

# Maternity Checklist & Guidance for Managers



## Feeling Valued/ Supportive Signals

TU Dublin is actively invested in embedding a Culture that Cares, characterised by empathy, support, and a commitment to creating an environment where individuals feel seen and supported. As a line manager you have an important role to play when a staff member is going on maternity leave and in particular, when they are returning to work.

Research revealed that one of the critical factors in determining how women experienced the transition back into work after maternity leave was the perception that management had on maternity leave and this transition in a woman's career. Where line managers and/or the organisation viewed the maternity leave as a brief interlude in the individual's long-term career, the females often reported a positive transition back after leave. In contrast, in organisations where management viewed maternity leave as a major disruption, negative experiences were more common.

A positive experience of the return to work is often preceded by a signal from the organisation or the line manager that the employee concerned was valued.

## Considerations for Line Manager

### Open Dialogue

- Initiate a conversation as soon as pregnancy is disclosed
- Create a psychologically safe place
- Career conversations should take place at significant stages, e.g.,
  - prior to maternity leave commencing
  - prior to the return to work
  - during the settling in period

### Planning Early

- Plan early for the transition and handover if backfilling
- Work with your staff member from early on to support seamless transition before and after leave
- Do not make promises you can't keep!

### Supportive Transition

- Be aware of the emotional and psychological adjustment of the return to work – the first few weeks may be difficult
- Signal support through career chats and asking, 'how are you settling back?' or 'how can I support you?'
- Be aware of childcare plans that are in place and if adjustments are needed

### Unconscious Bias

- Don't make assumptions about career/family priorities
- Be aware of ruthless prioritisation: less time in office does not indicate reduced motivation or productivity
- Don't assume that pregnant women and returners are delicate beings!

# Checklist for Line Manager - BEFORE Maternity Leave

Action	Guidance	Tick
<p>Make sure your staff member is aware of the <b>maternity policy</b>.</p> <p>Discuss with her when and how she wishes to share the news.</p>	<p>All the information about leave and pay can be found in the University's <a href="#">Maternity Leave policy</a>. There is also a handy <b>Guide for Expectant Mothers</b> that will help your staff member prepare for what's next.</p> <p>All pregnant employees are entitled to maternity leave regardless of length of service or hours worked.</p> <p>Fathers/partners of mothers are entitled to paternity leave following the birth of a child.</p>	
<p><b>Supports while pregnant</b></p> <p>Carry out a risk assessment as soon as possible to make sure your staff member is working safely during pregnancy.</p> <p><b>Employee Assistance Service (EAS)</b></p>	<p>You or the pregnant staff member should contact <a href="mailto:shw@tudublin.ie">shw@tudublin.ie</a> to request a <b>Pregnancy Risk Assessment</b>. This should be done as soon as the staff member confirms their pregnancy. As part of the risk assessment the Health and Safety Office will advise if any modifications are required to the work activities during pregnancy.</p> <p>For more information see: <a href="#">Pregnancy and Breastfeeding</a></p> <p>Remind your staff member that support is available through the: <a href="#">Employee Assistance Service</a></p>	
<p><b>Official Notice of Pregnancy</b></p> <p>Ask your staff member to <b>notify you and HR</b> in writing that she is pregnant, confirming due date, and when she would like her maternity leave to start.</p>	<p>The staff members should a medical certificate confirming their pregnancy, their due date and preferred maternity leave start date to: <a href="mailto:leaveandbenefits@TUDublin.ie">leaveandbenefits@TUDublin.ie</a></p> <p>This information needs to be submitted at least 4 weeks in advance of the date the leave is due to start.</p> <p>Maternity Benefit applications need to be submitted to the Department of Social Protection at least 6 weeks in advance of the due date. This can be done online through <a href="#">MyWelfare.ie</a>.</p> <p>Entitlements to paid leave and unpaid leave are outlined in the <a href="#">Maternity Leave Policy</a>.</p>	

# Checklist for Line Manager - BEFORE Maternity Leave

Action	Guidance	Tick
<b>Supports after Pregnancy Loss</b>	See the section in this document called 'Line Manager Guidance: Supporting an Employee Through Pregnancy-Loss'	
<b>Maternity Related Appointments</b>  Pregnant employees are entitled to reasonable paid time off during working hours for antenatal or post-natal care.	Members of staff should notify you of the date/time of appointment(s) as soon as possible, but the notice should be at least two weeks before the appointment.	
<b>Annual Leave</b>  Agree when any <b>outstanding annual leave</b> should be used.	Members of staff continue to accrue annual leave during maternity leave. Discuss taking any outstanding leave before maternity leave commences and consider how accrued leave might be taken before returning to work. Accrued leave could be taken as a block at the end of maternity leave or used to help your staff member settle back into work gradually.	
<b>Keeping in Touch</b>  Discuss and agree how much contact your staff member would like when she is on maternity leave and how you will communicate (work email/ personal email/text etc).	Ask the staff member if they would like to be contacted while they are on leave and what they would like to be contacted about, e.g., information about team or University updates or events .  Confirm how they would like to be contact and ensure you have up to date contact information. Remember that staff out on maternity leave <b>need to be notified of any open roles during their maternity leave.</b>	
<b>Maternity Cover</b>  Consider if the post needs to be/can be covered during the maternity leave period.  If a maternity cover will not be in place, agree which elements of work need to continue in your staff member's absence and how these will be covered.	If you need a maternity cover post, the usual recruitment practices will apply, and the post will need to go through the University approval mechanism.	

## Checklist for Line Manager - RETURN to work from Maternity Leave

Action	Guidance	Tick
<p><b>Return-to-work Meeting</b></p> <p>Arrange a return-to-work meeting, ideally <b>4 weeks prior to the return date</b>.</p> <p>Having this conversation and documenting what is agreed in a <b>Return-to-Work Plan</b>, will help you and your staff member to plan for a successful and effective return to work . See template below.</p> <p>It is advisable that careful consideration is given to workload i.e teaching loads, new tasks, meetings etc during the first few weeks back at work so staff member does not find herself overloaded on her initial return.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree how your staff member will be reintroduced to her work. Make sure she is aware of any <b>administrative or organisational changes</b> that have taken place in her absence.</li> <li>• Discuss any <b>changes to working hours and patterns</b> that may be needed and set review dates to check in with her to ensure the working pattern is working for her and for the organisation.</li> <li>• Discuss with your staff member whether she would like to do a <b>phased return to work</b> – use accrued holiday or a period of reduced hours working.</li> <li>• Discuss <b>appropriate workload</b> for the first couple of weeks or semester (academics), e.g. reduced contract hours, discuss teaching timetable and course delivery.</li> <li>• <b>Confirm access</b> to get into place of work, IDs and access to systems, a desk etc. and inform payroll and HR</li> <li>• Discuss if any other supports or adjustments are needed.</li> </ul>	
<p>If your staff member indicates she wishes to <b>continue breastfeeding or expressing</b>, please advise her to contact the relevant HR Business Partner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior to returning to work following maternity leave, those who intend to take breastfeeding breaks must notify Human Resources at least four weeks in advance of their return. The arrangements for, and the legal entitlement to, such breaks is outlined in the <a href="#">Maternity Leave Policy</a>.</li> <li>• Where there is a designated rest facility, access to same for the purposes of breastfeeding or expressing milk is facilitated by the Safety Health &amp; Welfare Office and is available to both staff members and students on request.</li> <li>• The first-aid rooms also serve as a rest facility for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers. They are each equipped with a sink, nursing chair, fridge and steriliser.</li> </ul> <p>See <a href="#">here</a> for more information.</p>	



## Checklist for Line Manager - RETURN to work from Maternity Leave

Action	Guidance	Tick
Your staff member may indicate her desire to explore <b>flexible working options</b>	<p>If a flexi-leave arrangement is requested by your staff member, you need to have a conversation together to explore possible options that may be available. You may also discuss this with your HR Business Partner.</p> <p>While flexible working is not an automatic entitlement and may be declined where there is a clear business reason, all requests must be considered carefully and fairly.</p>	
<b>Day one</b> of return-to-work	<p>Be there to welcome her on the first day back and brief her on any changes in the workplace.</p> <p>Go through the <b>Return-to-Work Plan</b> that was discussed and agreed at the return-to-work meeting, so she can resume her responsibilities and settle back into work as seamlessly as possible. Check to see if any adjustments to the plan are needed.</p>	
<b>Provide ongoing support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange regular check-ins to see how your staff member is settling back in and discuss any adjustments or supports that might be needed.</li> <li>• Ensure the employee knows about any support the organisation gives to employees. See <a href="#">Staff Supports</a> and the <a href="#">Infographic Poster with Staff Supports</a>.</li> <li>• Remind her of the <a href="#">Employee Assistance Service</a>, should she need it.</li> <li>• Ensure she knows about leave provision e.g. parental leave and time off for dependants, as mentioned on the next page.</li> </ul>	

## Checklist for Line Manager - RETURN to work from Maternity Leave

Action	Guidance	Tick
<p>Familiarise yourself with relevant leave policies and ensure you share with your team member.</p> <p>Your local HR Business Partner will be happy to provide advice on these policies. You can <a href="#">find the policies here</a>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Parental Leave - Staff with one year's service are entitled to 26 weeks (130 days) of unpaid leave in relation to a child. The leave can be taken in blocks or in (half) days per week. The leave has to be taken before the child is 16 years of age.</li><li>• Parents Leave - Parents of children under the age of 2 years, can avail of 9 weeks Parents Leave. While this leave is unpaid, employees should apply for Parent's Benefit from the Department of Social Protection.</li><li>• Leave for Medical Care - Staff members who need to take time off work to deal with serious medical care for a child or other relevant person like a family member, can avail of 5 days unpaid medical care leave in 12 months. The leave is available to both parents and carers.</li><li>• Carer's Leave - is unpaid leave from work to allow staff to provide full-time care and attention to a care-recipient who needs continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day. To avail of Carers Leave, a staff member must have applied for, and have received confirmation of, Carers Benefit from the Department of Social Protection. There are some useful supports in the <a href="#">Carers Support Hub</a> for both employees and managers.</li></ul>	





## Manager Guidance: Supporting an Employee Through Pregnancy Loss

Pregnancy loss is a deeply personal and often devastating experience. As with any bereavement, it can feel uncomfortable to approach the subject, you may worry about saying the wrong thing, prompting an emotional response, or not knowing how the person will react. However, acknowledging the loss and showing that you care is incredibly important.

### Key Principles for Support

- **Acknowledge the Loss:**  
Even a simple, sincere message such as “I’m so sorry for your loss. I can’t imagine how difficult this must be for you” can make a meaningful difference. Avoiding the topic may unintentionally make the person feel isolated or unsupported.
- **Offer Compassionate Flexibility:** Everyone processes grief differently. Some may want to talk, others may prefer privacy. Some may need time off, while others may find comfort in routine. Let them guide the pace and nature of any conversations or adjustments. You can reach out to your HR Business Partner or the Leave & Benefits team if you need support.
- **Be Clear About Support Options:** Make sure the employee is aware of available support, such as:
  - [Special Leaves of Absence](#) (incl. Bereavement leave ) or [Sick Leave](#)
  - [Employee Assistance Service](#) (EAS) or counselling services
  - Adjusted duties or phased return to work
  - Time off for [medical appointments](#) or recovery
- **Maintain Confidentiality:** Respect the staff members privacy. Only share information with others on a need-to-know basis and with the staff members consent.
- **Check In:** A gentle check-in after some time has passed can show ongoing care. For example: “I just wanted to see how you’re doing and if there’s anything I can do to support you.”
- **Avoid Assumptions:** Pregnancy loss can affect people in different ways, regardless of how far along the pregnancy was or whether it was widely known. Avoid making comments that may unintentionally minimise their grief.