

*Childcare***Link**

www.childcarelink.gov.uk

0800 0 96 02 96

**Lines open 8am - 8pm weekdays,
9am - 12pm Saturdays**

Becoming a Working Parent

department for
education and skills



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Starting a new job or returning to a career when you are a parent can be an exciting and challenging time. Getting used to balancing the needs of your family and the demands of paid employment can take time. Having confidence in your childcare arrangements helps. And don't forget you will have acquired useful new skills by becoming a parent which could include: time management, budget management, negotiation skills and flexibility.

Balancing work and home

The Government is encouraging employers to offer a range of policies to help parents balance the demands of their job with bringing up children.

Employers who provide work-life balance arrangements to help their employees could gain from:

- more loyal staff who don't need to take unauthorised leave
- an increase in the number of staff who return to work after maternity leave
- experienced and skilled staff staying on after they have children
- good returns on investment in training staff
- high levels of staff productivity
- better public image.

So discuss your needs with your employer or trade union representative.

Childcare help for employees

Your employer could benefit from getting involved in childcare.

Your employer could:

- provide childcare information for you
- provide information about paying for childcare and the childcare tax credit in Working Families' Tax Credit and Disabled Person's Tax Credit
- get involved in your local Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership to find out more about childcare plans in the area
- buy some childcare places in local childcare services
- start up childcare services in partnership with others
- provide Childcare Vouchers or childcare allowances to help you pay for childcare.

Taking time off work

Sometimes you may need to take time off to be with your children.

Maternity leave – All employees are entitled to 18 weeks basic maternity leave regardless of length of service and additional leave lasting up to 29 weeks if you have been with your employer for at least one year. Women are entitled to statutory maternity pay or maternity allowance provided they meet the qualifying conditions.

Parental leave – From 15 December 1999 parents and adoptive parents have the right to take up to 13 weeks unpaid time off work over the first five years to care for each child. Fathers and adoptive parents are guaranteed a portion of this leave around the birth or adoption of their child.

In addition, employees are entitled to a reasonable time off to cope with family emergencies. This may be to deal with an emergency at a child's school, when a child falls ill or to make other arrangements when childcare breaks down.

Flexible work

Sometimes you may need to fit your job around the demands of your family, especially while your children are young, when they are coping with new circumstances or if you have a child with disabilities or particular needs. Here are some options to discuss with your employer:

- working part-time or reduced hours
- job-sharing
- term-time working
- flexi-time – allowing you to choose your hours within set limits
- career break – unpaid time away from your job
- sabbatical – paid time away from your job
- teleworking – working from home.

Regulations that came into effect on 1 July 2000 remove discrimination against part-time workers and increase access to part-time work. This will mean better quality part-time jobs and more choice, which will help parents, women and men, to combine work with family life.

Arranging childcare at short notice

Every parent using childcare finds that there comes a time when emergency childcare could be needed. You could:

- build up a list of possible childcarers your child knows well – perhaps childminders who are friends with your childminder, for example
- reserve some annual leave for emergencies.

Further information on the Government's work-life balance campaign can be found at www.dti.gov.uk/work-life balance.

Copies of this factsheet can be obtained from:

DfES Publications

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Annesley

Nottingham NG15 0DJ

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