

TIPSHEET

SUPPORTING EXPECTANT AND NEW PARENTS IN YOUR BUSINESS



What do you do when one of your employees tells you they're expecting a baby?

Do you know how to have the right conversations? Do you have practices in place to support dads going on long leave? Do you know how to encourage your people to return, equipped with the new juggling skills that come with parenthood?



In this tip sheet we're going to look at three things you can do to set yourself up for success, and help you – and your employees – transition well. Plan, Connect, and Set up.



PLAN

To prepare well for Parental Leave, the priority is to plan. That means:

- **Familiarising yourself with the government's Paid Parental Leave scheme and your organisation's parental leave work policies.** Share these with your employee.
- **Setting up a time to talk about key dates and options for parental leave.** Consider safety (for birth mothers) which might mean more breaks, less standing time, or limiting exposure to harmful chemicals.
- **Creating a clear handover and communication plan.** How could the role be covered, and how will you let clients know the plan? Start this planning early!
- **Agreeing on a Keeping in Touch Plan.** Returning to work after a period of leave can be challenging, but it's made easier through connection. Even if your employee wants to switch off from work completely while they're on leave, you'll still need to communicate key information. The easiest way to manage this is by agreeing a plan upfront.
- **Give them a good send-off!** Acknowledge the significance of this transition by congratulating them personally and giving them a good send-off. Make sure you've asked how you'll find out their baby news!



CONNECT

When your employee is on leave, the main thing to do is to connect. That means:

- **Following the keeping in touch plan.** Even if you didn't agree a plan before they went on leave, it's not too late to ask them how they'd like to stay in touch. Be creative – e.g. celebrating milestones (i.e. when baby turns three months), inclusion in team days or involvement in professional development activities.
- **Thinking flexibly.** Make sure you keep a flexible mindset as your employee starts to consider their return to work. Be aware you can also use 'keeping in touch' days to ramp back into work gradually rather than returning all at once.

What if things don't go to plan?

There are various journeys to parenthood that may affect your workforce, such as fertility treatment, adoptions, surrogacy, pregnancy loss and pre-term birth.

Sign up to the Parent Well for guidance on how to support your employees through these often hidden journeys.



SET UP

Hurrah, your employee is preparing to return to work! This phase is all about making time to set up your new working parent for success. That means:

Working together to plan the return.

As the return date approaches, start having conversations to bed down the plans for those early weeks. Keep that flexible mindset and look at how you can flex around the needs of the parent while keeping clients happy (e.g. reduced hours, early start/late finish, selective client list).

Telling the broader team – and clients – about the return-to-work.

This is the time to really make the parent feel welcome and supported. Message key clients to communicate changes and acknowledge those who may have stepped up during the leave period.

Create a plan for those first weeks back to increase certainty and reduce anxiety.

Have a 'Day One Timetable', allowing time for the returning parent to get up to speed on new products and services. Avoid making assumptions about their preferences – it's always good to ask, don't assume!

Discussing supports (both at work and at home).

What concerns does the parent have, and how can adjustments be made if needed? Think about infant feeding needs and how you'll work together with the team to support this, sick days, childcare logistics and commuting, etc.

Considering safety.

Is there anything you need to consider with regard to your employee returning, e.g. heavy lifting, prolonged standing or fatigue?

Checking in at the critical moments.

We recommend checking in at three, six and 12 months (or more – but not less!). These can be particularly challenging periods for a new parent, and an opportunity for you to remind them of the range of supports available to them, both at work and through free services and resources.

Need more?

We're building an online program to give small businesses the tools they need to manage parental leave transitions well.

Sign up to our pilot program help us shape these resources.



SUPPORT

Did you know that 1 in 5 mums and 1 in 10 dads suffer from perinatal anxiety or depression? Yet, 74% of parents don't seek help until crisis point.

Planning ahead to intentionally manage the parental leave transition can reduce the risks to mental health during this critical life transition.

For information about the signs and symptoms of perinatal mental health, visit: transitioningwell.com.au/PMH-Distress-Signs

If your employee needs support, encourage your employee to seek help early and make them aware of the support services and resources available, including:

- **Their GP**, who can refer them to an appropriate specialist.
- **eCOPE Directory** – directory.cope.org.au (a list of health professionals who specialise in perinatal mental health)
- **Lifeline** – 13 11 14 (24-hour support)
- **Perinatal Anxiety and Depression Australia (PANDA)** 1300 726 306 (9am-7.30pm Monday to Saturday)
- **Sign up to Ready to COPE** – cope.org.au (for all parents, at all stages)
- **Sign up to SMS 4 Dads** – sms4dads.com.au

Be sure to check in regularly to see how the person is going so they know they are not alone.



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TRANSITIONING WELL

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