



Additional Leave For Parents Of Premature Babies

**CORPORATE COMMITTEE
MEETING DATE 2017/18**

27 March 2018

CLASSIFICATION:

Open

**If exempt, the reason will be listed in the
main body of this report.**

WARD(S) AFFECTED

All Wards

GROUP DIRECTOR

Tim Shields, Chief Executive

1. CABINET MEMBER INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Premature babies can spend weeks and months in hospital before their parents can bring them home.
- 1.2 Parents wait beside incubators for the moment they can finally hold their child. Fathers often have to manage work and family commitments as current paternity leave does not cover the time their baby remains in neonatal intensive care.
- 1.3 Throughout this time, parents live with additional financial pressure and the prospect of possibly returning to work soon after a baby has come home from hospital, while the trauma is still raw and babies are still so small.
- 1.4 Hackney Council recognises the just how tough this time can be for parents. That is why, having had conversations with other London Boroughs, I have taken the decision not to wait for legislative change. Instead, the Council has revisited HR policies, updating them to ensure that staff who go through the trauma of having premature or sick babies have all the support they need.
- 1.5 Extending maternity and paternity leave to our staff as they go through what can be a truly traumatic event is the right thing to do.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Premature birth is one of the most stressful experiences a new parent can face. The Council wants to take a proactive step to assist its employees in dealing with the premature birth of their baby.
- 2.2 Although congratulations may not always feel appropriate, it is important that the organisation acknowledges the birth of the baby and approaches all conversations regarding the situation with compassion and sensitivity.

3. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1 Corporate Committee is recommended to approve the following additional wording to be added to the Maternity Leave Policy:**

With effect from 1 April 2018, parents of babies born before 37 weeks will be entitled to receive 1 extra day of Premature Baby Leave on full pay for every day their premature baby spends in hospital before 37 weeks. This leave entitlement will be added to the end of the employee's Maternity Leave period. The employee's normal entitlement to Maternity Leave will continue to apply and will not be affected by this scheme.

3.2 Corporate Committee is recommended to approve the following additional wording to be added to the Maternity Support Leave / Paternity Leave Policy:

With effect from 1 April 2018, parents of babies born before 37 weeks will be entitled to receive 1 extra day of Premature Baby Leave on full pay for every day their premature baby spends in hospital before 37 weeks. This leave entitlement will be added to the end of the employee's Maternity Support Leave / Paternity Leave period after this leave entitlement has been exhausted. The employee's normal entitlement to Maternity Support Leave and Paternity Leave will continue to apply and will not be affected by this scheme.

Employees will be eligible for this Premature Baby Leave entitlement if they are the biological father of the child or the mother's husband or partner. This also applies to same sex relationships.

4. REASONS FOR DECISION

- 4.1 The Council can assist new parents by ensuring that the new family has time to spend at home together. When the new baby is in hospital, that isn't always possible immediately after the birth. The Council can "make up" that time and ensure that new parents do not miss out on valuable family time together at home.

5. BACKGROUND

- 5.1 In the UK 60,000 babies are born prematurely each year. When a baby is born too early some aspects of their development are not complete and they may not be ready for life outside of the womb. Many of these babies therefore, will need urgent neonatal care after birth and are likely to be hospitalised for a longer period than babies born at full term. This means parents of premature babies will often have to wait weeks for their new-born baby to be allowed home.

- 5.1.2 During the period babies remain in hospital, parents often have to travel back and forth from hospital, for parents with other children this can be particularly challenging as they manage the birth of their premature baby alongside their other children.

- 5.1.3 As well as pay issues, the Council will also be giving advice to Managers on how to deal with this sensitive issue.

This policy amendment will apply to babies born on or after 1 April 2018.

5.2 Policy Context

Other Councils (most notably Waltham Forest locally) are implementing this scheme.

5.3 Equality Impact Assessment

This policy would bring parents of premature babies onto an equal footing with other new parents in terms of the amount of time off on full pay they can spend together at home as a family.

5.4 Sustainability

Not applicable

5.5 Consultations

Trade Unions have been consulted

5.6 Risk Assessment

There is no appreciable risk to the recommendations in this report.

6. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES

6.1 It is not possible to assess how many employees the change in policy will affect but it is expected that the additional costs will be insignificant as the baby has to be born before 37 weeks and also hospitalised so this is likely to be a low number

6.2 The cost of providing the 1 extra day of Premature Baby Leave will have to be covered by existing budgets within the relevant service areas.

7. COMMENTS OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR, LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

7.1 In accordance with the Councils constitution, full Council established the Corporate Committee to help it perform its functions. The Corporate Committee is responsible for maintaining an oversight of Human Resources functions which include Maternity policies and procedures.

7.2 Employees who are pregnant are entitled to take up to 52 weeks Maternity Leave. The earliest date that leave commences is the 11th week before the week the baby is due. A premature baby is delivered before 37 weeks of pregnancy with a full term pregnancy being calculated at 40 weeks. The Corporate Committee is recommended to approve this additional leave for employees. The rights associated with family friendly policies has increased

over the last few years. The introduction of this policy in Hackney would support this trend and would evidence the Mayors priority of making Hackney a place that works for everyone.

APPENDICES

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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