

*Document last updated: 04/09/2024*

# Fertility & Family-forming policy template

At [Company], we recognise the importance of supporting the health of all our employees. We know that fertility and family-forming journeys can have a profound impact on an individual.

- 1 in 6 people globally experience infertility.
- 60% of people take unexplained absences due to the demands of fertility treatments.
- 90% of individuals facing fertility challenges report feeling depressed.
- There has been a 350% increase in surrogacy in the past 12 years in England and Wales.

Our policy gives [Company] employees the framework to talk about their experiences and receive the support they need. It aims to provide [Company] employees with the necessary time and flexibility to address any fertility or family-forming challenges.

It's designed to be inclusive of everyone of every gender identity, sexual orientation, relationship status, age, and family structure, and is part of our commitment to you that all colleagues are treated fairly, equally, and with respect.

*If you feel like the language we've used here could be changed to be more inclusive of you, please let us know. We are always open to learning.*

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**Note for HR managers and People teams:** Do consider outlining how this policy fits within the more general sick leave policy at your company so that employees know how their allowance is broken down and when to use each one. Be sure to signpost this document within your employee handbook, internal portal, and wherever else you think employees might look for it. You want it to be as easy to find as possible.

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Our **[Company]** Fertility and Family-forming Policy covers a range of different processes and procedures, from IVF and ICSI to adoption and surrogacy, and more. We've kept it broad and flexible because no two paths to parenthood will look the same.

## The practicalities of the policy

### 1: How many days you're entitled to:

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**We trust you to do what is right for you.**

You can take up to **[x]** days off per year for fertility and family-forming challenges. How and when you use them is up to you. If you need more time than that, let your manager or HR know. We want this policy to work for you and we are happy to adjust it as needed.

If it's not time off that you need, flexible working arrangements (including working from home or adjusting working hours) are also available to support you through these challenges. Just let your manager know what would work best for you and we can go from there by having a confidential conversation.

**Note for HR managers and People teams:** It's important to clearly state here whether the leave you are offering is paid or unpaid leave for clarity.

### 2: Where to find support:

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We would encourage you to speak to your line manager, HR manager, People team or whoever you feel most comfortable speaking to about what you're experiencing. Remember, these conversations will be kept completely confidential.

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We also recognise that you might not feel comfortable speaking to someone at work about this, so we've outlined some resources below that might help too. This list is by no means exhaustive but it's a good place to start!

[HFEA](#)

[Surrogacy UK](#)

[COTS Surrogacy UK](#)

[Adoption UK](#)

[Fertility Network UK](#)

[Donor Conceived UK](#)

If you need to take more than the **[x]** days you are entitled to (for example, for travel to another country), a return-to-work discussion with your line manager or HR manager is recommended.

Your reasonable adjustment form can be reviewed too, and you can create a personal plan tailored to you that our HR team can organise. This plan should be reviewed on a regular basis.

### 3: How to book time off for fertility and family-forming challenges:

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We know that worrying about having to use annual leave is the last thing employees should be concerned about whilst going through family-forming challenges. This is why we have separated things clearly in your **[Human Resources Information System]**. You can book time off the same way you book sick leave off, just make sure to use our designated fertility and family-forming category in the **[Company]** system.

**Note for HR managers and People teams:** Set this up in your internal system. You might also prefer to have an 'Other' category that people can use for fertility and family-forming absences if they don't feel comfortable specifying what it's for. Be sure to emphasise that any time off will be taken in confidence and that only HR and/or their manager will be informed.

We understand that in some circumstances, additional family-forming leave may be required. In these cases, speak with your manager and the People team.

## 4: How to access clinical and wellbeing support:

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★ *To be included if [Company], is a Fertifa client*

At [Company], we offer support for fertility and family-forming challenges through [Fertifa](#), our reproductive healthcare provider.

To use this support, you can download the Fertifa app from the App Store or Google Play and get access to unlimited 1-2-1 support from Fertifa's in-house clinical team, for all fertility and family-forming challenges.

You'll also have access to a suite of educational resources through the Fertifa App - you can browse articles, attend webinars, and join live Q&A sessions with doctors and nurses on the most common and complicated areas in fertility and family-forming.

## Important terminology

We want to make sure you're comfortable and well equipped to make the right decision for you, and so we've kept our language simple and straightforward. As you read through this policy, you might have come across some phrases that you've never heard of or that require further explanation which we have explained below.

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### **Adoption**

Adoption is a formal legal process in which the rights and responsibilities relating to a child are transferred to the adoptive parent(s).

### **Egg freezing**

Egg freezing is the process of extracting eggs from the ovaries to preserve them so they can be used to try and become pregnant at a later stage. The frozen eggs can later be thawed and used in a procedure called IVF.

### **Fertility investigations**

Fertility investigations refer to any consultations, blood tests, scans or other procedures that may be required as part of a reproductive health diagnosis or ahead of treatment.

### **In vitro fertilisation (IVF)**

IVF is a fertility treatment that usually involves initial hormone treatment to suppress the natural menstrual cycle, followed by a procedure to collect eggs from the ovaries. If successful, eggs may then be frozen, or fertilised with sperm in a laboratory. If fertilisation is successful at that stage, the fertilised egg(s) or embryo(s), is then returned to the womb through a further transfer procedure to hopefully develop and continue through full pregnancy to birth. One transfer process can take up to eight weeks.

### **Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI)**

ICSI is sometimes carried out as part of an IVF process, where eggs once collected are individually injected with a single sperm. This fertility treatment is

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more commonly required when fertility issues are sperm related. Due to the additional step and equipment required, it can be a more expensive process.

### **Intrauterine insemination (IUI)**

IUI is an artificial insemination process, using a partner's or donated sperm. This is generally a less physically invasive procedure than IVF.

### **Partner**

For the purpose of this policy, 'partner' refers to either a spouse, civil partner, or someone you live with and are in a relationship with, who is not a relative.

### **Surrogacy**

Surrogacy is when a woman carries and delivers a child for a couple or individual who is unable to conceive or carry the child themselves.

### **Treatment cycle**

Treatment cycle refers to the duration of any fertility treatment. A treatment cycle usually lasts around 4-8 weeks. However, a treatment cycle may last 3-4 months in some cases dependent on additional procedures, the course and outcomes of treatment.

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