A GUIDE TO FAMILY LEAVE AND PAY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

INTRODUCTION

This guide is intended for all employees who are considering starting a family or expecting a child. Although it refers throughout to pregnancy, and maternity leave and pay, many of the principles also apply to adoption. All entitlements to maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental and unpaid parental leave – referred to collectively as family leave – apply equally to same-sex couples and regardless of marital status.

The guide provides an overview of the processes relating to maternity that you are legally required to follow and of your entitlements to leave and pay. It supplements, but does not replace the full guidance provided on the University website: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/

The guide is also intended to support you to think about the way in which your working life may change during and after a pregnancy or adoption, to consider your different options during and on return from leave, and to plan accordingly.

You can read the guide as a whole or use it to find the answers to any specific questions you may have. You are also strongly encouraged to speak with your line manager or supervisor, departmental administrator or HR representative, to discuss your individual circumstances.

You may also wish to speak to other parents, as it can be a helpful way to begin to formulate your thoughts and consider your options, particularly as your feelings may change as your pregnancy progresses or once you give birth. Some departments offer a maternity buddying scheme; where there is no formal scheme in place, your departmental administrator or HR representative may be able to put you in touch with other women in the department who have recently returned from maternity leave and are willing to share their experiences.

Calculating your ‘expected week of childbirth’

In this guide we refer to your ‘expected week of childbirth’ (EWC). This is the week, beginning on the Sunday, in which your baby is expected to be born. For example, if your baby was due on Friday 1 November, your EWC would begin on (Sunday) 27 October. If your due date falls on a Sunday then your due date and EWC are the same. This date is the first thing you need to calculate as all other dates relating to your leave, pay and return are based on this.

The Personnel Services website has a maternity calculator to help you work out your EWC and other important maternity dates. It also provides a full summary of family leave-related terminology and a timeline of key dates.

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/maternity/
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YOUR ENTITLEMENTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Do I have to tell my manager that I’m pregnant?

In order to be eligible for maternity leave, you must notify your department of your pregnancy no later than the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth (EWC). This is known as the ‘qualifying week’. Your partner must also notify their employer by this date if they wish to take paternity leave.

The University provides a Maternity Leave Plan to use to collect the necessary information relating to your employment and proposed maternity leave period. If you complete this fully with your department, by the qualifying week, this will ensure that the notification requirements are met. You can download the form at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/maternity/before/

Your healthcare provider (usually your GP or midwife) will provide you with a MATB1 form sometime around the 25th week of pregnancy. This gives proof that you are pregnant. You should ask for a further copy of this form if your partner may wish to take paternity leave.

Although the qualifying week is the latest date for notification of your pregnancy, both you and your department will benefit if you feel able to share the news earlier. This will allow your department to support your health and welfare, and for you to be able to work together to plan ahead and make arrangements for your leave period and return to work. This is discussed in more detail in later sections.

How much maternity leave can I take?

All women are entitled to take up to 52 weeks’ maternity leave, although you may decide to take less. The only legal requirement is that you take a minimum of two weeks’ leave immediately following the birth of your baby.

You can decide to start your maternity leave on any date from the beginning of the 11th week before your EWC, provided that you give the necessary notification described above. Once you have given notification, you can change your intended leave start date as long as you give your department 28 days’ notice.

Once you have provided notice of the intended start date of your leave, your department will in turn notify you of the date on which the leave will end. Your department will normally assume that you will take 52 weeks’ leave, unless you inform them of your intention to take less. If you already know how much leave you wish to take, you should indicate this in your maternity leave plan. You have the right to change your mind at a later date, provided that you give at least eight weeks’ notice.

If you are absent from work with a pregnancy-related illness in the four weeks before your EWC, or if you give birth prematurely before your intended start date, your maternity leave
will start automatically. If this should be the case, you should notify your department as soon as is practically possible.

“I gave birth two months prematurely. I was on annual leave leading up to maternity leave at the time. I emailed my department to ask them what I should do about starting my maternity leave and they sorted everything for me. It turned out to be all be straightforward.”

How much will I be paid?

The University Contractual Maternity Pay Scheme offers generous maternity pay to all eligible employees. In order to be eligible, at the qualifying week you must:

• hold a current contract of employment with the University; and
• have at least 26 weeks' continuous service with the University, as an employee; and
• provide your department with the correct notification of your intention to take leave; and
• intend to return to work for a minimum of three months (or for the remaining duration of your contract, if less than three months) following your maternity leave.

If you meet these requirements and your contract of employment will continue throughout the entire period of proposed maternity leave, you are eligible to receive:

• up to 26 weeks' full pay; followed by
• up to 13 weeks' statutory maternity pay (SMP); followed by
• up to 13 weeks' unpaid leave.

If you later decide not to return to work you will be required to pay back the enhanced contractual element of your maternity pay. You will be able to keep any SMP (see box below).

If you do not qualify for contractual maternity pay, for example because you do not intend to return to work after the birth of your baby, you may be entitled to SMP.

If your employment with the University ends (e.g. due to redundancy or the end of a fixed-term contract) before the beginning of your maternity leave, you will not be entitled to contractual maternity pay. However, if you will still be employed after the qualifying week you may still be eligible for SMP provided that you meet the other qualifying criteria.

If your contract ends during your maternity leave period, then - if you have engaged in efforts to seek suitable alternative work and would, if work was available, wish to continue in employment after your maternity leave - you will be eligible for the contractual maternity pay scheme but your entitlement to enhanced pay will end at your contract end date. You may still be entitled to SMP after this date.
For further information on these qualifying criteria, please read the full guidance ([www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/maternity/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/maternity/)) and speak to your HR representative or departmental administrator.

**Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP)**

Under UK legislation, employees are entitled to SMP, provided that you:

- earn above the National Insurance lower earnings limit;
- give the correct notice;
- give proof that you’re pregnant;
- have worked for your employer continuously for at least 26 weeks up to (and including) the 15th week before the EWC.

SMP is paid for up to 39 weeks at 90% of your average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first 6 weeks, followed by a set rate, or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks.

To check the latest rates of SMP, go to: [www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave/pay](http://www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave/pay)

If you do not qualify for SMP, you may be entitled to claim up to 39 weeks’ Maternity Allowance (MA), from Jobcentre Plus. Payroll will issue an SMP1 form to any woman who is not entitled to SMP and this will give information on how to claim MA.

During maternity leave you will be paid in exactly the same way as when you are at work. Your pay slip will be sent to your department (unless you already have an alternative arrangement in place) and you can ask for it to be forwarded to your home address.

**Can my partner take leave?**

If you are the partner of an expectant mother you are entitled to take up to two weeks’ leave during the first 56 days following the birth in order to spend time with your family. The University’s enhanced contractual scheme entitles eligible fathers/partners to take this leave at the rate of full pay. To be eligible for the University’s paternity leave and pay schemes you must:

- have been employed by the University for at least 26 weeks by the end of the qualifying week;
- continue to hold a contract of employment with the University for the whole period of the leave; and
- have, or expect to have, the main responsibility (apart from the birth mother) for bringing up the child.

You are required to notify your department of your intention to take paternity leave no later than the 15th week before the EWC. For full information see: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/paternity/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/paternity/)
**Can I share my leave with my partner?**

The shared parental leave (SPL) scheme allows mothers to bring their maternity leave to an end at any time except during the two weeks immediately following the birth of their child, and convert their remaining leave and pay entitlement into shared parental leave and pay which they can then share with their partner. The eligibility criteria can be complicated to understand but the Government provides a calculator to help you work out your leave entitlements: [www.gov.uk/pay-leave-for-parents](http://www.gov.uk/pay-leave-for-parents)

SPL offers a great deal of flexibility in the way that you take leave. Parents can take leave together or at different times; and in continuous blocks of time or, subject to agreement with your employer, discontinuous blocks. Even if only one partner qualifies for SPL, it may be possible for you to use the scheme to facilitate more flexible working patterns after your child is born.

In common with its contractual maternity pay scheme, the University has an enhanced contractual shared parental pay (ShPP) scheme through which eligible employees may be eligible to share up to a maximum of 24 weeks’ full pay and up to a further 13 weeks’ statutory ShPP.

For full details of eligibility and the notification required, and examples of how SPL and ShPP can be shared, see: [www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/spl/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/spl/)

**What will happen to my pension while I’m on leave?**

If you are in a University pension scheme, your normal employee contributions will continue to be deducted at the appropriate rate while you are on family leave on full and statutory pay. The University will also continue to make its contributions at the appropriate rate. While you are on unpaid leave, no contributions will be made by either you or the University.

When you return to work, you may choose to make up any unpaid or reduced pension contributions. The Pensions Office ([www.admin.ox.ac.uk/finance/epp/pensions/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/finance/epp/pensions/)) will be able to advise you on your individual situation.

During the whole period of leave you are entitled to receive all other contractual benefits with the exception of remuneration. This includes all non-cash benefits such as childcare vouchers.

**Will I still be entitled to annual leave?**

You will continue to accrue annual leave (including bank holidays and fixed closure days) throughout your family leave period. Any arrangements for taking annual leave should be discussed and agreed with your manager or supervisor in the usual way. While they will seek
to accommodate your wishes, they have the right to ask you to make annual leave arrangements to fit with operational requirements.

Normally, you are not permitted to carry over more than five days’ annual leave from one year to the next. Therefore, you may be asked to take any remaining annual leave from the current year before you begin your maternity leave or immediately on your return to work.

You may wish to use some of your accrued leave to prolong your period of paid leave or support your return to work, for example, by taking leave to work on a part-time basis (but on full pay) for the first few months. This can be discussed with your department as part of the process of completing your maternity leave plan.

You may also find it helpful to retain some annual leave to allow you to take time off to look after your child should they be ill, or to support them to settle into nursery, as otherwise you will need to take this as unpaid leave.

“I was unaware of my maternity leave entitlement and that bank holidays were accrued during maternity leave but my administrator explained this to me.”

YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY

What health and safety regulations are there during pregnancy?

The University is required to protect the health and safety of all employees at work and as an employee you also have a responsibility for your own health and safety. Once you have informed your department that you are pregnant, the University must carry out a specific risk assessment, paying particular attention to risks that could affect the health and safety of you or your child.

Some types of work, for example if you lift heavy loads, stand for long periods of time, or are exposed to toxic substances, pose particular risks. You are strongly encouraged to inform your manager, departmental administrator or HR representative, in confidence, that you are pregnant as soon as you can so that any risks can be assessed and decisions made, in consultation with you, about your work environment.

If a significant health and safety risk is identified, the University is required to follow a series of steps to ensure that you are not exposed to that risk. This might mean temporarily adjusting your working conditions or hours; offering you suitable alternative work; or suspending you from work on full pay. There is further information at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/uohs/at-work/a-z/mothers/

Can I take time off work for antenatal appointments?

All pregnant employees are entitled to paid time off to attend antenatal appointments. Antenatal care is not restricted to medical examinations. It could, for example, include
parenting classes as long as your registered medical practitioner, midwife or health visitor advises these for you.

With the exception of the very first antenatal appointment, departments are entitled to ask you to provide an appointment card or some other document showing that an appointment has been made.

Prospective fathers (or a mother’s partner) are entitled to unpaid time off to attend up to two antenatal appointments. If your partner wishes to accompany you to any further appointments, this should be requested as annual leave.

What happens if I’m ill?

You may experience pregnancy-related symptoms that make you feel unwell and make it hard to be at work. If any of these symptoms affect your work then please discuss them with your manager as soon as possible. This may mean that you inform your manager about your pregnancy earlier than you had intended, but whilst you are at work our priority is the health and wellbeing of you and your baby.

If you are absent from work due to illness during pregnancy, you will normally be able to take sick leave, as you would under other circumstances. The exception to this is if your illness is related wholly or partly to your pregnancy, and occurs during the four weeks before your EWC, in which case your maternity leave will begin automatically.

If you are too ill to return to work at the end of your maternity leave, whether related to childbirth or not, you should notify your department and provide them with a medical certificate. You will be considered to have returned to work, and the period of illness will be treated as sick leave.

Can I take time off to breastfeed?

If you will still be breastfeeding or intend to express milk after your return to work, you should notify your department so that a risk assessment can be carried out.

There is no statutory right to time off work for breastfeeding mothers, however, the University advises departments to be flexible in supporting mothers to do so wherever possible, for example, by allowing additional breaks or adjusting working patterns.

Your department should support you to have access to suitable facilities such as a room where you can be private and space in a refrigerator to store expressed milk.
**What happens if I miscarry?**

In the unfortunate event of your baby being born dead before 25 weeks’ gestation this is classified as miscarriage and, whilst you will be entitled to compassionate and sick leave, you are not eligible for maternity leave or pay.

After 25 weeks, if your baby is stillborn, you will be entitled to maternity leave and pay, and your leave will start automatically.

**PLANNING YOUR LEAVE AND RETURN**

**How much time should I take off?**

"My administrator laid out all the options for me such as part-time working, and using accrued bank holidays and annual leave. She went through my contract with me which was useful. It was all very clear and she was very supportive."

Everyone feels differently about going on maternity leave. You may wish to go on leave for a year and have minimal contact with the workplace, or you may have concerns about what will happen to your work while you are on leave and want to return sooner. When it comes to deciding on things such as how much maternity leave you want to take, what contact with work you want to have during your time off, and whether you want to return to work in a phased manner or flexibly, there are no right or wrong answers.

Some departments offer a ‘buddying’ scheme to put you in contact with someone who can offer support and advice, and share their experience of balancing the demands of family and work. Even if your department does not offer a formal scheme, your departmental administrator or HR representative may be able to help put you in touch with someone else who has recent experience of maternity leave.

Once you have reflected on your own feelings and circumstances, it is helpful to have a meeting with your line manager or supervisor, and departmental administrator or HR representative in order to discuss your wishes and concerns, and draw up a mutually agreed plan to address these. If you are concerned about the impact that taking family leave will have on your career progression, consider in advance with your manager or supervisor how this might be minimised. It may be helpful to keep a brief written record of your discussions, to avoid any later misunderstandings.

"Before going on maternity leave I was offered support from colleagues in the Personnel team to create my maternity plan and calculate the leave period. I was able to follow this and stopped working on the pre-planned date. Since then I have been in regular contact with the Personnel team and they have forwarded payslips to my home address each month. More recently, I have had the opportunity to meet with my line manager to discuss my return to work and KIT days. This has also..."
been helpful and will enable me to make childcare arrangements in plenty of time before my return to work.”

What contact will I have with work while I’m on leave?

Before you go on maternity leave, you should discuss and agree arrangements for staying in touch with your department. By law, both you and your employer are entitled to make ‘reasonable contact’ with each other.

There are certain things that your department is obliged to communicate to you, for example if there are significant changes in the workplace that will affect you on your return. But beyond that it is very much up to you to agree with your manager what ‘reasonable contact’ you wish to have, how it will happen (e.g. by phone, by email, in person), how often, and who will initiate the contact.

There is a section in the Maternity Leave Plan for you to note your preferences in this respect.

Can I work while I’m on leave?

While you are on maternity leave you may, by agreement with your department, do a maximum of ten days' work - known as Keeping in Touch (KIT) days – without ending your leave or losing any maternity pay. KIT days can be used at any stage during your maternity leave except during the first two weeks after your baby is born. KIT days can only be used during maternity leave and cannot be carried forward to a period of shared parental leave.

If you choose to use the shared parental leave scheme, you and your partner are each entitled to twenty SPL in Touch (SPLIT) days, by agreement with your employer. This is in addition to any KIT days that you may have already taken.

If you work more than your permitted KIT or SPLIT days, you will lose the SMP or ShPP to which you were entitled for the whole week(s) in which you have worked, even if you just work for a few hours.

You can use your KIT and SPLIT days for any activity which would ordinarily be classed as work under your contract. Many women find them particularly useful to keep up to date with changes in their office or field of work, for example, undertaking a training activity or attending team meetings.

Any work may only take place by mutual agreement. Your department cannot require you to work during your leave if you do not want to, nor do you have the right to work KIT or SPLIT days if your department does not agree to them.

“During my maternity leave, I found the keeping-in-touch days very useful. I came back to the office, talked to people, attended project meetings, and caught up with the work in progress. I feel that I stayed in contact with work, and was
Any amount of work carried out on a KIT or SPLIT day counts as one full day. For example, if you came to work for a one-hour training session and did no other work that day, you would still have used one of your KIT or SPLIT days.

The hours to be worked and the pay for those hours must be agreed in advance with your department. It is suggested that you should be paid the equivalent of your normal hourly rate for the hours you work on the day(s) in question. For example, during the period that you are being paid at the rate of full pay, no further payment would be due; while you are receiving SMP only, it would be appropriate for your pay to be made up to the equivalent of full pay for the hours worked.

With the exception of KIT or SPLIT days, you are not allowed to work while you are on leave. If you wish to have greater involvement with your work than the ‘in touch’ days allow, you should discuss with your manager or supervisor whether an early return to work, possibly phased or on reduced hours, would be more appropriate. Remember that apart from the first two weeks of compulsory leave, it is entirely up to you to determine how much maternity leave you wish to take and that SPL offers flexibility in the way that you share leave with your partner.

What will happen to my work while I’m on leave?

Before you go on maternity leave, you should discuss and agree with your manager or supervisor arrangements for how your work will be covered in your absence, and how best to prepare for this. For example, you may want to arrange handover meetings or prepare briefing documents. Discussions should begin at an early stage to allow for the recruitment of a maternity cover post, if applicable. It is your manager’s responsibility to ensure that necessary arrangements are in place.

The arrangements will depend on the nature of your post and the operational needs of the department. For academic and research posts the University recommends that a cover post should be recruited or a contract extension equivalent to the period of leave taken be arranged where there is a clear operational need and it would be feasible to do so. For further guidance see the Framework for the management of family leave for research and academic staff www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/framework/
How should I manage my return to work?

“At quite short notice my husband’s job situation changed. I spoke with my department and came back to work part-time using my annual leave. It gave my husband time to make the necessary arrangements to work part-time himself so we can share the childcare.”

You may wish to support your transition back into the workplace by returning to work gradually at less than full-time hours, for example, by returning initially for four days a week. If you wish to do this, speak to your department to see whether it would be possible to agree reduced hours at a pro rata rate of pay for a period or use your accrued annual leave.

Even if you don’t want to reduce your hours, you may want to explore the possibility of other forms of flexible working such as working from home or working staggered hours to help you adjust to new childcare arrangements and routines. If this is the case, you should discuss the possibility with your manager or supervisor before you begin your maternity leave. Departments are asked to consider requests favourably, but any arrangement will depend on the operational needs of the department.

“As a Research Assistant I have worked flexibly since my maternity leave. I discussed this possibility with my supervisors in advance of going on leave but didn’t make the final decision until after my baby was born and I was thinking about my return.”

If you wish to change your hours of work on a permanent basis, you have a legal right to request flexible working. Your department must give careful consideration to your request but may not able to accommodate it. There is further information at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/flexible/

You should also think about what handover meetings, training or re-induction sessions you might need to help you return to work as smoothly as possible. You might find it helpful to arrange a meeting with your manager or supervisor shortly before, or immediately on, your return to work to discuss your needs.

Do allow yourself sufficient time to readjust to the workplace and get back up to speed with your work. You may find it helpful to set manageable goals for the first few weeks and months, to give yourself a clear focus, and to arrange regular meetings with your manager or supervisor to discuss any issues or concerns.

“I am convinced that having a clear plan of action for my research helped me to be more productive on my return than I otherwise would have been.”

If you are a researcher or academic, the University’s Returning Carers’ Fund makes small grants to support your return to research. For information on how to apply see: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/gender/carers-fund
What if I change my mind about when I want to return to work?

Your feelings about work or your personal circumstances may change either during your pregnancy or once your child is born. If this should be the case, speak to your manager or supervisor, departmental administrator or HR representative as soon as possible to explore alternative arrangements regarding your return to work.

If you decide that you wish to return to work before the end of your agreed maternity leave period, you must notify your department eight weeks in advance of the new date.

Similarly, if you had initially planned an early return to work, but decide to take a longer period of leave, you must give your department notice of this new, later date at least eight weeks before the initially agreed date.

“If discussion with HR, I extended my maternity leave by two weeks so that my baby was a little bit older and I got the chance to settle her into nursery.”

If you decide that you do not wish to return to work you must give your department the notice of termination required by your contract of employment, although it is helpful to give as much notice as possible. If you do not return to work for at least three months following your maternity leave period, you will no longer be eligible for the University Contractual Maternity Pay Scheme. You will still be entitled to keep your SMP but will be required to pay back the enhanced contractual element of your maternity pay.

What are my employment rights on return to work?

If you are returning to work within the first 26 weeks of maternity leave, you are entitled to return to the same job in which you were employed before you went on leave, on terms and conditions that are the same, or no less favourable than those that would have applied had you not been absent on maternity leave (unless a redundancy situation has arisen or a fixed-term contract has come to an end).

If you are returning to work after more than 26 weeks’ leave, you will normally return to the same job you were in before you went on leave. However, if there is a reason other than redundancy which means that this is not reasonably practicable, you are entitled to return to a different job which is both suitable for you and appropriate in the circumstances, on terms and conditions that are no less favourable than they would have been had you not been absent.

If you are made redundant while you are on maternity leave, your department must keep you fully informed of the consultation process, as if you were at work, and you have the same rights as if you were working.
CHILDCARE

How do I arrange childcare?

You are advised to begin making childcare arrangements early, and to think about alternatives. Many nurseries and childminders in Oxford and the wider Oxfordshire area have long waiting lists meaning that you may not get a place at your first choice nursery.

The University has a number of its own nurseries and also University places at private nurseries - the highest number of places of any university in the country - however, there is still usually a waiting list for baby places.

To help meet the costs of childcare for all eligible parents, the University offers a salary sacrifice scheme for payment of nursery fees at its own nurseries. If your child attends a private nursery or another type of a registered childcare provider there is a tax-free scheme which can give you a considerable saving on childcare costs. For further information see the Childcare Services website.

The University’s Childcare Services team aims to support all parents with their childcare requirements. For more information on University nursery places and financing your childcare see: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/childcare/

The University subscribes to My Family Care, an external provider of advice about family issues and emergency back-up care. My Family Care operate a Nanny Share scheme and can offer a customised Care Search. For further information see the box below.

There is information on childcare options in the Oxfordshire area at: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/childcare

What if my child is sick?

It is important to note that caring for a sick child does not count as sick leave.

You are entitled to take time off during normal working hours to deal with emergency care for a dependent. Your department may grant you paid leave, from half a day to no more than two days and to a maximum of five days per year, to enable you to make arrangements for continued care.

Such leave is only intended to cover genuine emergencies, not the routine illnesses of young children. It also does not cover care that you know about in an advance, such as medical appointments. If you need additional time off to care for a sick child, this will normally be unpaid or may be taken as annual leave. As it is not unusual for babies and young children to be ill, you may wish to save some of your accrued annual leave to help you to deal with such situations.
The University subscribes to My Family Care, an external service provider which can help you find emergency childcare. See the box below for further details.

Can I take time off work to be with my child?

As a parent, you have a right to take unpaid time off work through the formal, unpaid parental leave scheme to look after your child or to make arrangements for your child's welfare. You can use it to spend more time with your children and strike a better balance between your work and family commitments. To qualify for parental leave you must have one year's continuous service with the University at the date from which you wish to take leave and your child must be under the age of 18. You do not have to be living with your child in order to qualify.

Each parent can take a total of 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave for each child, up to a maximum of four weeks in any year. Parental leave must be taken in blocks of a week. If you choose to take a block of less than a week, this will be treated as though it were a full week's leave. You must give your department at least 21 days’ notice of your intention to take leave.

My Family Care

My Family Care is a benefit the University provides for all employees, offering access to emergency back-up childcare and adultcare, a 'speak to an expert' phone line and a wide range of guides and webinars through a website called the Work + Family space. Registration is free, but you need to cover the cost of any back-up care that you book.

Once you've registered with My Family Care you can arrange telephone consultations with a range of experts, to help you with your work+family challenges. Examples of the sorts of topics covered include:

- Finding the right type of childcare
- Child development issues
- Combining work and caring responsibilities

You can explore the services available at:  
[www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/benefits/family/mfc/](http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/benefits/family/mfc/)

FIXED-TERM CONTRACTS AND EXTERNALLY-FUNDED POSTS

What will happen if my contract ends while I’m on leave?

The University has strict procedures that must be followed at the end of a fixed-term contract, and these apply equally if your contract is due to end during your maternity leave period. If this is the case, you should familiarise yourself with the procedures
(www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/end/red/endftc/) and discuss your plans for the future with your supervisor and/or departmental administrator. This includes notifying your department whether you wish to seek suitable alternative employment within the University.

If you do not wish to seek alternative employment and would not return to work if suitable employment were available, you will not be entitled to any contractual maternity pay, since eligibility is contingent upon the employee wishing to continue to be employed by the University. However, you would still be eligible for SMP if you meet the eligibility criteria. If you seek redeployment, but it is not possible to offer you a post, then your rights to contractual maternity pay will end on the same day that your contract expires, although you will continue to receive any remaining statutory maternity pay to which you are entitled.

**My post is externally funded – how does that affect me?**

If you are a contract researcher in an externally-funded post, this does not affect your rights to maternity leave and maternity pay as an employee of the University. It may, however, affect your options on return to work.

As the rules of each funder are different and your individual circumstances are unique, we encourage you to discuss your questions or concerns with your supervisor, PI or administrator. They will contact the funding body to determine their rules.

Your PI will need to plan how best to meet the needs of the research project during your absence and may wish to recruit to a maternity cover for your post whilst you are on leave. In some circumstances it is possible for the grant to be extended to cover your period of maternity leave, but there may be reasons, including funding body rules, which mean this won’t be possible.

If you are thinking of returning to work part-time after your leave you should also explore this early on since not all funding bodies will accommodate this.

“My department’s research grant manager contacted the funding body to discuss my options. As a result I was able to suspend my fellowship and grant for a year whilst I took my maternity leave.”

While your department will work with you to minimise the impact of any family leave on your career, it may not always be operationally possible to balance your needs with those of your wider team and/or the research project on which you are employed. However, decisions about how work will be covered in your absence should not be influenced by financial considerations. The *Framework for the management of family leave for research and academic staff* sets out the process that should be followed to reach such decisions (www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/framework/).
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

University policies and support

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family
Provides full details of the University’s policies and provisions for maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental and unpaid parental leave.

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/parentsandcarers/
Information for Parents and Carers, including information about flexible working options

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/childcare
Provides information on the University’s nurseries and childcare support schemes, and on different forms of financial support for childcare.

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/staffinfo/benefits/family/mfc
My Family Care provides guidance and support for carers, including a ‘speak to an expert’ phone line, and a service to find emergency back-up care.

www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/gender/carers-fund
Information on the University’s Returning Carers Fund, a small grants scheme to support academic and research staff on their return to work

Other sources of information and support for parents

www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/information-parents
Oxfordshire County Council’s website provides information, guidance and advice for parents on a range of issues, including childcare, schools, activities and support services.

www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting/pregnancy-birth
UK Government guidance on your rights and entitlements to maternity, paternity and shared parental leave and pay.

www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby
A guide from the NHS on getting pregnant, being pregnant and caring for your new baby.

www.nct.org.uk
Comprehensive information from the National Childbirth Trust on all aspects of pregnancy, birth and parenting.

Pregnancy, maternity and returning to work: an employee’s guide, a booklet by the NCT and Working Families.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/rights-at-work/flexible-working/flexible-working-what-is-it
Information and advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau on requesting flexible working arrangements.