which you were employed before your absence. Where this is not reasonably practicable, you will be entitled to return to a suitable and appropriate role on terms that are no less favourable.

If your role is made redundant during maternity leave, you will be offered a suitable alternative role.

Unless you state otherwise, it will be automatically assumed you intend to return to work at the end of your full 52 week leave period. So we may make effective plans for your return, we would be grateful if you would contact us shortly before your return. However, there is no obligation on you to do so unless you wish to change the date of your return, in which case you must give us 8 weeks' notice.

If you qualify for shared parental leave and wish to return early from maternity leave for this purpose, you must also give us 8 weeks' notice. You can find more information on this in the [Shared Parental Leave Policy](#) section.

You may be invited to attend an informal meeting with your line manager in order to discuss any arrangements regarding your return to work. This is likely to take place approximately 2 weeks before your return. The following points will be discussed at this meeting:

- any developments taking place at work
- any appropriate training required
- any flexible working arrangements which have been agreed.

If you decide you do not wish to return to work after your maternity leave, you are required to give us notice of your resignation. Your notice period to resign is set out in your contract of employment.

If you are unable to return on the agreed date due to sickness, please inform your line manager as soon as possible in line with your Sickness Absence and Capability Policy and Procedure.

Flexible Working

We recognise you may wish to reduce your working hours or undertake homeworking upon your return from maternity leave.

We will make every effort to accommodate requests for part time working, provided your duties can still be effectively carried out on such a basis. However, we must also take into account the needs of the business when assessing and granting any requests. A flexible working request should be made in line with the process set out in the Flexible Working Policy, which can be found on our Sharepoint.

Grievances related to Maternity Rights

In the first instance, if you have any queries or concerns regarding your maternity rights or treatment, please raise these with your line manager. If you are unhappy with the outcome of this conversation, please refer to our Grievance Procedure, which may be used in the event you are dissatisfied with any decision made in respect of your maternity rights.

Section 2: Paternity Leave Policy

This section outlines paternity leave entitlements and how leave arrangements are organised.

Eligibility

Paternity leave following the birth of a child

You will meet the eligibility criteria for paternity leave if you:

- are the child's father, the mother's husband or partner (whether of the same or different sex), the child's intended parent in a surrogacy arrangement
- You are an employee of MVR regardless of length of service
- will be or expect to be responsible for the child's upbringing, where you are the father, or expect to be mainly responsible for the child's upbringing where you are the mother's husband or partner but not the father of the child
- have given the required notice of your intention to take leave
- have not previously taken shared parental leave for the same child.

Paternity Leave following Adoption

You will be eligible for paternity leave and pay on the adoption of a child if you:

- will be or expect to be mainly responsible for the child's upbringing are married to the child's adopter or the partner of the child's adopter (whether of the same or different sex), the child's intended parent in a surrogacy arrangement
- You are an employee of MVR regardless of length of service
- have given the required notice of your intention to take leave and, where requested, have provided evidence
- have not previously taken shared parental leave for the same child.

When does Paternity Leave start?

Paternity leave lasts for up to 2 weeks, which can be taken as 1 or 2 consecutive weeks. Leave can be chosen to start:

- from the birth date or date of adoption (whether this date is sooner or later than anticipated) or
- on a specific day after the birth date or date of adoption (whether this day is sooner or later than anticipated) or
- from a specific date after the first day of the EWC (in birth cases and not adoption) or
- on a specific date, arranged in advance, that is after the expected placement date (in adoption cases).

If the child is born earlier than expected before the EWC, paternity leave must be taken:

- within a period of 56 days from that date or
- within a period of 56 days from the child's actual birth date.

If the same pregnancy results in more than one child being born, or more than one child is adopted in the same arrangement, your paternity leave entitlement remains up to 2 weeks in total.

Notification Requirements

a. Paternity Leave following the Birth of a Child

Unless not reasonably practicable, your intention to utilise a period of paternity leave must be notified to your line manager during or before the 15th week before the EWC. If you wish to change the date of your paternity leave after giving notice, you must provide an additional written notice requesting a variation to the leave. This notice must be provided at least 28 days in advance of the new start date of the leave period.

Notification of your intention to take paternity leave should be in writing and include:

- the anticipated week of birth
- whether you intend to use 1 or 2 consecutive weeks' of leave
- the arrangements and dates for taking your leave.

As soon as reasonably practicable after the birth, please notify your line manager in writing of the actual date of birth.

b. Paternity Leave following the Adoption of a Child

Your intention to go on paternity leave should be given to your line manager within 7 days of the date the matching notification is given to you. Where this is not reasonably practicable, this notification should be provided as soon as possible. Notification should be in writing and include:

- the date the matching notification was given to you
- the expected date of placement
- whether you intend to use 1 or 2 consecutive weeks' of leave
- the arrangements and dates for taking your leave.

Paternity Pay

You may be entitled to receive Statutory Paternity Pay (SPP) during your paternity leave. SPP is paid at a specific rate set by the government each tax year, or at 90% of your average weekly pay during the relevant period, whichever is lower. For details of the current SPP rate, please visit gov.uk/paternity-pay-leave/pay

In order to meet the eligibility criteria for SPP, average weekly earnings for the relevant period must be equal to or higher than the specific lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year.

The relevant period is:

- the period of 8 weeks which ends immediately before the 14th week before the EWC (in birth cases) or
- the period of 8 weeks which ends immediately before the week where the matching notification was given to the child's adopter (in adoption cases).

Dependent on your individual circumstances, you may be entitled to receive additional financial support. You should contact your local social security office (Department for Work and Pensions) to receive further information on this.

Contractual Benefits

You will continue to be eligible for your normal terms and conditions of employment while on paternity leave, other than your salary.

Your contract of employment continues during paternity leave. As such, any contractual obligations continue to apply during your leave and you remain bound by these.

Returning to Work

Following up to 2 weeks' paternity leave, you have the right to come back to the same job role. If you wish to change your working hours following paternity leave, your line manager will consider your request in line with the our Flexible Working Policy, a copy of which can be found on our Sharepoint.

Your line manager will fully consider your request and aim, wherever possible, to accommodate the change, provided there is no detrimental impact to business needs. Requests should be submitted as far in advance as possible to allow the full consideration process to take place as early as possible.

Shared Parental Leave

Following paternity leave, you may be entitled to take further periods of leave under the Shared Parental Leave Scheme. Full details on shared parental leave, including how to apply, are outlined in the [Shared Parental Leave Policy](#) section.

Once a period of shared parental leave has been taken in respect of a child, paternity leave cannot be taken for the same child.

Stillbirth and Miscarriage

If you and your partner experience a miscarriage before 24 weeks of pregnancy, you will no longer be entitled to take paternity leave. It is however anticipated you may need some time off work, which would usually be taken as sick leave, in line with the [Sickness Absence and Capability Policy and Procedure](#). If your partner suffers a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy, your entitlement to paternity leave and pay will not be affected and you will still be able to take the time off, and receive pay, as planned. Parental Bereavement Leave is also available for employees who suffer a stillbirth. You can read more information on this entitlement in the [Parental Bereavement Leave Policy](#) section.

Section 3: Shared Parental Leave Policy

This section outlines shared parental leave entitlements and how leave arrangements are organised.

Shared Parental Leave and Pay is designed to help eligible parents to combine work with family life. Parents can share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay and choose to take the leave and pay in a more flexible way. Eligible parents can be off work together for up to 6 months or alternatively stagger their leave and pay so that one of them is always at home with their child in the first year.

This section outlines MVR's stance on your entitlement to take shared parental leave, an explanation of the available entitlements and the procedures you should follow in order to take leave.

Shared parental leave may be taken in the case of both births and adoptions, so within this section the word 'parent' describes employees in both birth and adoption circumstances.

Features of Shared Parental Leave

The essential features of shared parental leave (SPL) are:

- eligible employees will be able to end maternity/adoption leave early and share the remaining leave entitlement
- eligible employees will have a certain amount of flexibility to decide which parent takes leave and when, including being on leave at the same time
- the maximum amount of leave to be shared is 50 weeks
- leave may be taken in minimum blocks of 1 week
- eligible employees may make up to 3 requests for leave, including any changes to previously booked leave
- a request for a continuous period of leave becomes fixed
- a request for discontinuous leave is subject to agreement with the Company.

Amount and Timing of Shared Parental Leave

Parents cannot take more than 52 weeks of leave in total made up of maternity or adoption leave and shared parental leave, but excluding paternity leave which is a standalone entitlement.

If the mother is entitled to statutory maternity/adoption pay/maternity allowance but not maternity/adoption leave, the maximum number of weeks of shared parental leave to be taken is the remainder of 52 weeks' minus the number of weeks' pay received.

Mothers are not able to share compulsory maternity leave entitlement of 2 weeks. This is a statutory requirement enabling the mother to recover from the birth and is to be taken exclusively by her. Correspondingly, adopters may share a maximum of 50 weeks' leave.

Shared parental leave can only be taken in minimum blocks of 1 week; it is not possible to take a day's shared parental leave.

Eligibility Requirements

If you wish to take shared parental leave please inform your line manager at the earliest possible opportunity to discuss and clarify your shared parental leave entitlement. Due to the flexibility of the shared parental leave system, it is essential you understand the procedural requirements involved in taking such leave.

In order to take SPL, both you and your partner must meet certain eligibility criteria. You must:

- be the parent of the child (mother, father, or main adopter), or the partner of the mother or main adopter
- have 26 weeks' service at the end of the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (EWC) or at the week in which the main adopter was notified of having been matched for adoption with the child (known as the 'relevant week')
- have a partner who meets the employment and earnings test (see below)

- share the primary responsibility for the child with the other parent at the time of the birth/adoption
- have made the required notifications in respect of your entitlement and have provided the necessary declarations and evidence
- be an MVR employee until the week before any leave is taken.

Employment and Earnings Test – Your Partner

Your partner must have, in the 66 weeks before the EWC, worked for at least 26 weeks and earned on average at least £30 a week in any 13 week period.

Entitlement to Shared Parental Pay

Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) can be paid to both parents for a maximum of 39 weeks in total. This includes any weeks in which statutory maternity or adoption pay was received, and the timing of pay will be decided between the parents.

To be eligible to receive ShPP, you must:

- have been continuously employed for at least 26 weeks up to and including the “qualifying week” (the 15th week prior to the EWC or placement for adoption)
- have average earnings not less than the lower earnings limit calculated over the 8 weeks prior to the qualifying week
- comply with the notification requirements.

All ShPP is paid at the lower of the standard rate or 90% of your normal weekly earnings.

Notification Requirements

At least 8 weeks before any leave is to be taken, please provide the following information to your line manager:

- your name
- the name of your partner
- the start and end dates of maternity/adoption leave

- the total amount of shared parental leave available
- the EWC/adoption placement (or the actual DOB/placement if this has taken place)
- a non-binding indication of how you and your partner think you will split and take shared parental leave.

If you are the mother, please also confirm you meet the eligibility requirements for taking leave and produce a signed declaration from the other parent confirming:

- his/her name and address
- he/she meets the eligibility requirements
- he/she consents to you taking the amount of leave you have indicated you intend to take
- he/she permits MVR to process his/her information and
- we will be notified immediately if any of the eligibility requirements cease to be met.

Notice to take a specific period of SPL and ShPP

It is important you provide all relevant information according to the indicated timelines, failure to do so may mean we are unable to guarantee your leave will be granted.

A maximum of 3 periods of leave are permitted, and you need to provide 8 weeks’ notice you intend to take leave on your specified dates. The date your leave will start should be specified unless you give notice of your leave before the birth of your child, in which case the start date may be indicative, for example, ‘2 weeks’ after the birth, to last for ‘4 weeks’.

You should also indicate whether you intend to allocate ShPP to the period of leave.

Confirmation of SPL and ShPP

If you request one continuous block of leave, you are entitled to take this period of leave and we will confirm the dates to you in writing.

However, if you request more than one period of leave ie discontinuous blocks of leave, we will decide whether this can be accommodated.

Your line manager will arrange to meet and discuss this with you, with the outcome being one of the following:

- agreement to your request
- proposal of alternative leave dates or
- refusal of your request.

If no agreement can be reached within 2 weeks of submitting your period of leave notice, you can withdraw your request any time up to the 15th day after it was made.

If your request is not withdrawn, you can take the leave in one continuous block to start on the first date of leave agreed.

Varying a Period of Leave

Once your leave has been agreed, you may change the leave dates by submitting a request to vary your period of leave giving 8 weeks' notice. These notice provisions are waived in the event of an early birth and your leave will start the same length of time after the birth as it would have started had the baby not come early. In this case, please notify your line manager as soon as reasonably practicable.

Submitting a variation notice will count towards your maximum 3 periods of leave, unless it is as a result of your child being born earlier or later than the EWC, or if you are requesting a variation at our request.

Evidence Requirements

In order for us to verify the information you have provided, you may be required to produce:

- a copy of the child's birth certificate
- and the name and address of the other parent's employer.

If the other parent is not employed, a declaration must be signed to this effect.

Within 14 days of receiving your request for adoption leave, you may be required to produce documents from the adoption agency which show the following:

- the adoption agency's name and address
- the date you were notified of being matched with the child
- the expected date of placement.

Where requested, the information above must be provided within 14 days. Where you are unable to provide a birth certificate because it has not yet been issued, you will be required to sign a declaration which includes the date and location of the child's birth.

'SPLIT' Days

During shared parental leave, you may work for up to 20 "Shared Parental Leave In Touch" days (SPLIT days) without statutory payments being affected. We recognise the benefit of SPLIT days and encourage you to use them, however, they are optional: you are not obliged to use them.

You will be paid at normal rate for work on a SPLIT day. Any work done on one day will count as one SPLIT day.

Your entitlement to 20 SPLIT days is not affected by your entitlement to 10 KIT days during maternity or adoption leave.

Terms and Conditions during SPL

You will continue to receive all your contractual benefits (with the exception of salary) during shared parental leave.

Returning from SPL

If you wish to amend the date you are to return to work after shared parental leave, please give 8 weeks' notice of the original end date and the new end date, whichever is earlier.

After SPL, provided the total amount of leave taken by you (including maternity leave) does not exceed 26 weeks, you are entitled to return to the same job on the same terms and conditions of employment as if you had not been absent.

When you are considering your return to work, for reasons related to childcare, you may request a change to your previous working arrangements. Any such request should be submitted in accordance with our Flexible Working Policy and will be considered against operational requirements and accommodated wherever possible. Please note: there is no automatic right to return to work on altered conditions.

Holiday Entitlement during Shared Parental Leave

Holidays cannot be taken at the same time as shared parental leave, so please ensure you have a discussion with your line manager in good time ahead of your parental leave commencing to agree how your remaining annual leave for the current leave year will be taken. This could include taking all, or part of your remaining holiday immediately before shared parental leave commences, provided it meets with business needs at the time.

Holiday Accrual during Shared Parental Leave

Your contractual holiday entitlement will continue to accrue during the shared parental leave period.

Your line manager will discuss options for taking your holiday before you return to work. You may be asked to take any accrued holiday entitlement immediately after your leave ends, or you could cut your shared parental leave period short and take any remaining holiday entitlement before returning to work. Please confirm your holiday request in writing to take accrued holiday entitlement at the end of your shared parental leave period.

Any additional contractual holiday entitlement accrued during shared parental leave (in excess of the 5.6 weeks statutory holiday entitlement) may be paid in lieu, at the discretion of your line manager.

Section 4: Adoption Leave Policy

This section outlines adoption leave entitlements for you if you are adopting a child, including notification requirements and your right to time off work.

If you are matched for adoption with a child, you may be entitled to either adoption leave or paternity leave. One parent cannot take both periods of leave, and it is up to you and your partner to decide who is the main adopter and therefore who will take adoption leave. The main adopter's partner may be entitled to take paternity leave, so you may also wish to refer to our [Paternity Leave Policy](#) section.

Main adopters are entitled to a total of 52 weeks' leave. We have set out below all of your rights and obligations should you be matched for adoption. We would ask you notify us as soon as possible of your situation so we can ensure you are fully aware of all your entitlements and obligations.

Time off for Adoption Appointments

You are entitled to time off to attend adoption appointments in the period between notification of a match and the date of placement. For single adopters or a joint adoption, you are entitled to paid time off to attend up to 5 appointments.

Please provide ample notice to your line manager ahead of your appointment to ensure any work obligations are covered.

Eligibility for Adoption Leave

You are entitled to adoption leave from the commencement of your employment. Only one period of leave is available irrespective of whether more than one child is placed for adoption as part of the same arrangement. However, if an additional child is adopted at a later date as a separate agreement then you could qualify again for a separate period of adoption leave.

Ordinary and Additional Adoption Leave

Adoption leave is divided into 2 categories, 'Ordinary' and 'Additional'. Each is for 26 weeks, with additional leave following on from ordinary adoption leave, giving 52 weeks leave in total. If you are eligible for ordinary adoption leave you will also qualify automatically for additional adoption leave.

During additional adoption leave the employment contract continues and you are entitled to your normal terms and conditions of employment, except salary.

Commencement of Adoption Leave

You can choose to start your adoption leave on the date of the child's placement (whether this is earlier or later than was expected), or on a predetermined fixed date no earlier than 14 days before the expected date of placement and no later than the date of placement. Adoption leave can start on any day of the week.

Notification Requirements

You are required to give us notice, in writing, of your intention to take adoption leave within 7 days of being notified by the adoption agency you have been matched with a child, unless this is not reasonably practicable. The notice must specify:

- the date the child is expected to be placed with you; and
- the date you want your adoption leave to start.

You should provide your line manager with a copy of the "matching certificate" from the adoption agency. The certificate will include basic information on matching and expected placement dates.

You are able to change your mind about the date on which you want your adoption leave to start providing you inform us at least 28 days in advance, unless this is not reasonably practicable.

We will write to you to notify you of the date on which you are expected to return to work if the full entitlement to adoption leave (ordinary and additional) is taken, within 28 days of the date on which you notified us of your intention to take leave.

Returning to Work

If you are returning to work at the end of your additional adoption leave period, there is no notice requirement, you just let your line manager know out of courtesy and return to work at the end of your adoption leave period.

If you intend to return to work before the end of your additional adoption leave period, you must give your line manager at least 8 weeks' notice of the date on which you intend to return.

Shortly before your return to work, your line manager will be in touch with you to arrange an informal meeting, during which you will discuss your return to ensure it is as smooth a transition back to work as possible.

You have the right to return:

- with your seniority and pension rights and;
- on terms and conditions no less favourable than those which would have applied if you had not been absent.

You will not be subject to any detriment because you took or sought to take adoption leave.

Keeping In Touch (KIT) Days

You can work for up to 10 KIT days during your adoption leave period without losing statutory payments, or ending your entitlement to leave.

For this purpose any work carried out on any day, is deemed to constitute "a day's work". Any days' work done under this provision will not extend the total duration of your adoption leave period. You will be paid at your normal rate of pay for a KIT day.

Adoption Pay

Subject to being continuously employed by MVR for 26 weeks by the week you were matched with a child, you will be entitled to

Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP). Payment will be made at the rate of 90% of your average earnings for the first 6 weeks' of leave and then up to 33 weeks' at the Standard Rate of SAP or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower). SAP will be paid in the same way your salary would be paid if you were not on leave. If you do not qualify for such a payment, you may, dependent upon your circumstances, be eligible to receive allowances from the appropriate government departments.

Shared Parental Leave and Pay

You may be entitled to opt in to shared parental leave, sharing up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay (subject to availability). If you think you would like to take shared parental leave instead of adoption leave, in the first instance please familiarise yourself with the relevant section of this policy before speaking to your line manager.

Surrogacy and Adoption Rights

If you are an intended parent in a surrogacy arrangement who intends to apply for, or has already applied for, a Parental Order, you may be entitled to either adoption leave and pay or paternity leave and pay. One parent cannot claim entitlement to both periods of leave and pay, and it is up to you to decide which you wish to claim (subject to eligibility).

You should provide documentary evidence – a statutory declaration. This document will state you have obtained, applied for or intend to apply for a Parental Order in respect of the surrogate child and, where not received, this is expected to be made.

If you have begun a period of adoption leave in respect of a child before approval of a Parental Order, and you are subsequently notified that the application is refused, your adoption leave period will end 8 weeks after the week of that notification or the end of the adoption leave period, if earlier.

For Adoption Leave entitlement and pay eligibility service qualification please see the relevant sections of this policy as outlined above.

Section 5: Parental Bereavement Leave

We are committed to providing support to you, should you experience loss in your life, in particular the harrowing experience of losing a child, including a still birth. This section explains rights to time off, pay during time off and other support offered by MVR.

Eligibility

Parental bereavement leave is available from your 1st day of employment. It is available to anyone losing a child. You may take parental bereavement leave if you fall into any one of the following categories:

- A 'natural' parent
- An adoptive parent, and those with whom a child has been placed under the 'foster to adopt' scheme, provided the placement is ongoing
- A 'natural' parent where the child has been adopted but a Court Order exists to allow the 'natural' parent to have contact with the child
- An employee who is living with a child who has entered Great Britain from overseas who has received official notification they are eligible to adopt
- A 'parent in fact' which is someone in whose home the child has been living for a period of at least 4 weeks before their death and has had day to day responsibility for the child, subject to exceptions. This category includes guardians and foster parents but does not include paid carers
- The partner of anyone who falls into the above categories, where they live in an enduring family relationship with the child and their parent.

In addition, parents who suffer a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy are entitled to take parental bereavement leave.

Length of Leave and how it may be taken

A total of 2 weeks may be taken as parental bereavement leave and you may choose to take leave as:

- A single block of 1 week
- A single block of 2 weeks
- 2 separate blocks of 1 week

Leave may start on any day of the week and must be taken in whole weeks. It may be taken at any time in the 56 week period following the death.

If you have suffered a stillbirth after 24 weeks of pregnancy, you are entitled to take your full entitlement to maternity and paternity leave, provided you were eligible to take maternity or paternity leave in the first place, in addition to parental bereavement leave. Parental bereavement leave cannot be taken at the same time as maternity or paternity leave.

Where more than one child dies or is stillborn, you are entitled to 2 weeks of parental bereavement leave in relation to each child.

Notification Requirements

You do not need to give any advance notice of taking parental bereavement leave. Please contact your line manager as soon as is reasonably practicable, giving the date of the death, the date on which leave will start and whether 1 or 2 weeks is to be taken.

Cancelling or Changing Leave Dates

You can cancel a period of leave you have already told us about, as long as the period of leave has not already started.

Payment during Leave

You will qualify for statutory parental bereavement pay during leave if you meet the following criteria:

- You have been continuously employed with us for at least 26 weeks by the week prior to the week in which the child dies
- Your normal average weekly earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit relevant for national insurance purposes
- You are still employed by us on the date the child dies.

Payment will be made at the rate set by the Government each year or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

In order to receive statutory parental bereavement pay, you must provide your line manager with the following information as soon as is reasonably practicable:

- The child's name
- The date of the death or stillbirth
- A declaration you fall into the one of the categories listed under 'Eligibility' above.

Terms and Conditions during Leave

During parental bereavement leave, you remain entitled to receive your normal contractual terms and conditions of employment you would have received had you not taken this leave, with the exception of pay. This will include contractual benefits, subject to the terms of these benefits.

Right to Return

Upon your return to work, you are entitled to return to the same job, with the same terms and conditions, in which you were employed before your absence unless:

- the period of leave you have taken is more than 26 weeks when added to any other period of statutory leave including maternity, paternity, adoption leave etc. in relation to the same child and/or;
- it is not reasonably practicable for you to return to the same job.

On your first day back, your line manager will meet with you informally to discuss any arrangements regarding your return to work and any additional support we may be able to offer you.

Counselling

You have access to our Employee Assistance Plan with Aviva who can support you with counselling and support and we would like to encourage you to use it if you feel like you would like to talk to someone about your loss. The service can be accessed by accessing aviva.co.uk/business/workplace-wellbeing/wellbeing/wellbeing-solutions/

Flexible Working

We appreciate a temporary period of flexible working may be beneficial to you if you have suffered a loss. If you would like to explore this, please speak to your line manager.

Section 6: Neonatal Leave Policy

We are committed to supporting you when your baby needs extra care. If your baby is born prematurely or needs specialist care after birth, you may be entitled to Neonatal Leave. This gives you time to focus on what matters most without worrying about work or pay.

Eligibility

- You are an employee of MVR regardless of length of service
- You are the child's mother, father, the mother's husband or partner (whether of the same or different sex), the child's intended parent in a surrogacy arrangement
- Your baby is admitted to Neonatal care within the first 28 days of life
- The hospital stay lasts for 7 or more consecutive days

Length of Leave and how it may be taken

- Up to 12 weeks of Neonatal Leave, on top of your other family leave (like Maternity, Paternity or Shared Parental Leave)
- MVR will pay your full salary up to the first 4 weeks, after which pay will align with Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), subject to eligibility and statutory limits and upon receipt of appropriate medical evidence. This in addition to the standard MVR maternity pay.
- Leave can be taken in full weeks, immediately following maternity/paternity leave, or as agreed with HR.

Notification Requirements

- Let HR know as soon as possible if your baby is receiving Neonatal care
- Provide a letter or discharge note from the hospital confirming the admission and dates of care. We will guide you through next steps and make sure your pay and leave records are updated

Cancelling or Changing Plans

We know this is a sensitive time. If plans or circumstances change, please keep us updated and we will adjust your leave and support where we can.

Terms and Conditions during Leave

During Neonatal leave, you remain entitled to receive your normal contractual terms and conditions of employment you would have received had you not taken this leave, with the exception of pay. This will include contractual benefits, subject to the terms of these benefits.

Counselling

You have access to our Employee Assistance Plan with Aviva who can support you with counselling and support and we would like to encourage you to use it if you feel like you would like to talk to someone about your circumstances. The service can be accessed by accessing:

aviva.co.uk/business/workplace-wellbeing/wellbeing/wellbeing-solutions

Have questions or need support?

HR is your first point of contact:
HR@metaverse-vr.co.uk

Section 7: Parental Leave

Introduction

We are committed to supporting employees in balancing their work and family responsibilities. In line with statutory requirements, employees who have completed at least one year of continuous service with MVR and who have parental responsibility for a child under the age of 18 have the legal right to take up to 18 weeks' parental leave per child, subject to a maximum of four weeks in any one leave year.

Parental leave is unpaid unless otherwise stated in an employee's contract of employment or a separate MVR policy. Employees are encouraged to consider the financial implications before confirming their leave arrangements.

Parental leave is available to each parent individually and applies per child. For example, an employee with two children under the age of 18 may take up to 18 weeks' leave for each child (36 weeks in total, taken separately and subject to annual limits). An employee's partner may also qualify for the same entitlement with their own employer, provided they meet the relevant service requirements.

Parental leave is distinct from paternity leave, maternity leave, adoption leave and shared parental leave, each of which is governed by separate statutory provisions and MVR policies.

This section sets out:

- Eligibility criteria and qualifying conditions
- The duration and timing of parental leave
- Notice requirements
- Circumstances in which leave may be postponed
- The statutory "fall-back scheme"
- Arrangements during parental leave
- The right to return to work
- Sources of further guidance and support

Eligibility

To be eligible for parental leave at MVR, an individual must:

- Be an employee of MVR (self-employed contractors and agency workers are not eligible); and
- Have completed at least one year of continuous service with MVR; and
- Have, or expect to have, parental responsibility for a child under the age of 18.

Parental responsibility may arise where the employee:

- Is the child's parent;
- Has acquired parental responsibility under the Children Act 1989 (or the Scottish equivalent legislation);
- Has adopted a child under the age of 18; or
- Is the spouse or civil partner of a parent and has acquired formal parental responsibility for the child.

Part-time employees are entitled to parental leave on a pro rata basis. Employees on fixed-term contracts qualify provided they meet the one-year continuous service requirement.

Qualifying Conditions

To take parental leave, an eligible employee must:

- Provide at least 21 days' written notice of the intended start and end dates (unless otherwise agreed);
- Confirm that the leave is being taken to care for the child;
- Provide evidence of parental responsibility and/or the child's date of birth or adoption if reasonably requested by MVR; and
- Comply with any applicable procedural requirements outlined in this policy.

Duration and Timing of Leave

Eligible employees may take up to 18 weeks' parental leave in respect of each child, up to the child's 18th birthday.

Key provisions:

- A maximum of four weeks' parental leave may be taken per child in any one leave year.
- Leave is to be taken in blocks of one week.
- For full-time employees, any period shorter than a week (for example, two days) will count as one full week unless otherwise agreed.
- Parental leave taken with a previous employer count towards the overall 18-week entitlement.

Employees must inform MVR if they have previously taken parental leave with another employer. MVR reserves the right to verify previous leave taken, with prior notice to the employee.

Parents of a Disabled Child

Where the child qualifies as disabled for statutory purposes, parental leave may be taken in single-day increments rather than full-week blocks. Individual days will be aggregated to calculate the total leave taken.

Notice Requirements

Employees must provide a minimum of 21 days' written notice before the intended start date of parental leave, specifying:

- The start date;
- The end date; and
- The child in respect of whom the leave is being taken.

Where parental leave is requested to commence at the time of a child's birth or placement for adoption, the employee must also provide notice of the expected week of childbirth or adoption placement.

Postponement of Leave

MVR may postpone a requested period of parental leave where the operation of the business would be unduly disrupted by the employee's absence.

If leave is postponed:

- The employee will be notified in writing within seven days of the request;
- The reason for postponement will be clearly stated; and
- Alternative dates will be proposed.

Any postponed leave will be rescheduled to commence within six months of the original requested start date and will be for the same duration as originally requested.

Parental leave cannot be postponed where an employee has given notice to begin leave immediately upon the birth of their child or on the date of adoption placement.

The Statutory "Fall-Back Scheme"

Where no separate collective or workforce agreement applies, the statutory default provisions (the "fall-back scheme") will apply. Under this scheme:

- Leave must be taken in minimum blocks of one week (except for parents of disabled children);
- No more than four weeks may be taken per child per year;
- 21 days' notice is required; and
- Leave may be postponed for up to six months where justified on business grounds.

MVR may adopt these provisions in full where no alternative agreement is in place. Any alternative arrangements will not reduce statutory minimum entitlements.

Employment Rights During Parental Leave

During parental leave:

- The contract of employment remains in force;
- Continuity of service is preserved;
- Statutory annual leave continues to accrue;
- Contractual notice provisions remain applicable;
- Employees remain bound by duties of fidelity, confidentiality and mutual trust and confidence; and
- Rights relating to redundancy and disciplinary or grievance procedures remain in place.

Pay and most other contractual benefits will be suspended during periods of unpaid parental leave unless otherwise stated in the employee's contract.

Return to Work

Employees are entitled to return to the same job following a period of parental leave, on the same terms and conditions, provided the total period of leave does not exceed four consecutive weeks.

Where a longer period of leave has been taken in combination with other statutory leave, the right to return will be in accordance with applicable legislation and MVR policy.

Further Support

Employees considering parental leave are encouraged to speak with their line manager and/or the HR at the earliest opportunity to discuss eligibility, scheduling and any operational considerations.

MVR is committed to supporting employees in meeting their family responsibilities while ensuring business continuity and fairness across the organisation.