Banc Ceannais na hÉireann
Central Bank of Ireland
Eurosystem

# Parents & Guardians' Leave Policy

August 2026

# Introduction

As an organisation, the Central Bank seeks to provide colleagues, insofar as possible, with fair, transparent and progressive leave supports to fulfil their role of parent and/ or guardian. At a minimum, we align to legislation3 and practice in the wider Civil service in relation to the leave provisions for parents and/ or guardians.

This policy aligns to Civil Service Circular 14/2022: Revision of Working Hours in the Civil Service.

# Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the leave provisions and/or facilities available to colleagues related to their role as a parent and/ or guardian.

# Scope

This policy applies to all Bank employees.

# Policy Statement

- The Maternity Protection Acts, 1994 & 2004, as amended outline entitlements for expectant mothers in respect of maternity leave and related matters;
- The Adoptive Leave Acts, 1995 and 2005, as amended outline entitlements for an adopting parent in respect of adoptive leave and related matters;
- The Parental Leave Acts, 1998-2019 outline entitlements for parents. These entitlements extend to adoptive parents and to persons acting in 'loco parentis' or as a guardian for a child; and

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- The Parent's Leave and Benefit Act, 2019 outlines entitlements for 'relevant persons' i.e. a parent of the child, the spouse, civil partner or cohabitant of a parent of the child, a parent of the child where the child is a donor-conceived child under section 5 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015, the adopting parent or parents of a child, the spouse, civil partner or cohabitant as the case may be, of the adopting parent of the child (if the parents have not jointly adopted).

The Central Bank applies the provisions contained in these Acts, the main elements of which are set out in this policy. In addition, we provide Surrogacy Leave, of an equivalent nature to adoptive/maternity, to colleagues who meet the required conditions.

## Maternity Leave - Key Points

**To apply for Maternity Leave please complete and return the 'Maternity/ Adoptive/ Surrogacy Leave Application Form'4 (see Appendix 1) to HR Support.**

In the case of **maternity leave,** colleagues are entitled to the following:

- ***26 weeks paid maternity leave*** which must commence no later than two weeks before the end of the expected week of confinement and end no sooner than 4 weeks after the childbirth5. Colleagues must apply for paid maternity leave no later than four weeks before the expected date of commencement;
- ***An optional additional period of unpaid leave of 16 weeks*** may be taken. If availed of, this leave must be immediately after the period of paid maternity leave. This unpaid leave will not qualify as service towards pension and must be applied for no later than 7 weeks before the end of the period of paid maternity leave;
- For the period of paid maternity leave eligible colleagues (PRSI Class A) are obliged to claim Social Welfare Maternity Benefit6 and nominate the Central Bank to receive this payment. Those eligible must complete the relevant Maternity Benefit Form (on www.welfare.ie) and submit to HR Support at least 6 weeks before the due date/ start

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date of maternity/ adoptive leave. HR Support will then forward the completed form to the relevant Social Welfare Office78;

- **A *risk assessment*** of the health and safety of pregnant or breastfeeding women9. The completed assessment form, and any questions arising from this, should be directed to the Environmental Health and Safety Office in the Workplace Services Division;
- ***Reasonable time off (paid) to attend maternity clinic appointments*** for ante or postnatal care once reasonable notice is provided and it is agreed in advance with the line manager;
- ***Reasonable time off (paid) to attend antenatal classes.*** This entitlement is for the purpose of attending one set of antenatal classes (other than the last 3 classes in each such a set) for the first pregnancy1011;
- ***Continued accrual of entitlements*** in respect to annual leave, public holidays and increments for the duration of the paid and unpaid maternity leave period; and
- ***Breastfeeding breaks on return to work (without loss of pay) until the child reaches 2 years of age.*** These can be in the form of an adjustment of working hours (up to 60 minutes), a 60 minute break each day, or as agreed with local management. Breastfeeding facilities are available in the Medical Room in the Docklands Campus or in the Lactation Room in Sandyford.

**Postponement of Maternity Leave for Serious Medical Conditions**

Colleagues may request to postpone all or part of their paid maternity leave in instances where they experience a serious medical condition. A "serious health condition" is defined as a health condition that entails a serious risk to the life or health, including the mental health, of a colleague, and which requires necessary medical intervention that is ongoing for a period of time to be carried out to address the risk. In circumstances of a serious mental health conditions, the medical interventions that necessitate a postponement of maternity leave refers to inpatient hospital treatment only.

- Paid Maternity Leave can be postponed for a period between 5 weeks and up to 52 weeks from the date of notification.
- Colleagues must give 2 weeks' notice and provide a letter to hrsupport@centralbank.ie from a doctor who is registered in the Specialist Division of the Medical register confirming:

i. You are suffering from a serious medical condition that represents a threat to life and health, and
ii. that they are the Medical Practitioner treating you for the serious health condition that represents a threat to life and health, and

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iii. that your condition requires medical intervention that will be ongoing for a period of time, and
iv. if your serious health condition is a mental health condition, that it requires inpatient hospital treatment.

- The HR Division will review the above referenced letter from the doctor and assess if it meets the criteria outlined in the legislation and either approve or deny the postponement. If approved, HR will issue a letter to the Colleague which includes the following information:

i. The Colleague is entitled to the postponement of maternity leave due to a serious risk to their life and health, and
ii. The date on which the postponement of maternity leave is to commence, and
iii. The date on which the maternity leave is to resume.

- Colleagues are required to submit the doctor's letter and the letter from HR to the Maternity Benefit section of the Department of Social Protection.
- Colleagues may request for a postponement on a maximum of two occasions provided the aggregate duration of the two postponements does not exceed 52 weeks. The second period of postponement must immediately follow the first period and 2 weeks' notice must be provided accompanied by a medical certificate.

## Adoptive Leave - Key Points

**To apply for Adoptive Leave please complete and return the 'Maternity/ Adoptive/ Surrogacy Leave Application Form'12 (see Appendix 1) to HR Support.**

In the case of **adoptive leave,** colleagues will be entitled to the following:

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- ***24 weeks paid adoptive leave*** from the date of the placement of the child. Colleagues must apply for paid adoptive leave no later than four weeks before the expected date of commencement;
- ***An optional additional period of unpaid leave of 16 weeks may be taken.*** If availed of, this leave must be immediately after the period of paid adoptive leave. This period of unpaid leave will not qualify as service towards pension and must be applied for no later than 7 weeks before the end of the period of paid adoptive leave;
- For the period of paid adoptive leave eligible colleagues (PRSI Class A) are obliged to claim Social Welfare Adoptive Benefit and nominate the Central Bank to receive this payment. Colleagues must complete the relevant Adoptive Benefit Form (available on www.welfare.ie) and submit to HR Support at least 6 weeks before the due date/ start date of maternity/ adoptive leave. HR Support will then forward the form the relevant Social Welfare Office1415;
- In the case of a foreign adoption colleagues may take some or all of the optional additional unpaid leave before the date of placement of the child16. Colleagues will be required to provide HR Support with sight of the declaration of suitability and eligibility (issued pursuant to the Adoption Act, 1991)17, which should indicate the expected date of placement, before the start of the adoptive leave period;
- ***Reasonable time off (paid) to attend pre-adoption classes18*** or meetings once reasonable notice has been provided and the time required is agreed with the line manager;***Continued accrual of entitlements*** in respect to annual leave, public holidays and increments for the duration of the paid and unpaid adoptive leave period;

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## Surrogacy Leave - Key Points

**To apply for Surrogacy Leave please complete and return the 'Maternity/ Adoptive/ Surrogacy Leave Application Form' (see Appendix 1) to HR Support.**

In the case of **surrogacy leave20** the Central Bank provides the following:

- ***24 weeks paid surrogacy leave*** from the date of the placement of the child. Colleagues must apply for paid surrogacy leave no later than four weeks before the expected date of commencement;
- ***An optional additional period of unpaid leave of 16 weeks*** may be taken. If availed of, this leave must be immediately after the period of paid surrogacy leave. This period of unpaid leave will not qualify as service towards pension and must be applied for no later than 7 weeks before the end of the period of paid surrogacy leave; and
- ***Reasonable time off (paid) to attend pre-surrogacy classes or meetings*** once reasonable notice has been provided and the time required is agreed with the line manager.

Entitlements in respect to annual leave, public holidays and increments will not accrue for the duration of the (paid or unpaid) surrogacy leave period. This period of Surrogacy Leave will not be counted as reckonable service for redundancy calculation or pension purposes and colleagues will not receive additional entitlements than would be provided if the child were adopted.

## Maternity, Adoptive & Surrogacy Leave – Additional Points

- Colleagues availing of unpaid leave are also required to contact Payroll (Payroll@centralbank.ie) directly to make arrangements in respect of any salary deductions e.g. TaxSaver, income protection etc.
- If the birth occurs before the employee has commenced maternity leave they may be entitled to receive additional paid maternity leave equal to the time between the actual birth date and the date on which maternity leave had been expected to commence;

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- In the event of a stillbirth or miscarriage, after the 24th week of pregnancy, the maternity leave entitlements set out in this policy will apply;
- As set out in the 'Leave Policy'; in the event of a stillbirth or prenatal death of a child, after 24 weeks pregnancy, the father/spouse or cohabiting partner of the mother of the child will be entitled to 10 consecutive working days Bereavement Leave;
- In the event of the death of the mother, within 24 weeks of the birth of the child, the father/ relevant parent will be entitled to avail of the remainder of the maternity leave entitlement;
- In the case of adoption, where the placement of the child is for less than 14 weeks, colleagues should advise HR Support within 7 days of the end of the placement and they will be expected to return to work as soon as possible;
- Colleagues may apply through HR Support to postpone or terminate maternity/ adoptive/ surrogacy leave in the following circumstances:
  - In the event of hospitalisation of the child, colleagues can request to postpone part of the paid or unpaid maternity/ adoptive/ surrogacy leave period to allow them return to work for the period. Maternity leave can only be postponed for up to 6 months and only after 14 weeks maternity leave has been taken (4 weeks of which will have been after the birth of the child); and
  - If a colleague become ill during the **unpaid** maternity/ adoptive/ surrogacy leave period they can request that the leave be terminated as they may be entitled to sick pay/ disability benefit.

### Managing attendance at Maternity/ Adoption/ Surrogacy Related Appointments

- In advance of starting maternity/ adoptive/ surrogacy leave colleagues the Central Bank will provide reasonable paid time off22 to allow for their attendance at:
  - Maternity clinic appointments
  - Ante-Natal Classes
  - Pre-adoption/ surrogacy meetings and classes.
- Colleagues should provide their manager with reasonable notice of the above appointments and are generally expected to attend work in advance of the

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appointment/ return to work after the appointment. Colleagues may be required to provide written confirmation of appointments;

- Colleagues are not required to record absence/ clock-out times for the above appointments on HR Central;
- It is advisable that colleagues availing of flexi-time/ flexi-leave record clock times as follows, if attending appointments in the morning or evening, to ensure their flexi- balance is not negatively impacted:
  - Attending appointment in the morning and starting work later than the normal start time - register a clock-in at 09.00 and register attendance as normal for the rest of the day; and
  - Attending appointment in the afternoon and leaving work earlier than the normal finishing time, where it is not feasible to return to work following the appointment, register a clock-out at 17:00 and register attendance as normal for the rest of the day.

## Paternity Leave

- The Paternity Leave & Benefits Act, 2016 sets out a range of entitlements in respect of paternity leave and related matters;
- The Central Bank applies the provisions contained in the Acts, the main elements of which are set out in this policy
- **Note:** Paternity leave entitlements can only apply to one person deemed to be a 'relevant parent' of a child:
  - in the case of a child who is or is to be adopted, the relevant parent is: the spouse, civil partner or cohabitant of the adopting mother or sole male adopter; married same sex couples, the spouse chosen by them;
  - in the case of a birth, the relevant parent is: the father of the child; spouse, civil partner or cohabitant of the child's mother; and
  - in the case of surrogacy, paternity leave does not apply unless the Father is the biological father of a surrogate baby.

### Paternity Leave – Key Points

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**To apply for Paternity Leave/ Benefit please complete and return the 'Paternity Leave Application Form'23 to HR Support (see Appendix 5) within 22 weeks of the birth/ placement of the child. Colleagues should advise their manager of their intention to take paternity leave four weeks in advance of the anticipated start date24.**

In the case of **paternity leave**, colleagues are entitled to the following:

- ***A single period of 2 weeks paid paternity leave*** to be taken within 6 months of the birth or placement of the child/ children25. This must be taken as one block of leave and cannot be fragmented into smaller periods;
- Eligible colleagues (PRSI Class A) are obliged to claim Social Welfare Paternity Benefit2627 and nominate the Central Bank to receive this payment on their behalf. This can be done by completing the (PB1) form and uploading required documents to accompany their application28 to the Department of Social Protection (DSP) no later than 26 weeks after the date of birth/ placement of the child. If colleagues do not submit the claim on time, and/ or nominate the Central Bank to receive the payment, the period of paternity leave will be treated as unpaid; and
- **Continued accrual of entitlements** in respect to annual leave, public holidays and increments for the duration of the paternity leave period.

### Paternity Leave - Additional Points

- In the event that colleagues become ill before the paternity leave period commences, and wish to postpone the leave, they should notify their line manager as soon as possible and provide the necessary medical certificates to HR Support to cover the period of illness. The revised dates for the paternity leave must be within 28 weeks of the birth/ placement of the child and should be discussed with the line manager; and
- If the child is hospitalised during the paternity leave period colleagues can request the postponement of paternity leave through their line manager. Where the request is granted the revised dates for the paternity leave will be agreed with the line manager.

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## Parental Leave

- The Parental Leave Acts 1998-2019, set out a range of entitlements in respect of parental leave and related matters to parents, adoptive parents and to persons acting in 'loco parentis' or as a guardian for a child; and
- The Central Bank applies the provisions contained in the Act (as amended), the main elements of which are set out in this policy.

### Parental leave Key Points

**When applying for Parental Leave colleagues must complete and return the 'Parental Leave Application Form'2930 (see Appendix 6) to HR Support at least 6 weeks in advance of the intended commencement date of the leave. Colleagues should discuss the application with their line manager in the first instance.**

In the case of **parental leave**, colleagues are entitled to the following:

- **Colleagues with at least one year's continuous service are entitled to take 26 weeks unpaid parental leave in respect of their child;**
- **Parental Leave may only be used to care for the child concerned** and if taken/ intended for another purpose the Central Bank reserves the right to refuse or cancel parental leave;
- Where both parents are employed in the Central Bank colleagues may apply to **transfer part of their parental leave entitlement** to the other parent;
- This **leave must be taken before the child reaches 16 years of age in all cases, including for parents of children with a disability or long-term illness:**
  - in the case of an adoption which commences when the child is over fourteen years old but less than sixteen years old at the time of adoption, the parental leave must be taken within two years of the date of the adoption order ;
  - for colleagues working reduced hours (i.e. part-time working/ job-sharing) the entitlement to 26 weeks will be pro-rated based on their specific working arrangement; and
  - where colleagues don't meet the one year service requirement, and their child is reaching the age threshold, they will be entitled to take one week's parental leave for every month of service they have completed.

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- Colleagues should avail of Parental leave for their eldest child first and then each subsequent child thereafter;
- **Colleagues are entitled to take their parental leave entitlement as follows**:
  - as one continuous block of 26 weeks unpaid leave
  - as two separate blocks of at least 6 weeks provided there is a 10 week break
  - In general, a maximum of 26 weeks parental leave may be taken in any one year except in the case of twins/ triplets etc. or if management specifically agree to a longer period being taken
- **The Central Bank may, at its discretion, accommodate more flexible or favourable means of taking parental leave**. Each request for such arrangements will be subject to business needs and will require line manager approval. Examples include:
  - Weekly parental leave arrangement subject to review on a regular basis
  - Allowing a new colleague to avail of a parental leave arrangement before they meet the minimum service requirement
  - Reserving of up to 2 separate blocks of 2 weeks of the parental leave entitlement for a child's Junior or Leaving Certificate examinations (or equivalent)
- HR Support will provide written confirmation setting out the parental leave arrangement at least 4 weeks before the start of the leave;
- Upon receipt of confirmation that the parental leave has been processed, colleagues are also required to contact Payroll (Payroll@centralbank.ie) directly, in advance of taking the leave, to make arrangements in respect of any salary deductions e.g. TaxSaver Travel; and
- Once agreed, the arrangement can only be amended if both the colleague and the Central Bank agree.

Colleagues will not be entitled to remuneration or superannuation entitlements during parental leave. They will continue to accrue entitlements in respect to annual leave, public holidays and increments for the duration of the parental leave period.

Colleagues availing of parental leave are entitled to be credited PRSI contributions from the Department of Social Protection (DSP) – this will preserve their record for social insurance

purpose. Colleagues are responsible for contacting the DSP directly to ensure appropriate credits are applied.

### Parental leave – Additional Points

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- Colleagues may suspend their parental leave if they are ill and unable to care for the child. In such cases, colleagues will be required to provide a medical certificate to HR Support to cover their period of illness;
- There may be some circumstances where the commencement date for the block of parental leave (minimum of 6 weeks in duration) may need to be postponed if the absence of the person would have a substantial impact on the operation of the team/ division:
  - In such cases, colleagues will be advised at least 4 weeks before the date on which the block of leave was expected to start;
  - The revised date for the leave should be agreed between the line manager and colleague and should be no later than 6 months after the original date;
  - The parental leave in respect of a child may not be postponed a second time unless as a result of seasonal variation in work volume; and
  - If, solely as a result of the postponement by the Central Bank, the child reaches the age threshold before the end of the parental leave period colleagues will retain the entitlement to take the parental leave.
- Colleagues taking parental leave have a right to have a position retained for them to return to at the end of their parental leave. Where it is not feasible to retain the existing role, for the duration of the parental leave period, a suitable alternative role will be provided;
- Colleagues returning to work after a period of parental leave may request a change in working pattern to apply for a set period following their return to work. This request should generally be discussed and agreed with management in the first instance before being submitted to HR Support for processing; and
- This request should be submitted in writing outlining the nature of the changes requested at least 6 weeks before the proposed commencement of the set period concerned. The Central Bank will inform the colleague, not later than 4 weeks from the receipt of the request, if the request has been granted.

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The Parent's Leave and Benefit Act 2019 provides an entitlement for each 'relevant parent31' to take nine weeks parent's leave within 104 weeks of the child's birth or placement of the child with the family in the case of adoption.

### Parent's Leave – Key Points

**When applying for Parent's Leave colleagues must complete and return the 'Parent's Leave Benefit Application Form'32 to HR Support (see Appendix 6) no later than 6 weeks before the expected start date of Parent's Leave33. Colleagues must also advise their manager of their intention to avail of unpaid Parent's Leave at least 6 weeks in advance of the anticipated start date and this request must be approved by the Line Manager before being submitted to HR Support for processing.**

In the case of **parent's leave**, colleagues are entitled to the following:

- **2 weeks paid parent's leave34** which must commence within 104 weeks of the child's birth or placement of the child with the family in the case of adoption. Eligible colleagues35 will be obliged to claim Parent's Leave Benefit from the DSP and nominate the Central Bank to receive this payment on their behalf. This must be completed online36 at mywelfare.ie;
- An **optional additional period of 7 weeks unpaid leave** may be taken which must also commence within 104 weeks of the child's birth or placement of the child with the family in the case of adoption. Eligible colleagues37 may also claim Parent's Leave Benefit from the DSP for the weeks that they are unpaid (i.e. any Parents Leave taken following the first two weeks of Parents Leave);
- This leave can be taken as one continuous nine week period of leave or as separate weeks of block leave;

- **Parent's Leave can only apply to a person deemed to be a '*relevant parent*'** of the child38;
- Parent's Leave may **not be transferred between parents.**

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### Postponement of Parent's Leave by the Central Bank

- There may be some circumstances where the commencement date for parent's leave may be required to be postponed if the absence of the employee would have a substantial adverse impact on the operation of the team/ division;
- In such circumstances, colleagues will be advised at least 4 weeks before the date on which the leave was expected to start. The revised date for the leave should be agreed between the line manager and colleague and should be no later than 12 weeks after the original intended start date.

## Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed biennially (or more frequently as the need arises) by the Policy Owner to determine if changes are required. Proposed material changes to the Policy will be submitted to the Performance and Resourcing Committee (PRC) for advance approval and non-material changes will be approved by the Chief People Officer and reported for reference to PRC.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The following provides a definition of the individual roles of those participating in the Parents & Guardians' Leave Policy

| Roles | Responsibilities |
|---|---|
| HR Advisory | • Policy Owner |
| HR Support | • Assist colleagues & line managers with queries |
| Colleagues | • Adhere to all aspects of Central Bank's Parents & Guardians' Leave Policy |
| Line managers | • Ensure that colleagues reporting to them adhere to all aspects of Central Bank's Parents & Guardians' Leave Policy |

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### Contacts

Any queries on the above, should be directed to HR Support, HRD (hrsupport@centralbank.ie)

## Policy Implementation Procedure

This policy is owned and reviewed by HR Advisory, Human Resources Division and implemented by HR Support, Human Resources Division.



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