

PARENTAL LEAVE POLICY

Definitions

1. “Parental leave” refers to leave taken by the main carer of a child following birth or adoption. This could be the mother, father or adoptive parent of either sex.

Aims and purpose

2. It is the aim of this policy to:
 - encourage members following parental leave to return to chambers and continue to build successful practices;
 - prevent discrimination on grounds of parental responsibility;
 - encourage and support members taking time off following the birth or adoption of a child without suffering financial hardship;
 - comply with the requirements of the Code of Conduct and accompanying Guidelines.

Circulation

3. This policy is circulated to all members, clerks and staff all of whom are required to:
 - read and understand the policy; and
 - understand their role in relation to the policy.

Review of this Policy

4. This policy is reviewed by chambers Equality and Diversity Officer every two years.

Parental Leave

5. Every member of chambers is entitled to return to chambers within a period of one year after giving birth or adopting a child for whom they are the primary carer.
6. A member of chambers taking a period of parental leave is entitled to 6 months’ free of chambers rent and expenses.¹
7. Members of chambers are required to notify chambers management and clerks of their intention to take a period of parental or adoption leave not less than 3 months before the commencement of the period of leave indicating the estimated commencement date and likely date of return.

¹ The 6 month period free of rent and expenses or free of the levy on receipts does not extend to mortgage repayments, one off investments or clerks’ fees. If 6 months are taken then there will be a no rent free period. If it is more than 6 months up to a year then it will be rent free.

8. If a member wishes to take more than 6 months' rent free parental or adoption leave s/he should notify chambers' management and clerks 12 weeks before the end of that period stating the estimated date on which s/he intends to return.
9. If a member wishes to take leave for a period longer than 12 months, this should be arranged with chambers management.
10. If a member is absent from chambers for more than 12 months without agreeing an extension with chambers management, her/his automatic right to return to chambers ceases unless such absence is due to consecutive births.
11. Where membership ceases by virtue of the provisions in paragraph 10, a member can re-apply to chambers in the usual way.

Arrangements during Leave

12. A member on parental or adoption leave is encouraged to maintain contact with chambers.
13. Head of Chambers will ensure that the member is:
 - offered opportunities to do appropriate work if this is requested and;
 - invited to training events, social occasions, marketing events and chambers meetings and;
 - is consulted on any significant issues affecting the practice of chambers and;
 - receives assistance with the re-establishment of their practice on return to work, including (where requested) the arrangement of a "practice meeting" with the relevant clerk within two weeks before the member returns to work.

Undertaking work during leave

14. Informal working arrangements during a period of parental leave do not affect a member's entitlement to the six month period free of rent, provided that the Head of Chambers is kept informed of the arrangements by the member of chambers and is satisfied that the level of work being undertaken does not constitute a return to practice.

Return from Leave

15. It is the policy of Equity Chambers to enable parents to work reduced hours on return from a period of parental or adoption leave. This should be discussed with chambers' management and clerks.

Complaints

16. Any member who wishes to make a complaint regarding a breach of this policy should in the first instance contact chambers' Equality and Diversity Officer.

Contact

17. Chambers Equality and Diversity Officer is Akaal Sidhu as@e-c.org.uk or 0121 236 5007.
18. Chambers Management Committee is the point of contact for all queries regarding this policy. Please refer to Chambers Constitution for further details.