

# How to... support pregnant staff

**Understand your responsibilities**

- Be aware of the legislation
- Understand your role in pregnancy risk assessments
- Understand what documentation is required
- Be aware of relevant University policies, eg Maternity Leave and Flexible Working
- Be aware of sources of support, eg human resources and occupational health

**Provide support during maternity leave**

- Understand what is meant by a KIT day
- Understand how to stay in touch
- Provide information on any changes to the workplace
- Provide invitations to social events

**Understand what is required from you when an individual returns**

- Understand the legislation surrounding returning to the same role
- Deal with requests for flexible working
- Ensure staff are 're-inducted' back into the role or team
- Ensure that objectives are set and support is provided

## Understand your responsibilities

### The legislation

Being pregnant or on maternity leave is a 'protected characteristic' under the Equality Act 2010. This means that pregnancy and maternity-related discrimination can occur in employment if a woman is treated unfavourably because: of her pregnancy; of pregnancy related illness; she is on maternity leave.

### My member of staff has told me she is pregnant. What do I need to do?

- Congratulate her (if appropriate)
- Find out at what point she wants to share her news. She is entitled to confidentiality
- Make her aware of the University Maternity Policy
- Conduct a pregnancy risk assessment
- Consider any reasonable adjustments that may need to be made (e.g a new chair for back pain)
- Discuss plans for her maternity leave (including start and return dates if known)
- Ensure she has submitted her MATB1 form (available from the midwife after week 26) to Human Resources (HR) along with her written application for maternity leave no later than 15 weeks before the baby is due
- Allow her to attend anti-natal appointments
- The earliest she can start her maternity leave is 11 weeks before her due date
- Agree how, and how often, she would like contact from you during maternity leave

## Support during maternity leave

- She can do up to ten days work, known as Keeping in Touch (KIT) days, during her maternity leave. She will be paid for all hours worked. KIT days can be used for any activity that would ordinarily be classed as work or to attend conferences, team meetings or training courses
- Stay in touch with her as agreed
- Update her on structural changes, job opportunities etc
- Invite her to social events
- Entitlement to annual leave, bank holidays and University closure days will continue to accrue during the leave. With your agreement, annual leave may be taken prior to or on return from maternity leave

**Sources of support:** Visit these websites for more information, or to access policies and forms mentioned. Please contact your link HR Officer/Manager for any advice.

HR – [www.essex.ac.uk/hr](http://www.essex.ac.uk/hr)

OH – [www.essex.ac.uk/ohsas](http://www.essex.ac.uk/ohsas)

E&D – [www.essex.ac.uk/equality](http://www.essex.ac.uk/equality)

L&D – [www.essex.ac.uk/ldev](http://www.essex.ac.uk/ldev)

REO – [www.essex.ac.uk/reo](http://www.essex.ac.uk/reo)

## Return to work

- Clarify return to work date
- She is entitled to return to work to the same job, or similar job, on the same terms and conditions of employment to that which they were employed before maternity leave
- Give sympathetic consideration for requests for flexible working. She has the right to request changes and you have a duty to consider the request
- Carry out a 're-induction' to the workplace. Do not assume she can just 'pick up' where she left off
- If she is returning to a 0.6 FTE contract, her workload should be 60% of a full-time person's
- Consider her personal development needs. Does she need coaching/mentoring/training?
- Have regular catch-ups to check progress and provide support. Set and agree objectives
- Provide arrangements for breastfeeding if required. Consult HR

Access at Essex  
(on-line information portal)

[www.essex.ac.uk/access](http://www.essex.ac.uk/access)

