



Subject:	Maternity Pay Provisions
Date:	20 June 2025
Reporting Officer:	Christine Sheridan, Director of Human Resources
Contact Officer:	Eamonn Neeson, Principal HR Advisor (Employee Relations)

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in
Is the decision eligible for Call-in? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	At the SP&R committee on 23 August 2024, the Committee requested that a paper be brought back setting out the Council's maternity pay provisions and benchmarking undertaken against other organisations in the public and private sectors.

1.2	This report informs Committee of the Council's maternity pay provisions and comparisons with a selection of organisations as outlined at Appendix 1.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Statutory Maternity Leave and Pay</p> <p>Maternity leave and pay provisions are a statutory entitlement for any pregnant employee. All employees are entitled to 52 weeks maternity leave. This consists of 26 weeks ordinary maternity leave and 26 weeks additional maternity leave. Entitlement to maternity leave is not dependent upon length of service of an employee.</p> <p>Employees are entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) provided they have at least 26 weeks service with their employer prior to the 15th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth (EWC) and they are earning, on average, an amount which at least equals the lower earnings limit which applies on the Saturday at the end of your qualifying week. The lower earnings limit is currently £125 a week.</p> <p>Provided an employee meets the criteria above Statutory Maternity Pay is paid for the first 39 weeks of maternity leave only and comprises of the following payments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for the first six weeks at 90 per cent of average gross weekly earnings with no upper limit. • for the remaining 33 weeks at the lowest of either the standard rate of £187.18* or 90 per cent of your average gross weekly earnings. <p>(Average weekly earnings are an employee's average earnings for the eight weeks prior to the qualifying period. The qualifying period is the 15th week before the baby is due).</p> <p><small>*this is the lower limit SMP and is set by government on an annual basis</small></p>
3.2	<p>BCC Occupational Maternity Pay</p> <p>While statutory maternity pay is the minimum an employee is entitled to, many organisations provide additional Occupational Maternity Pay. In the Council the rates of occupational maternity pay are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the first six weeks of maternity leave the employee will be entitled to 9/10ths of a week's pay offset against payment made by way of SMP.

- For the subsequent 12 weeks the employee will be entitled to half a week's pay plus SMP. If this figure exceeds an employee's normal pay, they will be paid full pay.
- For the subsequent 21 weeks the employee will be paid SMP only.
- Any maternity leave extending beyond the 39 weeks and up to 52 weeks will be unpaid.

It should be noted that the Council affords the employee an opportunity to have these payments spread across the period of maternity leave.

Therefore, the Council enhances the statutory maternity pay by providing the higher amount for the first six weeks where 9/10ths of a weeks' pay exceeds SMP and further additional payments at a rate of half a weeks pay plus the SMP for the subsequent 12 weeks. This is in line with the current conditions as set out in the NJC National Agreement on Pay and Conditions of Service (Green Book).

3.3

Comparisons with Other Organisations

Benchmarking was undertaken against a number of other organisations' maternity pay provisions and a summary of these is included at appendix 1.

All organisations benchmarked had an occupational / company maternity scheme which provided enhanced payments for some period of time during the 39 weeks of maternity pay.

Local Councils, (seven of whom, provided maternity policies for this benchmarking exercise), the Education Authority, the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service and the NI Housing Executive are like the Council, governed by NJC terms and conditions of service and provide the same enhanced provisions as Belfast City Council.

The Northern Ireland Civil Service provides maternity pay at a rate of full pay for the first 18 weeks of maternity leave, with the remaining 21 weeks paid at SMP only. Weeks 40 – 52 are unpaid.

Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University, provide the same maternity pay provisions as per the Civil Service.

	<p>With regard to private sector companies, KPMG, provide 18 weeks normal monthly salary, while Marks and Spencer and Tesco both provide 26 weeks at full pay followed by 13 weeks at SMP only.</p> <p>Local organisation, Kainos, provide an enhanced company maternity pay of 13 to 20 weeks full pay. Details of the criteria used to determine how many weeks full pay an individual may receive were not available.</p> <p>The benchmarking indicates that some organisations provide an enhanced maternity pay packages to qualifying employees. All organisations provide payment over and above the statutory rate for the first 39 weeks of maternity leave.</p> <p>It should be noted that during the half pay period (weeks 7 – 18), Council do continue to pay normal pay to the employee and this will include any contractual allowances an employee receives as a part of normal pay, e.g. shift allowance, weekend enhancements, essential car user allowance etc.</p> <p>Furthermore, given that SMP is not paid pro-rata to hours worked, some employees who may work part-time and/or be on lower income can receive an amount equivalent to or close to full pay for this period.</p>
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.4	There are no additional finance or resource implications relating to this report.
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.5	There are no equality or good relations implications relating to this report.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Maternity Pay Provisions Benchmarking outcomes