

6.3 Parental Leave

A staff member who is the natural or adoptive parent of a child is entitled to avail of unpaid parental leave (ref: [Parental Leave Act 1998 and Parental Leave \(Amendment\) Act 2019](#)) for a period of up to 26 weeks in order to take care of their child. Parental leave must be taken before the child reaches the age of thirteen years (or sixteen years in the case of children with disabilities or long term illness). Staff members who are acting 'in loco parentis' of an eligible child may also avail of parental leave.

Where an adopted child is eleven or more years but less than thirteen years at the time of adoption, the parental leave must be taken within two years of the date of adoption order. Parental leave for an adopted child under eleven at time of adoption must be taken before the child is thirteen years old.

Each parent has a separate entitlement to parental leave from their job. Where qualifying parents both work in the civil service, 14 of the 26 weeks can be transferred between parents. Staff members who wish to avail of parental leave must have completed one year's continuous service.

A staff member with more than 3 months but less than one years' service can avail of parental leave at the rate of one week for each month continuous service which the staff member has completed at the time of commencement of the leave.

With the agreement of the line manager, leave can be taken in one continuous period of 26 weeks, separate blocks of continuous weeks, weekly blocks, monthly blocks or on more favourable terms. Staff members do not have to take the full entitlement. Any public holidays that fall during the period of such leave are added on to end of it.

The granting of parental leave is conditional on a staff member notifying their line manager as soon as is reasonably practicable but not later than six weeks prior to the proposed commencement date of the parental leave.

The notice must specify when the staff member intends to commence parental leave, the duration of the leave and the manner in which the staff member proposes to take the leave. The staff member may revoke this at any time before the confirmation document is signed.

While staff will be facilitated as far as possible, the line manager may postpone parental leave if such leave would have a substantial effect on the operation of the Department concerned. The staff member must be notified not later than 4 weeks before the intended date of commencement of the leave.

The postponement may be to an agreed date, not later than 6 months from the date on which the staff member had intended that the parental leave was to start.

If a second postponement due to seasonal variation in the volume of work concerned takes place, parental leave will not be lost, if solely as a result of postponement, the child reaches the age threshold.

Not later than four weeks before the commencement of parental leave, the line manager must prepare a 'confirmation document' specifying the date of commencement of the leave, its duration and manner in which it is to be taken. The HR Department and staff member must

sign the confirmation document and the staff member retains a copy for their own records. Once this document is signed, no amendments can be made to it without the agreement of both parties.

In the case of a staff member who is on probation at the start of parental leave, the period of probation will stand suspended during the absence on parental leave and will be completed by the staff member on their return to work.

A staff member on parental leave is deemed for all purposes (other than the right to remuneration and superannuation benefits) to be in employment. The absence will therefore count as service and will reckon for increment purposes and for qualifying service for annual leave and promotion. If a staff member falls ill while on parental leave and as a result is unable to care for the child, parental leave may be suspended for the duration of the illness. Following the period of illness parental leave can recommence. In order to avail of this, the staff member must provide their line manager with evidence of the period of sickness i.e. a medical certificate.

If the line manager has reasonable grounds for believing that the staff member is not using the leave for this purpose, the leave may be terminated following the expiry of 7 days' notice and the staff member concerned may be required to return to work. However, before any notice of termination can be given, the staff member must be invited to make representations on the matter within a period of 7 days.

When returning to work from parental leave, staff members may request a change in their work pattern for a set period of time. Teagasc will consider this request taking into account the needs of the staff member and the organisation. Such requests should be made not later than 6 weeks prior to the proposed commencement date, specifying the nature and duration of any such pattern. The staff member will be informed in writing, not later than 4 weeks after the submitting the request, as to whether it will be granted or not. There will be no obligation on Teagasc to grant the change in work pattern.

How to Apply

- Applications for parental leave should be made as soon as is reasonably practicable but must be no later than six weeks prior to the proposed commencement date of the parental leave
- To obtain an application form, click [here](#)
- Section A of the application form should be completed and a copy of the birth certificate(s)/adoption order(s) should be enclosed
- The staff member's line manager may postpone leave or amend the manner it is to be taken in, because such leave would have a substantial effect on the operation of the unit. If so, they must explain the reasons for postponing/amending the leave and this must be communicated to the staff member not later than 4 weeks before the intended date of commencement of the leave
- If leave is approved, no later than four weeks prior to commencement of the leave the line manager must complete Section B of the form (the confirmation document)
- The line manager and the staff member should both sign the completed form and it should then be submitted to schemes@teagasc.ie
- Once this document has been signed, no amendments can be made without the agreement of both parties

Version	Revision Date	Summary of Changes	Policy Owner
2.0	October 2020	Increase in entitlement, change to application process	HR