Parents-to-be HANDBOOK

Working

Hello and welcome!

Thanks for downloading the handbook. As promised in the book, in here you will find:

- All the exercises outlined
- The templates shared
- The wheel of life tool
- A summary version of the checklists
- The list of resources with live links*

*correct and live at the time of writing!

To help you find something specific quickly, I've included also a contents page and broken into the three core parts of the book: before you go on leave, while you're away on parental leave and returning to work.

I hope you find this a helpful extra resource to either use alongside reading the book or to go through afterwards as and when needed.

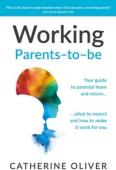
I'd love to know what you think, both of this and the book, so please do get in touch and / or leave me a review on Amazon – they really are hugely valued both my me and other readers.

Thanks and I hope all is going really well for you

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Before you go on leave

Exercise 1.1: How are you feeling right now?

Before we get too far into this, I want you to take a moment to think about the challenges you feel you are facing today – right now – and note them down. There is absolutely no right or wrong answer here. This exercise is purely intended as a way to capture your thoughts at this time and give you something to refer back to.

It's very likely that what you think is a challenge now will evolve over time. In fact, I would expect your views to change even in the amount of time it takes to read this book, let alone as you learn more from other sources, including those around you. Some of the challenges you note you will quickly overcome and tick off the list; others will raise their heads that you have not even thought of.

For now, though, I want you to ask yourself the following questions and write down the first thoughts that come to mind. Be really honest with yourself. No one else is going to read this list unless you choose to share it with them (although you might want to recruit your partner or a friend to help you do this). And no concern is too small. If it's bothering you, write it down. And look at this as a living list that grows with you. Revisit it often as you progress through the book and, if you find it helpful, add to it as you go.

What are your biggest concerns right now about leaving work?

What do you think your biggest concerns will be when you're thinking about returning to work?

Once you've done this, take a moment to process what's on your mind. Are there any themes emerging? For example, it could be a lack of information making you feel uneasy, or a particular relationship of concern. Or it might be a bunch of different things and that's okay, too. Either way, it's worth re-reading this a couple of times and letting it sink in. You can probably see where I'm going with this... being aware of what's worrying you is the first step to figuring out how to deal with it.

Exercise 2.1: Who might be able to help you?

Let's start by creating a list of stakeholders both inside and out of work who are in a position to help you through this transition. Remember, you will need different types of support at different times so don't discount any at this point. You're essentially creating a list that you can look back at when you need it (or metaphorically). Use the suggestions in the box below to help you.

Sources of Support – pointers to get you started

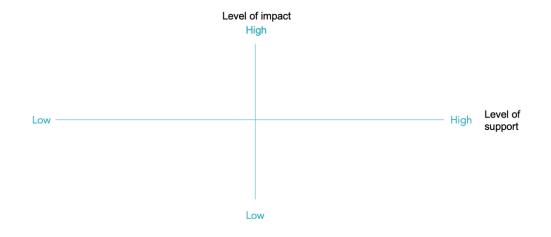
Work	Home
Manager	Partner
Director / Leadership	Parents
Work friends / colleagues	Close friends
HR Partner / manager / contact	Brother(s) / sister(s) / cousin(s)
Key client / supplier	Antenatal class members

Exercise 2.2, Part 1: How much support could they offer and how much influence do they have?

Start by reviewing your draft list of stakeholders both inside and out of work who are in a position to help you through this transition (using your list from Exercise 2.1).

Now think about how supportive you think they currently are and how much potential to make a difference to you that they have. What I'm getting at here is that there will be some obvious points of support you will naturally turn to, but these are not the only ones. There may be others who are less obvious – either in terms of you thinking of asking them for help or them being inclined to give it – but who could make a big difference to you. Thinking through who they might be now could be of great help to you later.

Now, plot those names onto this framework:

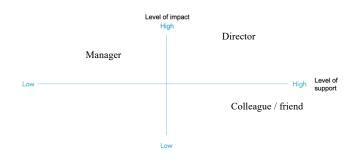


Level of Impact – refers to how much of a difference they *could* make to your experience Level of Support – refers to how supportive you feel they are of you becoming a parent

For example, your manager may not (from your perspective) appear to be very understanding or supportive and yet they may have a big influence on your overall experience as well as your future career progression, so in this example, you'd put them in the top left segment. Or, you may have a director / senior manager, who has always been a bit of a mentor and is a parent to a young child themselves. They may not be able to directly influence your day to day, but they could be a real champion able to influence your manager, so they'd go to the right and above the line. Or there may be a colleague who has been there and done that with going on parental leave and could share lots of useful tips, so you'd put them bottom right. I've added these examples to a smaller version so you can see how this builds.

This clearly isn't an exact science. Even as I wrote this, I challenged myself on where to "put" people. For example, the friend who has been there and done that could be hugely impactful if they are able to help when you face a major challenge but hopefully you get the point. Take a look at the example framework that follows and the pointers to get your started.

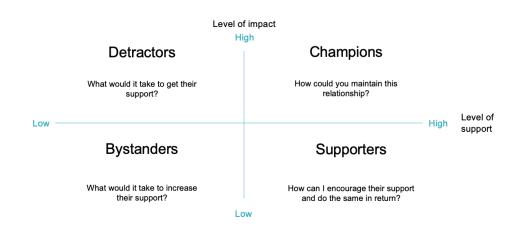
Example template



Exercise 2.2, Part 2: What would it take to get the most support from them?

Review your stakeholder map/framework and think / talk through the following for each name:

- Why have you put them in that quarter?
- How are they likely to be feeling about you becoming a parent and why?
- What could you do to get the best out of the relationship at this time?
- What would it take to move them into or keep them in the Champion / Supporter quarter?



For example, it may be your manager is just feeling concerned about how they will cope without you and worried about saying the wrong thing. Be careful not to make any assumptions. Talk to them and try and find out. Being open about how you're feeling and what you're comfortable talking about with them might really help break down any barriers. Equally, to keep your Director in the top right, it might be helpful to keep them updated on your progress, and share your thoughts on career progression or even get their advice on making sure you're not forgotten while you're away. And that colleague who has been there and done that? Make an effort to get to know them better, ask their advice. Every parent LOVES to share their best tips! Who knows, they could become a great friend who gets what you're going through in a way others without children may not.

Exercise 3.1: What are your takeaways from Part 1?

What are your key outstanding concerns?	Who could help? What actions could you take?		
	/ /		

Checklist: Before you go on leave

Making sure you're informed	
Make sure you understand what you need to do when (forms to submit by what date)	
Familiarise yourself with the relevant policies (like antenatal appts) and benefits	
Agree with your manager when and how you share your news with your team / wider stakeholders	
Get an understanding of what happens to your pay , pension etc while you are on leave	

Reflect on your achievements	
Make a note of key systems / logins to help you get back up and running more quickly	
Make a list of your key stakeholders to use to keep them informed and refer back to on your return – and those you want to keep in touch with while you're on leave	
Consider ramping back up slowly and ways to stay connected with the team while you're on leave (e.g. for offsites, workshops or training days)	
Think about your return and consider discussing any flexibility requirements before you go	
Think about how you want to be contacted while you're on leave	
Consider the use of KIT days while you're on leave	
Agree a final date with your manager and consider ramping down in your final weeks	
Create a handover plan and agree this with your manager (and any other key stakeholders) at least 6 weeks before you leave	
Consider if you'd like to be involved in arranging cover while you're on leave and what would be the best solution (for you and the organization)	
Do some preparation – at work	

Arrange a meeting with your manager before you go to discuss your performance and talk about your aspirations	
Think about your first week back in the organization – make a to do list of people to re-connect with, systems / processes to re-familiarise yourself with	
Consider how long you expect to be off and if you're comfortable, consider sharing this with your manager (it's not binding but will help you both plan for your absence and return)	

Do some preparation – at home	
Think about childcare options and start exploring them (you have to sign up for some nurseries before the baby is born!)	
Consider which family and friends could help you - ask and accept it	
Start thinking about the kind of parent you want to be	

While you're away on parental leave

Exercise 4.1: How are you feeling about your return right now?

Before we get too far into this, as in Chapter 1, take a moment to think about how you are feeling about returning today – right now - and make a note below. There are no right or wrong answers here. In the same way as every pregnancy is unique, so is everyone's experience of parental leave. It follows then that how you will feel about returning to work will also be unique. And this is likely to change over time.

Try not to refer back to your notes/answers from Chapter 1 at this point, or at least not before you've jotted down your immediate thoughts! If you do look back afterwards, you'll probably notice a shift in priorities. Some of your early concerns have probably reduced and new ones will have crept in to take their place.

For now though, I want you to ask yourself the following questions and write down the first thoughts that come to mind. Be really honest with yourself. No one else is going to read this list unless you choose to share it with them. And no concern is too small. If it's bothering you, write it down. And again, consider involving a partner or friend and look at this as a living list that grows with you. Revisit it as often as you like as you progress through the book.

What have you already noticed you're feeling differently about now to before you went on leave?

What are your biggest concerns when you think about returning to work?

What are you feeling really positive or sure about?

Once you've done this, take a moment to process what's on your mind. Are there any themes emerging? For example, it could be you can't see how you're going to manage drop off and pick up with your commute, or that you feel very nervous about leaving your child or re-joining your team – or all of these and more! That's okay. As ever, being aware of what's worrying you is half the battle. Take some time to recognise what you're feeling good about. And why that might be. It could be as simple as having some adult conversation and the chance to drink an entire hot drink without interruption!

Re-read and let it sink in ...

Exercise 4.2: What's motivating you to return?

Having read the section on motivation, take a moment to consider *your* motivations for returning to work. You can use the grid below if you find it helpful, but this is not exhaustive so don't be restricted by it (hence the spare rows). I have found it helpful to consider their relative importance too. What are the main drivers and what are secondary?

	Hugely important	Important	A factor	Not a factor at all
Income / security (short and long term)				
Love what you do				
Sense of identity				
Mental stimulation				
Connection / adult conversation / part of team				
Independence / freedom				
Important for your confidence				

Exercise 4.3: What are your aspirations right now?

Being honest with yourself about your career aspirations and whether these have changed since before you went on leave is really important. For you *and* for those around you.

What are your career aspirations now? Do you want to progress and if so, what does that mean in terms of your role and in what timeframe?

How important to you is having time to adjust? What does that look like to you and what timeframe do you ideally want to work to? What impact, if any, does this have on your career aspirations?

Keep re-visiting this - as you've probably guessed how you feel about this is likely to change over time.

Exercise 5.1: What's your ideal working pattern?

Before we move on, take a moment to note how you're feeling about your working pattern going forwards at this point.

What's your objective? What are you hoping to achieve and why? What are the must-haves vs the nice-to-haves?

What potential solutions are you considering proposing at this point? Would it be a formal or informal arrangement? Is a trial worth suggesting?

What do you think the reaction might be? What's driving this? How could you address any concerns?

What else do you need to find out to help you? Who do you need to speak to?

Keep re-visiting this – as you've probably guessed how you feel about this is likely to change over time. And the more time you can give yourself before you need to discuss it the better. But remember it is a conversation, so don't get yourself entrenched in a position either. Look at the conversation as the first step towards agreeing a new way of working.

Exercise 6.1: What's front of mind as you plan your return?

Having read through these what's front of mind for you now? You might find it useful to fill out this template with actions to take.

Where	What	Who	When
is this a challenge,	is it you need to do?	do you need to talk to	is a good time to aim
home or work?		/ help from?	to do this / is there a
		·	deadline?

Exercise 6.2: What are your takeaways from Part 2?

What are your key outstanding concerns?	Who could help? What actions could you take?

Templates

Sample return to work plans

Return to work date

_	Week -4	Week -3	Week -2	Week -1	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Parent 1: Uses all 10 KIT Days to stagger their return so that from 4 weeks before their official return back they gradually increase the number of days they are in until their first official week back	1 KIT day	2 KIT Days	3 KIT Days	4 KIT Days				
Parent 2: uses all 10 KIT Days and uses 6 days leave to stagger their return so that they effectively return 4 weeks before their official return date and gradually ramp up from 2 day weeks to full time over a couple of months	2 KIT day	2 KIT Days	3 KIT Days	3 KIT Days	2 days leave	2 days leave	1 days leave	1 days leave
Parent 3: uses all 10 days of annual leave to start getting paid again but delay their actual return for 2 weeks					5 days leave	5 days leave		
Parent 4: uses their accrued annual leave to work less days per week for their first X months back but still be paid full-time / their new arrangement					1 days leave	1 days leave	1 days leave	1 days leave ➡

NB: for simplicity, all of these examples assume someone is returning 5 days / week but they could easily be adapted to shorter weeks

Your return to work plan

Here's a blank template for you to work out what different options might look like and create your own return to work plan.

	Week -4	Week -3	Week -2	Week -1	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Option 1:								
Option 2:								
Option 3:								
Option 4:								

Return to work date

Weekday Childcare Plan

	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri
Get ready					
Drop off					
On point for any					
issues					
Pick up					
Bath / bedtime					
Prep for next day					

*NB assumes regular Mon-Fri working pattern but please adapt as needed

Family Admin Review

What	Who's currently	Talk about changing?
	responsible (you / your	
	partner / shared)	
Cleaning the house		
Changing beds		
Washing / ironing		
Grocery shopping		
Cooking		
Bins		
Gardening		
Cars		
Shopping for kids		
Birthday presents / parties		
Family social plans		
Holiday planning		
Medical appointments		
Finance planning		
House repairs		
Pet care		
Childcare providers		
Bills		

Checklist: While you're away on leave

Preparing for your return – at work	
Create a plan for your first day / week / month back – stakeholders to reconnect with, and what's reasonable in terms of achievements	
Make sure your tech is set up and ready for your return (email account, work mobile, key logins etc)	
Find out about major events and make sure you have them in your diary – e.g. offsites, training days, team socials – and have childcare cover for them	
Arrange a meeting with your manager on your first day and get a briefing on key changes since you left, new projects / priorities for the organization, new team members, stakeholders etc	
Start thinking about your boundaries – when you are going to have to arrive or leave at a certain time and how you will manage the inevitable clashes	
Consider carefully what flexibility you will need – both formally and informally . Give yourself plenty of time to get this agreed and remember nothing is forever! If you're seeking reduced or changed hours consider a trial period to make sure it works for you and the organization.	

Preparing for your return – at home	
Create a back-up plan for when things go wrong (e.g. your little one is poorly)	
Think through and explore the childcare options – you may find a combination is right for you	
Consider a settling in period / trial run with your childcare before your first day back and consider phasing your return to allow you and your child to adjust	
Have a conversation at home (or several!) about how you will manage logistics and also how you will rebalance the load at home - plan meals, weekly shopping, and family admin	
Check your "work wardrobe" – make sure you have clothes that still fit you and you feel great in	
Consider any personal appointments due that it might be helpful to do before you go back – such as eye tests, dentist, doctor	
Consider seeking and accepting help from friends/family	

Returning to work

Exercise 7.1: How are you feeling about your return to work?

As at the start of the previous two parts of the book, let's take a moment to recognise how you're feeling about your return today, right now, and make some notes below. As ever, there is no right or wrong answer here. And, perhaps more than ever, how you feel (or felt) on your first day back might be very different to the end of the first week back or 6 weeks in.

Try not to refer back to your notes/answers in Chapters 1 and 4 at this point. Again, your thoughts are likely to have evolved still further.

For now, I want you to ask yourself the following questions and right down the first thoughts that come to mind. Be really honest with yourself. No one else is going to read this list unless you choose to share it with them or get them to help you with it. And no thought is irrelevant. If it's on your mind, write it down. And again, look at this as a living list, that grows with you. Revisit it as often as you like as you progress through the book.

What are you feeling really good about? What's working well?

What are you finding are the biggest challenges? Or what will they be?

What do you think is most likely to have an impact on your overcoming these?

Once you've done this, take a moment to process what's on your mind.

Exercise 8.1: Planning your first 3 months back

What might be on your 3-month plan? This is likely to include practical actions (like reconnecting with keep people) and more difficult to measure things (like feeling part of the team). For the practical actions list specifics (which people?) and for the more difficult try and unpick what it would take (e.g. for feeling part of the team, it might mean contributing at team meetings, feeling on top of your work and feeling like someone people look to for advice and so on)

Aim	What's does that mean to	When
e.g. reconnecting	you?	Is this something you'd like to
	e.g. who to meet up with	achieve by week one, month one, month 3?

Exercise 9.1: What skills have you brought back to your workplace after becoming a parent?

Reflect on what's changed for you. Which of the points above resonate with you? Where are you today vs when you first found out you were going to become a parent? I suspect you have come a long way in that time.

What skills have you enhanced since becoming a parent?

What new skills have you developed since becoming a parent?

How might these be useful in your role?

Exercise 9.2: What are your takeaways from Part 3?

What are your key outstanding concerns?	Who could help? What actions could you take?
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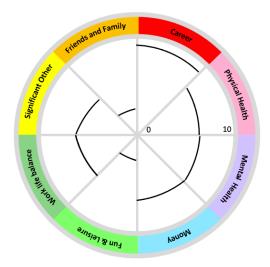
The Wheel of Life

Originally attributed to John Meyer, one of the founders of life coaching, back in the 1960s, this is a tool intended to help you take a snapshot view of how you're feeling about the varying aspects of your life at any given time, so you can recognise what might be in need of attention.



The idea is to look at each area of your life in turn and give it a mark out of 10; 10 is great, really satisfied, 0 is very dissatisfied. It should be a gut reaction, not something you spend a lot of time thinking about. It is likely to help you quickly acknowledge what you probably already knew.

For example, you may be feeling you're not managing to find time for yourself whether that be exercise or time with friends, so you score these very low, whereas you feel you're doing well with your work, and everything is ok, so it might look a bit like this:



And remember, how you score a category depends on what it means to you. For example, career to one person may just mean their feeling they are doing their job, to someone else it would mean not just doing the job but learning and growing ready for the next one.

It is not meant make you feel bad; it's meant to help focus your mind on what you need to tackle – and that's half the battle - and then thinking about where you can make changes, and where you can't. For example, it might be what could make a difference between a low and high score for work life balance is making it home for bath time each night. Or not feeling quite so rushed in the mornings.

Be aware it will change over time too so this a great tool to use on a regular basis.

Checklist: Returning to work

Your first few weeks/months back	
Give yourself time to adjust - it takes time	
Review and extend your plan for your first weeks/months back – think about what good would look like and be realistic about what you can achieve (be mindful of doing too little as well as too much)	
Be aware of any relevant rights – that may be helpful on your return, in particular parental leave and emergency leave	
Make the most of any "quiet time" in your first few weeks back – arrange catch ups with as many of your key stakeholders as possible	
Be open to talking and reviewing your new ways of working - work closely with your manager and wider team/stakeholders to explore and adapt to new ways of working - thinking carefully about any flexibility you will need, formally and informally - this will evolve over time	
Be honest about your boundaries – especially if you have reduced your hours but also if you used to commonly work late and no longer can	
Consider building in transition time – to help take the pressure off of drop off and pick up	
Work with your manager to agree early priorities and how you'll communicate these to your team and key stakeholders	
Arrange a meeting with your manager / any relevant senior stakeholders once you've been back a few weeks to discuss your career aspirations and manage expectations (avoid assumptions being made, either way)	
Develop lines you're comfortable with when you face the inevitable clashes	
Expect a lot of hiccups with childcare - have a plan to deal with these (at work and home)	
Be mindful of establishing short-term patterns if you're sharing leave and your partner is taking over	
Try not to make snap decisions in your first few weeks / months back	

Your new normal	
Make sure you don't pass on opportunities to learn and develop , particularly if you're working less hours	
Think about how you can maintain your profile – it's very easy to slip into "get the job done and get home" and feel you don't have time for this, find ways to make time	
Work out new ways to network (e.g. lunch or coffee vs evenings)	
Make sure you have an ongoing conversation with your manager about ways of working – make sure it's working for both of you and you're both adapting to the inevitable changes (and contingency plans you have in place)	
Seek out buddies/mentors/champions to help – think about those who recognise your value and will help keep up your confidence and stretch you	
Keep an eye on our old foe, guilt - recognize it and look the for the evidence	
Be aware of your own wellbeing – especially if you're a single parent	

Further Reading

As promised, here is the list from the book with live links.

Global

The best global reference I have found is the International Labour Organization (ILO) report. The ILO is a UN agency based in Geneva. The report (2022) is c.400 pages long but includes at-a-glance tables which give you a really good overview of the provisions in 185 countries around the world, as of 2021. There is also an Executive Summary which shares the key findings.

- Overview and full report: <u>https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/care-</u> economy/WCMS_838653/lang--en/index.htm
- Executive summary: <u>https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_838655.pdf</u>

By country / region

- o UK
- UK government
 - Overview of policies relating to childcare and parenting including maternity, paternity, adoption and surrogacy: <u>https://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting</u>
 - Overview of your rights on parental leave including KIT Days, SPLIT Days, and job protection: <u>https://www.gov.uk/employee-rights-when-on-leave</u>
 - Pregnant employee rights: <u>https://www.gov.uk/working-when-pregnant-your-rights</u>
 - Maternity leave and pay: <u>https://www.gov.uk/maternity-pay-leave/pay</u>
 - Paternity leave and pay: <u>https://www.gov.uk/paternity-pay-leave</u>
 - Emergency leave: <u>https://www.gov.uk/time-off-for-dependants</u>
 - Unpaid parental leave the entitlement to time off in addition to maternity / paternity / adoption leave that is limited to 4 weeks per year: <u>https://www.gov.uk/parental-leave/entitlement</u>
 - Shared Parental Leave: <u>https://www.gov.uk/shared-parental-leave-and-pay</u>
- General advice on parental leave
 - ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) advice for parents covering your rights both as an employee and employer: <u>https://www.acas.org.uk/time-off-for-parents</u>
 - Maternity Action maternity rights charity who offer a free helpline: <u>https://maternityaction.org.uk/#</u>
 - Pregnant Then Screwed advice line for guidance on rights, flexible working requests and questions about maternity pay / leave: <u>https://pregnantthenscrewed.com/your-rights/</u>
 - Working families UK charity for working parents and carers support for employees and employers and helpline: <u>https://workingfamilies.org.uk</u>

- Specific advice
 - MAT B1 Forms Bounty (UK parenting club): <u>https://www.bounty.com/pregnancy-and-birth/preparing-for-your-new-arrival/matb1-form-the-lowdown</u>
 - Childcare Options National Childcare Trust (NCT): <u>https://www.nct.org.uk/life-parent/work-and-childcare/childcare/childcare-options</u>
 - Childcare costs using Tax-Free Childcare Working Families: <u>https://workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/tax-free-childcare</u>
 - Adoption Leave
 - Working Families: <u>https://workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/adoption-leave/</u>
 - Pregnancy loss Tommy's <u>https://www.tommys.org</u>
 - Shared Parental Leave for adoption or surrogacy Working Families: <u>https://workingfamilies.org.uk/articles/shared-parental-leave-for-parents-using-adoption-or-surrogacy</u>
 - Pre- and post-natal depression Pandas advice and helpline <u>https://pandasfoundation.org.uk</u>

• **EU**

 Overview of rights of those living in the EU with links to country specific employee benefits: <u>https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/human-resources/working-hours-holiday-leave/parental-leave/index_en.htm#</u>

• North America

o Canada

- Government of Canada overview of maternity and parental benefits: <u>https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-maternity-parental.html</u>
- o **USA**
 - Family and Medical Leave Act overview from the US Department of Labor: <u>https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fmla</u>
 - This article shares a good summary of the current provisions in the US, and how they vary by state you live and your employer along with the rules around PTO and what happens in practice: <u>https://www.babycenter.com/pregnancy/your-life/maternity-leave-the-</u> basics 449#

o APAC

- o Australia
 - Australian government overview of parental leave, rights including KIT Days: <u>https://www.fairwork.gov.au/leave/maternity-and-parental-leave</u>
- Hong Kong
 - Hong Kong Labour Department with an overview of FAQs relating to employment including maternity and paternity leave: <u>https://www.labour.gov.hk/eng/faq/content.htm</u>
- Singapore
 - Singapore Government (Ministry of Manpower) overview of parental leave and how this varies depending on whether you are a Singapore citizen or not: <u>https://www.mom.gov.sg/employment-practices/leave</u>
- o New Zealand
 - Employment New Zealand government overview of parental leave: <u>https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/parental-leave/eligibility/</u>

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