

Help from your employer

You should ask your personnel or human resources department, line manager or employer if any childcare help is offered and how it is allocated. You could also ask your trade union representative for advice.

If your employer does not offer help, ask them to consider the following:-

- Family Friendly Policies
- Childcare Information Service
- Contribution to childcare costs
- Flexible working hours
- Childcare Partnership consultation
- Childcare Vouchers
- Quality Improvement Strategies which increase business improvements and customer services.

Your employer may already have or be working towards a quality improvement strategy. Work-life balance initiatives link with quality schemes such as Investors in People, Charter Mark, Best Value, ISO 9000, Business Excellence Model.

Useful Links

www.berr.gov.uk

- Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform - Employment Matters

www.dwp.gov.uk

- Department for Work and Pensions - Benefits and Services to Families

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

- Jobcentre Plus - Support people of working age from welfare into work

www.direct.gov.uk

- Directgov – Website brings together the widest range of public service information (UK site, some policies and services are different in Scotland)

www.infoscotland.com

- InfoScotland – Information on Scotland's Campaigns from the Scottish Government

www.scotland.gov.uk

- Scottish Government – Responsible for most of the issues of day-to-day concern to the people of Scotland, including health, education, justice, rural affairs and transport

www.hmrc.gov.uk

- HM Revenue & Customs – Responsible to collecting tax revenue, as well as paying Tax Credits and Child Benefits



Falkirk Council

Balancing Family and Work

Falkirk Childcare Information Service



Falkirk Council

More Information

Falkirk Childcare Information Service can provide you with full details of childcare providers, relevant childcare agencies and other useful information and contacts.

Phone - 01324 506632

Fax – 01324 506604

Email – childcare@falkirk.gov.uk

Website – www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk,
www.falkirk.gov.uk/childcare

Work Life Balance, Family-Friendly Policies, Family-Friendly Working, Working Families

- just some of the policies employers may use to help recognise the advantages of helping employees cope with balancing work and home life.

Employers must comply with equal opportunities legislation. The law applies to firms in all aspects of employment practices and the services provided to the public. The legislation relates to; equal pay, sex discrimination, race relations, disability discrimination, employment rights.

Written in conjunction with Falkirk Council Human Resources, Job Centre Plus and Falkirk Childcare Strategy Team

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The following points are a guide to some of the policies, benefits and help available.

Family Leave Options

Sometimes you may need to take time off work to be with your children. The following points are a guide. For more information on what you are entitled to, please discuss further with your employer or contact Jobcentre Plus.

Maternity Leave

All pregnant employees are entitled to 52 weeks' of maternity leave (26 weeks' Ordinary Maternity Leave and 26 weeks' Additional Maternity Leave).

Pregnant employees who meet qualifying conditions based on their length of service and average earnings are entitled to up to 39 weeks' Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), which is paid by their employers and mostly or completely refunded by the Government.

Women who are not entitled to SMP but meet qualifying conditions based on their recent employment and earnings may claim up to 39 weeks' Maternity Allowance, paid directly by Jobcentre plus.

Maternity Allowance

This allowance may be available to help you take time off to have your baby if you are not entitled to SMP from an employer. Maternity Allowance is also available if you are registered self-employed or have done some employed or self-employed work in the 15 months before the week your baby is due.

Sure Start Maternity Grant

If you are living on a low income and faced with costs that you are unable to meet, you may be able to get a payment, grant or loan from the Social Fund. Sure Start Maternity Grant is a one-off payment to help with the cost of having a new baby, help with the cost of buying essential items for a new baby. This grant could help you.

Paternity Leave

Employee must have continuous service with employer for 26 weeks ending with the fifteenth week before the baby is due. Paternity leave can start on any day of the week, as long as the employee has given the required notice. It must be completed within 56 days of the actual date of birth of the child.

Eligible employees can choose to take either one week or two consecutive weeks' paternity leave. It can't be taken as odd days or as two separate weeks.

Leave can start from any day of the week from the actual date of birth up to 56 days after the expected week of childbirth (EWC) and must be taken as a complete week.

Parental Leave

Parental leave is available to employees who have, or expect to have parental responsibility for a child. To be eligible, employees generally have to have one year's continuous service with their current employer. Employees get 13 weeks in total for each child. Parents of disabled children get 18 weeks in total.

Carers' Leave

In addition, parents will be entitled to a reasonable time off to cope with family emergencies. This may be to deal with an emergency at a child's school, when a child falls ill or to make other arrangements when childcare breaks down.

Adoption Leave

Eligible employees can take up to 52 weeks of adoption leave. This is made up of 26 weeks Ordinary Adoption leave and 26 weeks Additional Adoption leave.

Flexible Work Options

Sometimes you may need to fit your job around the demands of your family, especially while your children are young, when they are coping with new circumstances or if you have a child with disabilities or particular needs. Here are some options to discuss with your employer :-

- Working part-time or reduced hours
- Job sharing
- Term-time working
- Career breaks, unpaid time away from job
- Sabbatical - paid time away from your job
- Teleworking - working from home
- Home working
- Compressed hours
- Staggered Hours
- Shift swapping
- Flexi-time
- Annual hours

If you have a child under 6 years of age, you have the right to request to work flexibly. Requests should normally be in writing but your personnel/HR section will be able to advise you about this. Your employer must consider your application and give you a written response of their decision. Options for flexible working may include some of the above.

Arranging childcare at short notice

Every parent using childcare finds that there comes a time when emergency childcare could be needed - build up a list of possible providers your child knows and reserve some annual leave for emergencies.

Help for Lone Parents on Income Support

If you are a lone parent (starting work, looking for work or claiming benefits) bringing up a child under the age of 16 you could join New Deal for Lone Parents.

Once you join the programme, you will be offered :-

- Advice on jobs, training and benefits
- Help with working out how much you need to earn to be better off
- Help finding out about childcare
- Help with childcare costs while you train or attend job interviews (eligible only if approved by advisor, work-related training, NVQ/SVQ Level 2 or 3 and no more than one year long).

To find out more about New Deal for Lone Parents contact your local JobCentrePlus, or New Deal Information line 0800 917 4164.

Help for Students

Many colleges and universities provide support to help student parents to look after their children. You should ask your student welfare advisor to tell you what your childcare options are and what facilities and support your college or university can offer.

Support from funds are discretionary and administered by colleges and universities. Some of these may be available:-

- Further Education Childcare Fund
- Further Education Hardship Fund
- Hardship Fund
- Higher Education Childcare Fund
- Lone Parent's Childcare Grant
- Lone Parents Grant

Tax Credits

Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit support families with children and working people on low incomes. They give support to families' specific circumstances, and respond to their changing needs, by helping when they need it most.

Child Tax Credit

Child Tax Credit is for people who are responsible for at least one child or young person. You do not have to be working to claim. Child Tax Credit is paid direct to the person who is mainly responsible for caring for the child or children and is paid on top of Child Benefit and any Working Tax Credit you may be able to get.

Working Tax Credit

If you're in work but on low pay, you can apply for Working Tax Credit to top up your earnings. You can claim this whether you're employed or self-employed and you may get extra if:

- you're a parent or responsible for one or more children or young people
- you pay for childcare
- you are disabled
- you're aged 50 or over

You can claim for the childcare element of the costs of any registered or approved childcare that you pay for. You can only claim for the amounts you actually pay. The childcare element can help with up to 80% of your eligible childcare costs.

Tax credits are paid into your bank, building society, Post Office or National Savings account that accepts Direct Payment. For more information contact HM Revenue & Customs Tax Credit Helpline 0845 300 3900 or visit the website.

Benefits to Employers

Employers who provide family friendly arrangements to help their employees could gain from:-

- more loyal staff who don't need to take unauthorised leave
- an increase in the number of staff who return to work after maternity leave
- experienced and skilled staff staying on after they have children
- good returns on investment in training staff
- high levels of staff productivity
- better public image

Implementing Work-Life Balance Policies

The following are some practical suggestions for employers on how to introduce work-life balance policies including Parental, Carer & Flexible Working Policies:-

- hold staff attitude surveys
- avoid being overwhelmed, integrate existing policies into a formal package
- make it clear this is for everyone, not just mums
- improve company literature about work-life balance
- involve staff in policy formation before implementation
- getting involved in childcare by providing information (childcare, Tax Credits, Childcare Vouchers and childcare allowances)