

Discuss options
for flexible
working hours
when employees
return to work

Inspiration:

**What to do when
employees in a
FRI member firm go on
maternity/paternity leave**

Does the
employee want to
be in contact with
the company
during maternity/
paternity leave?

2022

How to make
everyday life
work as a new
parent

Provide information
about salary
developments
during maternity/
paternity leave



Foreningen af
Rådgivende Ingeniører
FRI

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Introduction

The maternity/paternity conditions for employees are regulated by law and were improved in autumn 2022 to ensure that parents are treated equally.

For the most part, FRI member firms offer better maternity/paternity conditions for employees than required by law. However, still *too many new parents quit their job in FRI member firms within the first year of having returned from maternity/paternity leave* to seek opportunities in other industries, such as the public sector and utility companies.

The reason is often that the increase in family members creates uncertainty as to whether it is possible to maintain a work-life balance in their current job. The reason may also be misguided considerations or unconscious bias that the employee prioritises the family over his/her career after maternity/paternity leave, which means that the employee may miss out on exciting roles and tasks or simply be overlooked. To respond to that uncertainty and thus maintain the employee's attachment to the company after the maternity/paternity leave, it is necessary to be able to offer something else than 'just' more maternity/paternity leave.

The period after maternity/paternity leave should be given more focus. How can the company welcome back the employee with an open mind and acknowledge that the employee's private life has changed while also acknowledging that it might now be more important to focus the content of the tasks than it was before? There is no right or wrong way to be on maternity/paternity leave. It is for the individual person to decide, and needs are different. For a FRI member firm, this means that the task of 'retaining an employee after maternity/paternity leave' must rank alongside the task of 'hiring and a new employee'. In short:

Your company and what you offer must be so attractive that the employee chooses to stay in your company after the family increase.

At its Annual General Meeting on 3 March 2022, FRI set out as its ambition to support its member firms' efforts to strengthen the attachment between new parents and the FRI member firm they are employed in. This should help reduce the number of employees who choose to quit their job after their maternity/paternity leave.

FRI's Forum for Diversity and Gender Equality has therefore prepared some good advice to help FRI member firms have as supportive a process as possible. The good advice describes what the company might consider and when. The advice is aimed at all employees and can be adapted according to specific needs and the duration of the maternity/paternity leave. The advice is divided into three periods: Before, During and After maternity/paternity leave.

The good advice can be found at www.frinet.dk as a pdf folder and as a dynamic document.

What to do when employees in a FRI member firm go on maternity/paternity leave

FRI's Forum for Diversity and Gender Equality has prepared some advice for FRI member firms to guide them when an employee go on maternity/paternity leave. The advice is aimed at all employees and can be adapted according to specific needs and the duration of the maternity/paternity leave. The advice is divided into three periods: Before, During and After maternity/paternity leave.

1. Before maternity/paternity leave

➤ Notification of maternity/paternity leave

- Respond positively to the pregnancy
- Make sure that the employee's immediate superior is informed of the coming maternity/paternity leave
- Together with the employee, plan who will take over the employee's tasks, including how customer relations should be maintained after the leave
- Consider whether to hire a temp to fill in for the employee during the leave
- Give information about the employee's salary/pension during the leave
- At this stage, discuss the employee's options in the company when he/she returns from maternity/paternity leave, including the possibility of flexibility, development and promotion.

➤ 4 weeks before the start of maternity/paternity leave

- Invite the employee to a meeting four weeks before the employee goes on leave to match expectations. The meeting can be used to discuss:
- To what extent does the employee want to be in contact with the workplace during the leave? ([click to read more](#))
- Inform the employee about what his/her expected salary development/pension will be during the leave and that the employee will not be forgotten ([click to read more](#))
- When does the employee plan to return after the leave and how ([click to read more](#))

● 2. During maternity/paternity leave

- Send flowers or similar to the new mom/dad
- If the employee has stated that he/she wants to be in contact with the company during the leave, the company can offer to invite him/her to company events and cosy get-togethers to show the baby or get-togethers with others on maternity/paternity leave
- The employee can choose to have internal information sent to his/her private email and/or still have access to the company's intranet – but should not be pressured into it!

○ ➤ **4 weeks before the end of maternity/paternity leave**

- Invite the employee to a meeting 4 weeks before he/she returns from leave. Match your expectations in terms of the role and function that the employee will return to ([click to read more](#)).
- Make sure that everyone knows that the employee is returning to work

● 3. After maternity

In general, it is important to discuss whether everyday life is working for the new parent. Show the company's willingness to be flexible. The more openly you are able to talk about it, the more likely it is that you will be able to find solutions to any challenges and make the right adjustments. It takes more than a couple of conversations, and regular follow-up is necessary.

○ ➤ **First day at work**

- Arrange for flowers and make sure to have a workstation ready
- Hold a meeting where the employee gets an update on current projects
- Arrange a welcome greeting/event where colleagues – despite a busy workday – are invited to come and welcome their colleague back.

○ ➤ **The first few months after maternity/paternity leave**

- Arrange a few meetings with the employee during the first months after returning from maternity/paternity leave. ([click to read more](#))

○ ➤ **The first year after maternity/paternity leave**

- Arrange meetings with the employee every six months or as needed. ([click to read more](#))

Appendix: Elaboration on topics of conversation, matching of expectations and follow-up after maternity/paternity leave

At the meeting 4 weeks before the start of the maternity/paternity leave, you can discuss the following topics:

To what extent does the employee want to be in contact with the workplace during the leave?

For some, it may be a good idea to stay in contact with the workplace during the leave. The employee should naturally decide the extent of the contact, but some degree of contact with the workplace can make it easier to return after the leave. The employee can keep the social relations going to get information about what is happening in the workplace, including major changes of importance to the company. This helps the employee not feel forgotten.

Information about the employee's expected salary development/pension during maternity/paternity leave

The employee will naturally appreciate knowing that he/she will be invited to performance and appraisal interviews and salary reviews on the same terms as his/her colleagues and that he/she is still considered part of the staff/talent pool if a promotion opportunity comes up. This also includes the employee being expected to follow the salary development of the rest of the company and not falling behind due to maternity/paternity leave.

Inform the employee about terms/options

This includes time off if the child becomes ill and the possibility of taking care days, family days and to work part time, etc.

Invite the employee to a meeting 4 weeks before he/she returns from leave.

Match your expectations in terms of the role and function that the employee will return to.

Remember to clarify what the position entails in terms of tasks, interfaces, reporting, development opportunities.

Also remember to invite the employee to join skills development events and courses that can create value for the employee.

In short: Discuss the employee's working conditions and expected needs, both in the short term and in the long term. It allows to you match expectations in terms of tasks and the employee to get to know a new superior.

The first few months after maternity/paternity leave

Arrange a few meetings with the employee during the first months after he/she returns from leave.

At these meetings, you can talk about how the employee has settled in at work: Are there any relevant tasks and development opportunities? And above all, is the employee able to create a work-life balance in his/her new role as a parent?

The first year after maternity/paternity leave

Focus must be on the employee's development opportunities and careers options, and the employee must feel that he/she gets acceptance and support to make everyday life work. It may therefore be an idea to prepare a development plan for the first 6 or 12 months.

At these meetings, you can discuss the employee's needs such as the need for flexible working hours/reduced working hours etc. For some, the best solution is to work part-time, have flexible working hours or maybe be able to work from home to create a work-life balance. For others, it may be other things that are important.

Returning to work after maternity/paternity leave can be an abrupt transition, so it may be a good idea to discuss whether any remaining leave can be spread out. This could be in the form of a weekly day off or an arrangement where the employee leaves early over a period of time.

Discuss options
for flexible
working hours
when employees
return to work

FRI, the Danish Association of Consulting Engineers, is the trade association for consulting and engineering firms. FRI works to improve the business conditions of its member firms and the framework conditions of the industry. We have done so since 1904.

FRI's member firms primarily provide consulting within: Building, urban planning and architecture, construction and infrastructure, energy and industry, climate and environment and international development.

- FRI is a platform for identity and pride
- FRI is a platform for networking
- FRI is a platform for influence
- FRI is a platform for services

FRI creates value for all member firms.

See more at www.frinet.dk

Arrange
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back event

How to make
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