

By: Director of Personnel & Development  
To: Personnel Committee - 29 September 2009  
Subject: Maternity Support Pay & Leave Pilot Evaluation  
Classification: Unrestricted

---

**SUMMARY:** Personnel Committee agreed a one year pilot from 1 June 07 providing contractual paternity leave and pay which was extended until 31 August 09 to allow for full evaluation. It was one element of a wider family leave pilot which included provision for carer leave; this has now been incorporated into terms and conditions on a permanent basis. This report presents the evaluation of paternity leave and pay and recommends they be adopted on a permanent basis.

---

### **Introduction**

1. The pilot offered paternity pay and leave of 2 weeks on full pay. The statutory minimum paternity pay, introduced in 2003, is £123.06 per week. The main reason for men not taking statutory paternity leave is that they cannot afford to lose pay around the birth of their child<sup>1</sup>.
2. During the pilot, following a customer impact assessment, the provision was renamed, 'maternity support' to reflect that it covers not only the biological father but also the civil partner or partner of either sex of the child's mother.

### **Feedback and Evaluation**

3. On average 2 to 3 employees take maternity support leave & pay each month.
4. Telephone feedback from employees who received this benefit during the pilot indicated that they found it very helpful to be able to have time off around the time of the birth without any reduction in pay. Managers considered it was important to support their staff at such an important time in their life.

### **National Developments**

5. By May 2010, the Government is aiming to give employed fathers extended rights to take additional paid time off work to care for their child in its first year. In the meantime, offering maternity support pay and leave is consistent with the trend towards increased support to the family unit around the time of birth and is in step with provisions already offered by many local authorities and other progressive employers.
6. The Equality & Human Rights Commission has published a report recommending a change of policy to create a 'gender neutral' system of family leave to make leave more equally available to both fathers and mothers. The report found that 69% of fathers who took paternity leave said it improved the quality of family life and 56% said it led them to take a greater role in caring for the children.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 'Working Better', Meeting the changing needs of families, workers and employers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Equality & Human Rights Commission, March 09.

<sup>2</sup> As above.

7. The research indicates that men who take paternity leave tend to be more involved in bringing up their children when their babies are nine months old and in reading to their children when they are three.
8. Early, active involvement by fathers can lead to a range of positive outcomes for children, including 'better peer relationships; few behaviour problems; lower criminality and substance abuse; higher educational and occupational mobility relative to their parents' employment and higher self-esteem'. Conversely, low involvement by fathers is linked with negative outcomes for children and the links tend to be stronger for vulnerable children.<sup>3</sup> The provision of maternity support leave without a reduction in pay would support the employee in the early stages of bonding.

## **Conclusion**

9. Evaluation of the pilot has shown that maternity support leave and pay have an intrinsic value in supporting staff in managing care needs and are universally welcomed within KCC, enhancing KCC's attractiveness as an employer of choice. Offering these provisions on a permanent basis would be in keeping with the developing trend amongst employers to increase the portfolio of benefits which help support working families.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That contractual maternity support leave and pay of two weeks on full pay should become part of Kent Scheme terms and conditions on a permanent basis, with effect from 1 September 2009.

**Amanda Beer**  
**Director of Personnel & Development**  
**Ext 4136**

Lucy Freeman  
Ext 6825

---

<sup>3</sup> Flouri and Buchannan, 2003