

Parental Leave

Guidance to all BT People

This site gives information on Parental Leave as there are extra considerations around this for managers and individuals, as the leave is covered by legislation.

In addition, the FAQ's on the next page, should help with some of the common questions that you may have.

Working parents have the statutory right to 13 weeks unpaid parental leave to care for a child up to their 5th birthday.

The above entitlement also applies to adoptive parents, for 5 years after the date of placement, or until their 18th birthday, whichever comes sooner.

For Parents of disabled children, the parental leave entitlement is now 18 weeks, which can be taken up until a child's 18th birthday.

BT's approach to parental leave is that it should be unpaid unless it falls into a category where our current paid leave policies are appropriate.

Dependants - employees are entitled to reasonable time off during working hours for matters related to dependants, such as providing assistance when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured. Most of the circumstances are already covered in BT's paid special leave provisions.

Provisions and timelines

- leave must be taken in blocks or multiples of one week
- the exception to the above is that parents of disabled children can take leave in blocks or multiples of one day
- in all cases a maximum of four weeks' parental leave in a year can be taken in respect of any individual child
- 21 days' notice must be given by the individual requesting non-urgent leave
- To postpone or delay a request the line manager must give written reasons within 7 days of receiving the request, offering an alternative date within 6 months of the original date requested
- leave cannot be postponed when the employee gives notice to take it immediately after the time the child is born or is placed with the family for adoption.

RECORDING OF PARENTAL LEAVE

Any Unpaid Leave, or leave that relates to an individuals responsibilities as a parent legally has to be recorded on the BT People System as well as local records being kept.

Employees requesting parental leave should complete the appropriate form (downloadable on the left of this screen) and forward to their line manager. The manager should then use Ask HR to create a case on the BT People System.

Parental Leave

Frequently Asked Questions

These sample Questions and Answers have been designed to assist with some common issues.

If you require further assistance, this can be found in the following policy documents [Link](#)

- [Maternity Leave](#)
- [Special Leave](#)
- or from **Accenture HR Services (formerly PeopleLine)** on - 0800 7314747

Q1 What right do I have to parental leave?

A1 Your rights are set out in [Special Leave](#). Both parents have the right to 13 weeks unpaid leave for the purpose of caring for:

- a child up to their 5th birthday;
- a child adopted for 5 years from the date of placement, or until the child's 18th birthday.
- In addition parents of children aged under 5, or placed for adoption up to 5 years before 15th December 1999, now have until 31st March 2005 to take 13 weeks parental leave.
- For parents of a disabled child, parental leave is now 18 weeks, which can be taken up to the child's 18th birthday (a disabled child is a child for whom a disability living allowance is awarded).

Q2 When can I take the leave?

A2 Clearly, some leave requests are urgent and will be dealt with very quickly. If someone eligible for parental leave would like non-urgent leave they must give their manager a minimum of 21 days' notice. The leave must be taken in blocks of a week unless it is to care for a disabled child, in which case it can be taken in days. Normally no more than 4 weeks unpaid parental leave can be taken in any 12 month period.

Q3 What happens if I have twins?

A3 Entitlement to parental leave applies to each child.

Q4 What proof will be required before I can take parental leave?

A4 It is up to an applicant's line manager to satisfy themselves that there is an entitlement to parental leave and proof such as a birth certificate may be asked for.

Q5 Can my manager delay or refuse parental leave?

A5 There is a legal entitlement to parental leave (see A1) which must be met if someone requests leave. However, in cases of non-urgent leave a line manager can require it to be postponed where the business would be unduly disrupted if it were taken. The manager must state the reason in writing no later than seven days after the employee's notice to take leave was given to him/her and specify the date that it can be taken, which must be no later than 6 months after the original date requested.

Q6 I would really like to take parental leave but can't afford to do so if it is unpaid. Why is it unpaid?

A6 Although there is no requirement under the Regulations for parental leave to be paid, there are many circumstances under BT's existing policies on special leave, both paid and unpaid, which can relate to people's responsibilities as parents, parental leave extends the policy provisions further.

Q7 I am not my child's natural father but would like parental leave to get to know him better. Am I entitled to it?

A7 This is an example of a range of similar circumstances where further advice should be sought if leave is required. Such leave would be dealt with under BT's policy on Special Leave, subject to management discretion.

Q8 Does parental leave have to be recorded?

A8 Parental leave and all paid leave lasting one week or more that relates to an individual's responsibilities as a parent (e.g. for adoption, nursing a sick relative, urgent domestic distress) and concerns a child covered by the Parental Leave Regulations must be reported to Accenture HR Services (formerly E-Peopleserve) using the downloadable forms on the left hand side of the page. Alternatively, these forms can be found on fax on demand (0800 571 516 item number 3520). This is in addition to local records.

It is the line manager's responsibility to decide whether the leave falls within these definitions.

Q9 I want some paid leave to care for my sick child. What do I do?

A9 You should discuss it with your line manager immediately. BT's special leave policies already cover leave for nursing sick relatives and urgent domestic problems. This is now supported by a legal right to reasonable time off in circumstances like this.

Q10 Under what other circumstances can I have urgent time off for my dependants?

A10 BT's special leave policies already cover a wide range of circumstances. The Employment Act provides for reasonable time off for the following circumstances:

- to provide assistance on an occasion when a dependant falls ill, gives birth or is injured or assaulted;
- to make arrangements for the provision of care for a dependant who is ill or injured in consequence of the death of a dependant ;
- because of the unexpected disruption or termination of arrangements for the care of a dependant ;
- to deal with an incident which involves a child of an employee and which occurs unexpectedly during term time.

Q11 Can you take individual days off when your child is sick?

A11 21 days notice must normally be given to apply for parental leave. Special Leave should be used to care for children who are sick and in particular the right to time off to care for dependants or emergencies would cover situations like this. This is generally unpaid leave, unless it falls within any of BT's other policies on special leave.

Q12 Can you use "parental leave" to cover school holidays or does it clearly specify what you can or can not use it for?

A12 No reason needs to be given for the leave, as there are no restrictions as to what you use your parental leave for. All parents have a right to this entitlement although an employer can ask to see evidence to confirm that the employee is the person who is legally responsible for the child. The leave needs to be taken before the child's 5th birthday, unless he or she has a disability, so cover for school holidays may not be possible.

Q13 Why is there the 21-day notice rule to apply for leave? If line managers can cope with less notice, then why have this requirement?

A13 The 21 day notice period forms part of the legislation on Parental Leave and is used by BT to provide a guide and allow managers to plan ahead. Individuals may be able to agree different timescales with their line managers if these are operationally feasible.

Q14 The new special leave arrangement seems to extend the right to parents of children who were under 5 when the law came in, and expires on 31st March 2005, so can parents of children under 10 get the leave entitlement?

A14 The Parental leave legislation was extended to cover parents with children aged under 5 on 15 December 1999. These parents have until 31 March 2005 to take their leave entitlement. It would not cover a child who was say 6 years when the legislation came in, so will not cover all children under 10.

Q15 How are pensions and other benefits affected by periods of parental leave, as it's unpaid? How about annual leave entitlement? Does parental leave contribute to your time employed for BT with respect to the calculation of pensions and any possible leaver/redundancy arrangements?

A15 Annual leave entitlement would not be affected by short periods of special leave (i.e. less than a month). Any period longer than that may mean that annual leave will be pro-rated. Similarly, any period less than 4 weeks would count towards continuous service for the calculation of any leaver payments/redundancy. During any unpaid leave, pensionable service would be adjusted to take into account any periods of unpaid leave. See the special leave policy for further details about this under the section on unpaid leave.

Q16 If someone in my team asks for parental leave next week and there is no urgent business need for them to be here, can I grant this anyway for that week?

A16 The 21 day notice period forms part of the legislation on Parental Leave and is used by BT to provide a guide and allow managers to plan ahead. However, if operationally, different timescales are feasible then this can be possible.

Again, you should discuss all such matters with your line manager immediately.

Q17 What is the financial payment?

A17 Paternity Leave consists of two weeks at basic pay rate, plus any regular allowances during this period, (overtime is not included). There is an option for up to a further two weeks unpaid leave. The paid element must be taken in blocks of one week or two consecutive weeks. The unpaid element can be taken in single days or whole weeks. Any period of unpaid leave will normally count towards service and pay progression.

Q18 Where can I find the paternity leave application form?

A18 The paternity leave application form can be found at http://humanresources.intra.bt.com/paternity_leave_procedure-link

Q19 Do I have entitlement as an adoptive father/partner of primary carer?

A19 An adoptive father or partner of the primary carer is eligible for and can request paternity leave.

Paternity Leave consists of:-

2 weeks paid Paternity Leave followed by 2 weeks unpaid leave

- Leave must be taken within 56 days of the placement of the adoptive child
- Paid Leave must be taken in 2-week periods, but unpaid can be taken as single days or week blocks.

Q20 What happens if the week I wish to take parental leave includes a bank holiday?

A20 As a full time employee you would lose 4 days pay and 1 full week from your 13 week parental leave quota.

Q21 How is my parental leave recorded if I work on a part time or reduced hours basis?

A21 In an example where an employee works 3 days a week on a part time basis they would lose 3 days pay and 1 week from their 13 week parental leave quota.

Q22 Can you use "parental leave" to cover school holidays or does it clearly specify what you can or can not use it for?

A22 No reason needs to be given for the leave, as there are no restrictions as to what you use your parental leave for. All parents have a right to this entitlement although an employer can ask to see evidence to confirm that the employee is the person who is legally responsible for the child. The leave needs to be taken before the child's 5th birthday, unless he or she has a disability, so cover for school holidays may not be possible.