

Adoption Leave Policy

Policy · UK · Updated 2026-07-23 · Square brackets are placeholders to replace with your own details.

An adoption leave policy is the written statement of how your organisation supports employees who are adopting a child or becoming parents through surrogacy — who takes adoption leave, how they notify you, what leave and pay look like, and how their return is handled.

Adoption cases are rarer than births, which is precisely the risk: when one lands, nobody in the business has done it before, and the employee ends up educating their own manager. A written policy means the first adoption your organisation handles is handled as well as the fiftieth maternity case.

This template gives you a ready-to-edit policy covering eligibility and notification, time off for adoption appointments, leave and pay, keeping in touch, and returning to work.

Purpose and scope

This policy explains how [Your company] manages adoption leave and pay. It applies to employees adopting through a UK adoption agency, adopting from overseas, and intended parents in surrogacy arrangements, subject to the eligibility conditions on GOV.UK.

Policy statement

[Your company] treats adoption leave with the same seriousness and the same protections as maternity leave. No employee will be treated unfavourably for taking or planning adoption leave, and managers are expected to plan cover on that basis.

Who takes adoption leave

Where a couple adopts jointly, they choose which of them takes adoption leave; the other may be eligible for paternity leave or shared parental leave. Only one person can take adoption leave for a placement. Intended parents in surrogacy arrangements may also qualify — the conditions are on GOV.UK, and [name/role] will confirm eligibility when notified.

Notification

- Tell [name/role] within [number] days of being notified of a match by the adoption agency, and give the documents the agency provides (such as the matching certificate).
- Give notice of your intended leave start date by the statutory deadline on GOV.UK, using [form/system].
- We confirm your leave dates and expected return date in writing within [number] days.
- For overseas adoptions and surrogacy arrangements, timescales differ — speak to [name/role] early so we can apply the right rules.

Time off for adoption appointments

Employees have statutory rights to time off to attend adoption appointments arranged by the agency after a match — the current entitlement, including how it applies to each member of a couple, is on GOV.UK. Book appointments through [manager/system] with as much notice as practical.

Adoption leave and pay

Statutory adoption leave is structured in a similar way to maternity leave, with an ordinary and an additional period, and statutory adoption pay is available for part of the leave for eligible employees. The current entitlement lengths, pay rates, and eligibility conditions are on GOV.UK, and payroll applies the published figures.

[If [Your company] offers enhanced adoption pay, set out the terms here and make sure they match your enhanced maternity offer — a mismatch between the two is hard to defend. Otherwise state that adoption pay is at the statutory rate.]

Annual leave continues to accrue during adoption leave.

Keeping in touch and returning to work

Reasonable contact during leave, keeping-in-touch days, and the return-to-work process all operate as described in our maternity leave policy, and the same rights apply on return: the same job after the ordinary period, or the same job where reasonably practicable after the additional period. Requests to change working patterns on return are handled under our flexible working policy.

Records and review

Matching documents, notices, confirmation letters, and pay records are kept in [system/location] in line with our data retention policy. This policy is reviewed [frequency, e.g. annually] and whenever the statutory scheme changes. Owner: [name/role]. Next review due: [date].

How to use this template

1. Check the current adoption leave and pay rules on GOV.UK before publishing — this template deliberately avoids hard-coding figures.
2. Mirror your maternity decisions: if you enhance maternity pay, enhance adoption pay to match, and say so in the pay section.
3. Name the person who handles matching certificates and eligibility checks — adoption paperwork differs from maternity paperwork.
4. Add your agency-appointment booking route so managers do not treat appointments as ordinary absence.
5. Walk one hypothetical case through the policy end to end before you rely on it — the surrogacy and overseas variants are where gaps show up.

Official guidance

- › [GOV.UK — Adoption pay and leave](#)

› [GOV.UK — Shared parental leave and pay](#)

This template is provided in good faith and for general information — it is not legal advice. Adapt it to your organisation and, where your sector carries specific legal requirements, have the finished document reviewed by a qualified adviser. The live version at <https://trainedteam.com/templates/adoption-leave-policy> is kept current; this file is a snapshot.