Maternity Leave and Pay Checklist

What to do and when, from telling work through to the first payment landing.

DUE DATE, FROM YOUR MATB1 _____ QUALIFYING WEEK _____ EMPLOYER _____

Your qualifying week is the 15th week before the week your baby is due. Almost every deadline below hangs off it, so work it out first.

AS SOON AS YOU ARE READY TO TELL WORK

- [ ] Tell your employer you are pregnant, and when the baby is due
  There is no legal deadline until the qualifying week, but earlier means your risk assessment and paid time off start sooner.
- [ ] Ask for your maternity policy in writing
  Some employers pay more than the statutory minimum. It is not always advertised.
- [ ] Ask for a pregnancy risk assessment at work
- [ ] Book paid time off for antenatal appointments

BY THE QUALIFYING WEEK, THE 15TH WEEK BEFORE YOUR DUE DATE

- [ ] Tell your employer in writing when you want your maternity leave to start
  Earliest possible start is the 11th week before your due date. You can change your mind with 28 days notice.
- [ ] Check you have 26 weeks continuous service by this week, and earnings above the lower earnings limit
  Both are tested at the qualifying week. Miss either and you claim Maternity Allowance instead, which is not a worse outcome, just a different form.
- [ ] Partner: give notice for paternity leave, also by this week

FROM ABOUT 20 WEEKS

- [ ] Collect your MATB1 certificate from your midwife or GP
  Issued from 20 weeks. Your employer needs it before they can pay you, so hand it over rather than filing it.
- [ ] Apply for your maternity exemption certificate, form FW8
  Free NHS prescriptions and dental care while pregnant and for a year after the birth. Ask your midwife for the form.
- [ ] Check whether you qualify for a Sure Start Maternity Grant or the Scottish equivalent

AT LEAST 28 DAYS BEFORE YOUR PAY STARTS

- [ ] Confirm in writing the date you want maternity pay to begin
- [ ] If your employer says you do not qualify, ask for form SMP1
  You need it to claim Maternity Allowance from the DWP using form MA1. Do not simply accept a verbal no.
- [ ] Check what happens to your pension contributions while you are off

Maternity Leave and Pay: My Numbers

The dates and figures in one place, so you can check the payslips against something.

MY DATES

DUE DATE _____ QUALIFYING WEEK _____ EARLIEST LEAVE CAN START _____ LEAVE START DATE AGREED _____

PAY START DATE _____ LAST DAY AT WORK _____ 39 WEEKS PAY ENDS _____ RETURN TO WORK DATE _____

You are entitled to 52 weeks leave whether or not it is all paid. Your return date is a year after your leave started unless you tell them otherwise.

WHAT I SHOULD BE PAID

PERIOD	RATE	WHAT I EXPECT PER WEEK	FIRST PAYMENT DUE
Weeks 1 to 6	90% of my average weekly earnings		
Weeks 7 to 39	The statutory rate, or 90% if that is lower		
Weeks 40 to 52	Unpaid, unless my employer pays more		
Anything extra	Occupational pay, if my employer offers it		

The statutory rate changes every April. It was £194.32 a week from 6 April 2026, with a lower earnings limit of £129 a week.
Check the current figure at gov.uk before you rely on it, and write it here: _____ as at _____

AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS

Worked out from the 8 weeks of payslips ending with your qualifying week. Ask payroll to show you the calculation if the figure looks wrong.

MY AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS _____ CHECKED AGAINST PAYSLIPS ON _____ WHO I ASKED _____

OTHER THINGS TO CLAIM

- ☐ Child Benefit, once the baby is born
- ☐ Register the birth, within 42 days
- ☐ Healthy Start, if eligible
- ☐ Add the baby to your Universal Credit
- ☐ Childcare account, when you need it
- ☐ Shared Parental Leave, if you are using it

IMPORTANT

This is a checklist, not advice about your situation, and rates and rules change. Check gov.uk for the current figures.
For free help with a maternity rights problem, Maternity Action, Working Families and Citizens Advice all run advice lines. Acas can help with a dispute at work.