



# From working life to family leave and back

**FAMILY LEAVE GUIDE  
FOR EMPLOYERS**



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# Dear employer or immediate supervisor!

You are about to take an important step in a significant change period for your employees. When your employee's family grows, it has effects on the whole working community.

With this guide, you can streamline work-family reconciliation and promote the well-being of the entire working community. The guide summarises the main issues concerning family leaves, the act on which was amended on 1 August 2022.

We explain what employers should take into account before, during and when returning from family leave. You will find valuable practical information in the guide, with companies and employers also telling their own stories about the implementation of family leave transitions.

The guide allows for easy navigation back and forth between chapters. You can browse the most appropriate content for you using the guide's timeline, under the pages in the navigation bar and on the cover page of the different sections. If you wish to review a topic in more detail, you can go to more information using the links. The information, perspectives and tips have been prepared in cooperation with several organisations, employers, employer associations, employee unions and research institutions.

The guide is published the Uusimaa Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment's From family leave to work project and produced by Era Content Oy. The From family leave to work project is funded by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.

## IN COOPERATION WITH:

DNA Plc  
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Koti Puhtaaksi  
Oy Miessakit ry  
Finland for All Families network  
Mothers in Business ry  
MiB Service Sector Employers Palta.  
Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions SAK  
STTK ry  
Suomen Yrittäjät, SY  
Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare THL Finnish  
Institute of Occupational Health TTL  
Family Federation of Finland Väestöliitto  
General Unemployment Fund YTK





# Introduction

“Preparing for family leaves starts with perceiving the big picture. It is a good idea to go over the plan together with the person taking family leave. When you bring clarity to the situation where there are a lot of variables, the transitions are made easier both before, during and after the leave. Planning together also strengthens both parties’ understanding of the changing situation.”

– *Saija Enqvist, From family leave to work project*

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# Kela's family leave system and support for the employer in a nutshell

What is family leave, who can take family leave and what is the structure of family leaves? How does Kela support the employer in family leave situations?

## Pregnancy allowance

A pregnant parent becomes entitled to pregnancy leave at the earliest 30 working days, or approximately weeks, before the estimated due date of the baby. A parent on pregnancy leave is paid pregnancy allowance. It is paid for 40 working days, or approximately 6.5 weeks. The employee should be instructed to apply for pregnancy allowance from Kela in time.

Before applying for pregnancy benefit, the employer informs the employee whether they can receive a salary for the period of parental leave (usually 3 months). The employee must inform the employer of the pregnancy leave at least two months before the start of the leave.

## Special pregnancy allowance

An employee may be paid special pregnancy allowance if they need to be absent, before being paid actual pregnancy allowance,

due to being exposed to chemical substances, radiation or infectious disease at the workplace. If the risk factor cannot be avoided at work, the pregnant employee's job description has to be modified or she must be transferred to a safer job.

An employee may be paid special pregnancy allowance if the risk factors are unavoidable and the employer is unable to arrange other tasks during the pregnancy. In addition, it is required that the employee is fit for work.

Special pregnancy allowance is paid until the actual pregnancy allowance period begins. The special pregnancy allowance does not reduce the actual pregnancy allowance.

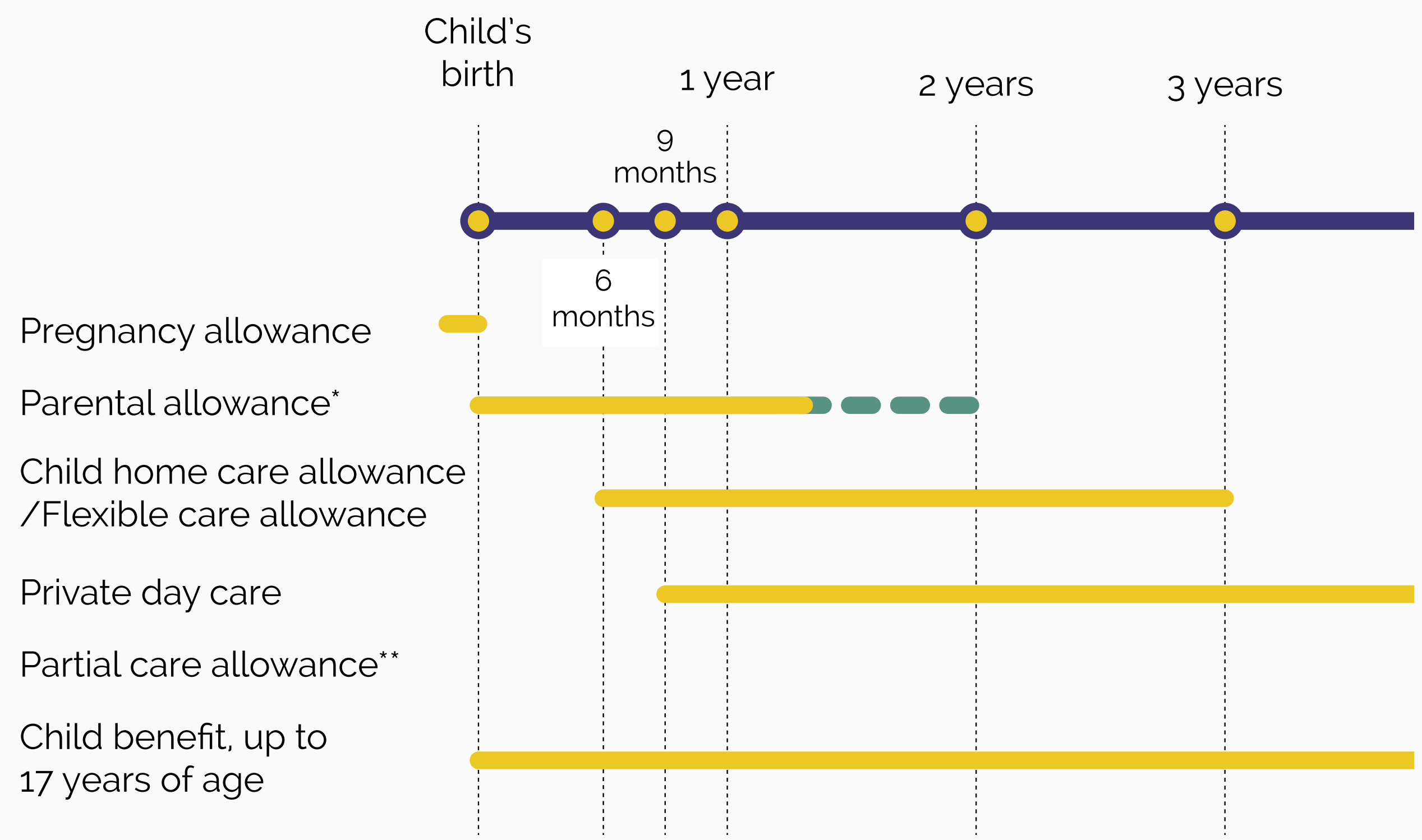
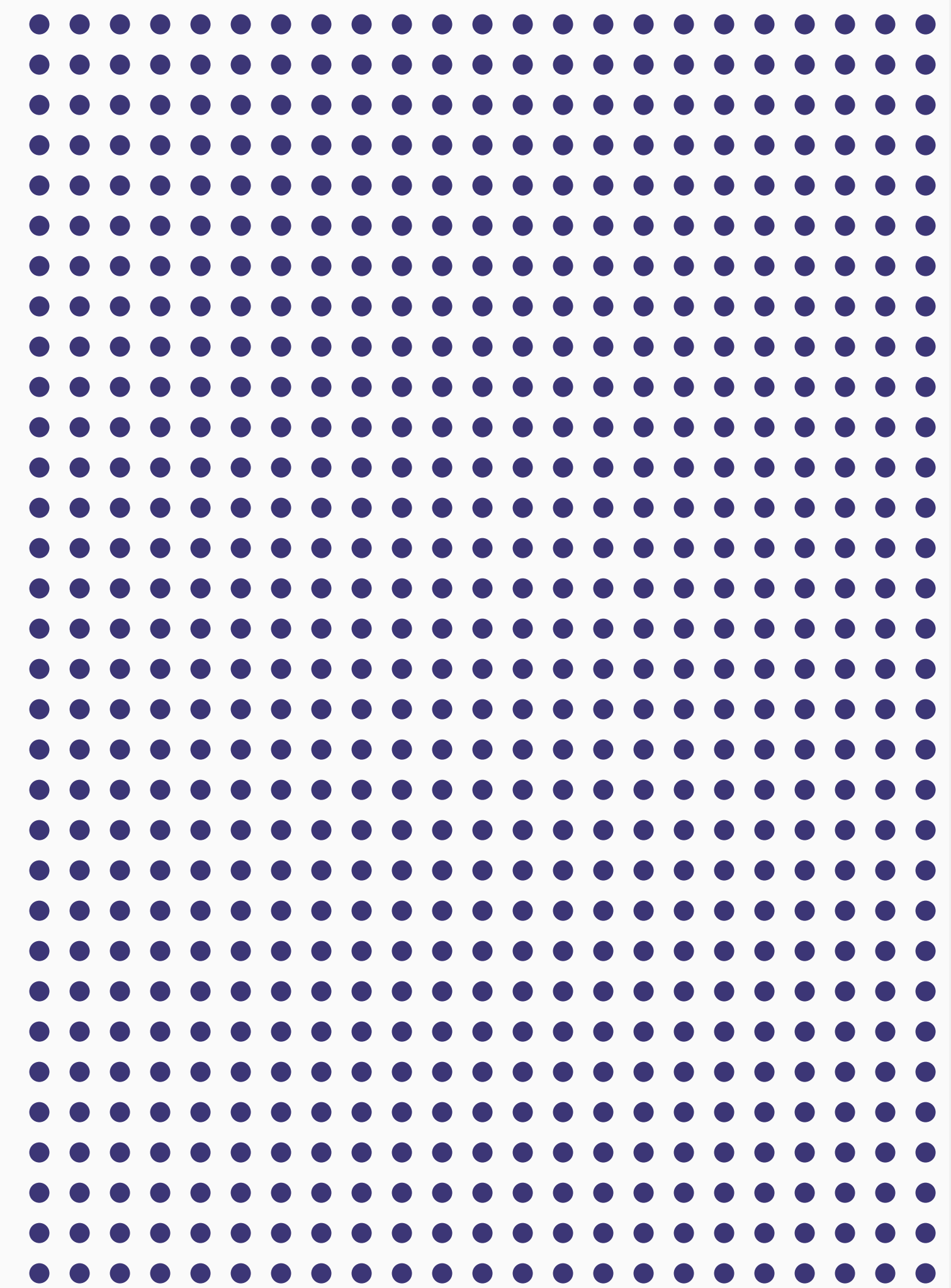
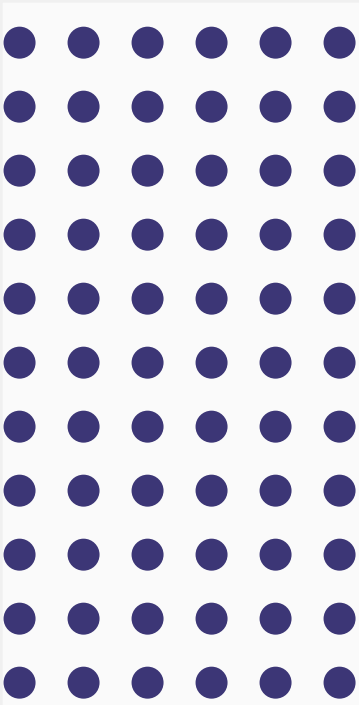
Special pregnancy allowance ceases to be paid if working conditions are made safe and the employee can return to work or if the employment relationship is terminated. When the employee receives special pregnancy allowance, she cannot work for another employer. Where an employee receives pay for the period of special pregnancy allowance:

Kela pays the pregnancy allowance for that period to the employer.

**NOTE!**  
The new family leaves apply to families where the child's estimated due date was on or after 4 September 2022. If the due date was exactly on that date, the family will receive parental allowances from 1 August 2022, when the new Act entered into force.







Kela pays various benefits to families with children, starting with pregnancy leave and ending with the end of child benefit. The timeline shows the duration of the different forms of benefits on the yellow line. \* Parents may receive parental allowance at the same time for a maximum of 18 working days. Parental leave may be taken in periods of different lengths until the child reaches the age of 2. The leave is shared between the parents. The leave can be taken in parts and alternated. \*\*Partial care allowance is granted to the parents of school children on the first and second grade.





*"Children may have different numbers of parents. In some families, there is one parent, in others more than two. In some families, the parents are of the same sex, in others not. When talking about the family leave with an employee, do not assume that the child always has two parents, or that the parents live in the same address."*

– Anna Moring, Leading Expert, Finland for All Families network

## Parental leave

The employee can take parental leave once the child is born. Parental leave may be taken by either of the parents. They can also alternate on parental leave.

The parental leave is 320 working days, or approximately months. If the child has two parents, each parent has one-half of the days of the parental leave, i.e. 160 days. A parent can give up and turn over 0–63 days to the other parent, or a maximum of 10.5 weeks.

Kela pays parental allowance for the period of parental leave. Parental leave may be taken in periods of different lengths until the child reaches the age of 2. However, the

employee must agree with the employer on taking parental leave. If the family has twins, Kela will pay parental allowance for 84 working days, or for approximately 14 more weeks.

If the parent cares for the child alone, they can use all 320 working days and be on parental leave for a longer period. They can give up and turn over a maximum of 126 parental allowance days to another person caring for the child. This requires that the child does not have a second confirmed parent and that the parent does not have a spouse who could receive parental allowance. Parents may receive parental allowance at the same time for a maximum of 18 working days.

Parental leave may be taken in periods of different lengths until the child reaches the age of 2. The leave is shared between the parents. The leave can be taken in parts and alternated.

Parents have equal right to parental leave, regardless of sex. A child may have a maximum of two parents who are entitled to parental allowance. However, you can give up and turn over part of your parental allowance day quota to the other parent, your spouse or the spouse of the child's other parent.

If the child's parents are not married or cohabiting and the parent has given up and turned over their parental allowance days to their spouse, three or four persons may receive parental allowance for the same period, depending on the family situation. This can be the case, for example, for co-parenting families and rainbow families. Kela's website contains information on the distribution of

family leaves to rainbow and co-parenting families.

If an employee cares for the child part of the day and works part-time, they may receive partial parental allowance. Partial parental allowance is one-half of the full parental allowance. An employee may receive partial parental allowance if they work no more than 5 hours per day. When a parent is on partial parental leave for one day, they spend one-half of a parental allowance day.

Kela supports the parents of an adopted child in almost the same way as biological parents. Adoptive parents cannot receive pregnancy allowance, but they receive a total of 320 working days of parental allowance. The parental allowance may be paid from the date on which the adopted child is placed in their care.



### AFTER PARENTAL LEAVE, THE PARENT CAN...

- care for the child at home and receive home care allowance
- work up to 30 hours a week and receive flexible care allowance
- organise private early childhood education and receive home care or private day care allowance;
- put the child in municipal early childhood education.



## Parental allowance based on annual income

The amount of parental allowance is calculated on the basis of annual income. For example, if an employee is eligible for allowance from May 2022 onwards, Kela calculates the amount of support based on the income received between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. The allowance is always lower than the salary. Usually, it is about 70 per cent of the income.

The allowance is also affected if the employee has been studying or been ill or unemployed. The parental allowance is taxable income. The employee accumulates pension and annual holiday when they are on parental leave. If the employer pays the employee salary for the duration of parental leave, Kela pays the allowance to the employer.

After parental leave, one of the parents may take care of the child on unpaid child care leave until the child reaches the age of 3. The employee must inform the employer of the child care leave at least 2 months before it begins.

Flexible care allowance can be paid to both parents at the same time. In this case, both have to work shorter hours than usual.

Child home care allowance can be applied for if a child under the age of 3 is cared for outside the municipal early childhood education system, for example, at home. The caregiver can be the child's parent or someone else, such as a grandparent or a paid caregiver. The parent can start the child care leave and receive child home care allowance 160 working days after the child was born. At that time, the child will be about 6 months old.

## Flexible and partial care allowance

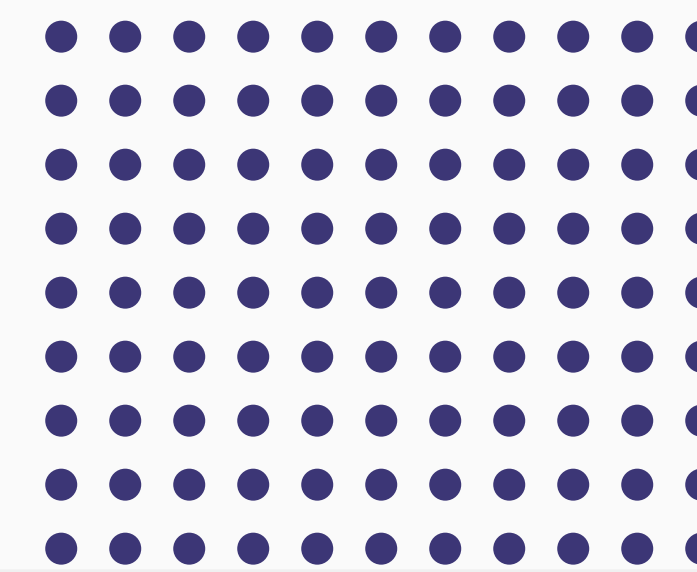
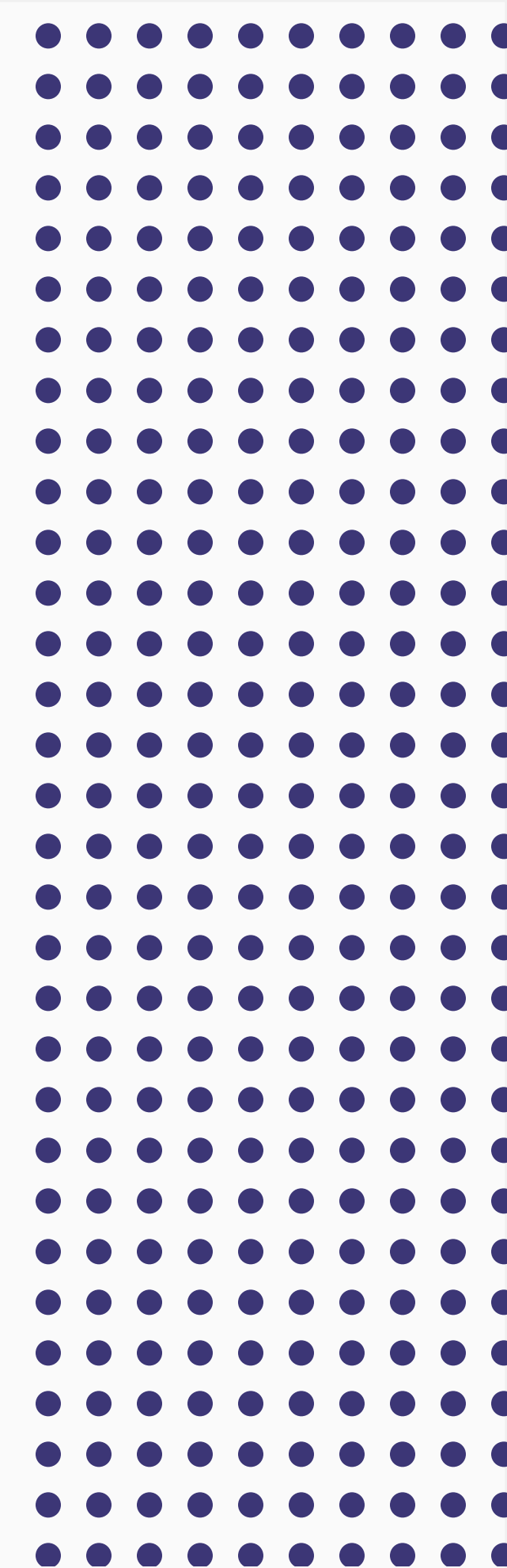
An employee can receive flexible care allowance if they work up to 30 hours a week and care for their child at other times. Kela pays flexible care allowance for a child under 3 years of age. Flexible care allowance can be paid to both parents at the same time. In this case, both parents have to work shorter hours than usual. They must care for the child at different times or on different days. Flexible care allowance is paid according to working hours. The care allowance can be either about EUR 250 per month or about

EUR 167 per month, depending on the average number of hours worked by the employee per week. Kela only pays flexible care allowance for one child at a time. The flexible care allowance is taxable income.

An employee can receive flexible care allowance if they work up to 30 hours a week due to caring for a child. Kela pays partial care allowance for a schoolchild on grades 1 and 2. The partial care allowance is approximately EUR 98 per month. It is taxable income.

## FURTHER USEFUL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND IN THE LINKS:

- » Kela's brochure in plain language provides information about allowances for families with children. [Read more in the family guide, PDF.](#)
- » Kela's Elämässä.fi site provides peer stories and information about services. [Read more about services throughout life.](#)
- » You can navigate to several language versions from Kela's English summary page. [Read more: Service in different languages.](#)
- » Kela publishes brochures in three Sámi languages spoken in Finland. [Read more on the summary page that includes all of the Sámi guides.](#)
- » There is an information package on special pregnancy allowance for healthcare professionals. [Read more on applying for special pregnancy allowance, PDF.](#)
- » A family can face an unexpected circumstances and need support. [Read more: Kela's information package on special circumstances of families with children.](#)
- » The reform treats children equally regardless of type of family. [Read more about the parental leaves of families of all types](#)





## The employee's and employer's duties under the revised legislation on family leaves:

### EMPLOYEE

- applies for pregnancy allowance no later than 2 months after taking leave from work
- applies for special pregnancy allowance no later than 2 months after taking leave from work
- applies for parental allowance no later than 2 months after taking leave from work
- applies for partial parental allowance no later than 2 months after taking leave from work
- finds out if the leave is paid.
- The pay day is different from the date of payment of the allowance.

### EMPLOYER

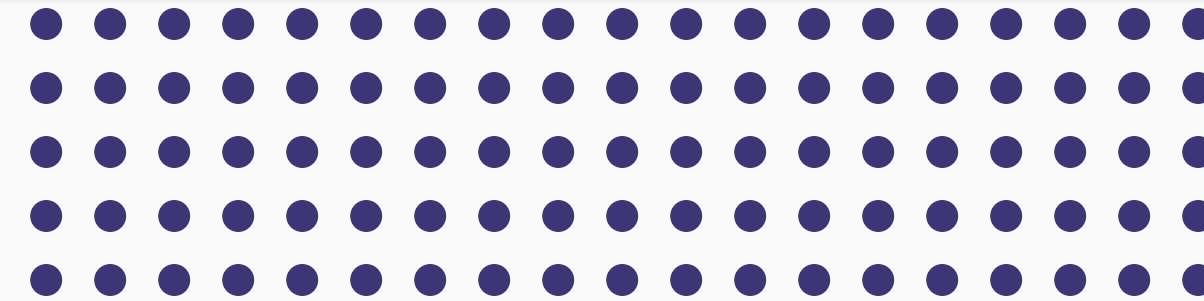
- receives information from the employee that the employee will take parental leave
- informs the employee whether the leave is paid and for what period
- applies for daily allowance for the period for which the employer pays salary on the basis of pregnancy, parental or special pregnancy leave.
- More detailed provisions on reporting the parental leave are laid down in labour legislation. The timing of the notification varies depending, for example, on the duration of the leave.
- NOTE! Kela must receive the employer's application before it can issue a decision on the allowance. Thus, the employer can inform the employee of whether the employer will only apply for the allowance after the end of the whole period of paid employment or on a monthly basis.

### NOTE!

For annual holiday expenses accrued during the period of leave in accordance with the legislation that entered into force in 2022, reimbursement must be applied for within 2 years from the beginning of the calendar month for which the reimbursement is applied.







# Kela guidelines to the employer

An employee accumulates pension and annual holiday when they are on parental leave. If the employee is paid salary for the duration of parental leave, Kela pays the allowance to the employer.

## Reimbursement for annual holiday expenses to the employer

When the employer is required to pay the employee holiday pay or holiday bonus for the annual holiday accumulated on the basis of pregnancy, special pregnancy, maternity, paternity, special maternity or parental leave, it may receive annual holiday reimbursement from Kela.

Kela pays reimbursement for annual holiday expenses for the period of the statutory annual holiday at the maximum.

The period of special pregnancy leave is equivalent to time at work in full.

Other parental leave at the maximum for the period of the statutory annual holiday (approximately six months), even if the collective agreement provides for more annual leave.

Annual holiday compensation must be applied for

within 6 months months of the end of the period of parental allowance if the application concerns annual holiday expenses accrued during a period of leave under the old legislation.

## Family leave reimbursement to the employer

An employer can apply for family leave compensation for costs arising from the pregnancy of a female employee or adoption. A self-employed person is not reimbursed for the costs of their parenthood. Additional information about reimbursement for family leave can be found in Kela's toolbox for employers (link on the right).

## Reimbursement for family leave can be granted if the following conditions are met:

- The employee has received pregnancy allowance or adoptive parent's parental allowance from Kela.
- On the basis of pregnancy or adoption, the employer has paid salary for at least one month for the period of the pregnancy allowance, maternity allowance or adoptive mother's parental allowance, which is based on an employment or service agreement or employment contract.

- The employee's employment relationship has lasted for a minimum of 3 months before the beginning of the pregnancy allowance period or an adoptive parent's parental allowance period and is based on an employment contract for at least one year.
- The employee's working hours are at least 80% of the sector's full-time regular working hours before the beginning of the pregnancy allowance period or the adoptive parent's parental allowance period.

### NOTE!

The employee should apply for reimbursement for family leave from Kela within 2 years of the beginning of the employee's pregnancy allowance period or adoptive mother's parental allowance period when the mother has been paid pregnancy allowance of adoptive parent's parental allowance. The reimbursement for family leave is EUR 2,500.

### SEE THE LINKS FOR MORE USEFUL INFORMATION:

- » Kela's toolbox for employers includes practical examples of the family leave reform. [Read more in the family leave information package, PDF.](#)
- » [Read more about applying for reimbursement for annual holiday.](#)
- » [Read more about the amount of reimbursement for annual holiday.](#)
- » [Read instructions about applying for parental allowance \(to the employer\).](#)
- » [Read more about the amount of parental allowance.](#)
- » [Read more about applying for reimbursement for family leave.](#)



# Equality and family leaves in the working community

Equality at the workplace is an extensive affair, and family leaves are a significant part of it. Family leaves have effects on those on leave, their colleagues and supervisors, organisation of work and well-being at work.

An equal working community that takes family leaves into account is made up of several factors. Although many different plans, measures and practices are described here, there is not single correct practice for implementing them.

Family leaves are present at all workplaces. An open and positive approach to reconciling work and family life, and to family leaves in general, is a key starting point.

The current system of family leave offers more flexibility than before. It also shares responsibility between the parents. At workplaces, family leaves increase administrative tasks and the organisation of work. However, a positive attitude towards family leaves and different flexibilities is an important issue for the employee, increasing well-being and contributing to the success of the company.

The Equality Act requires every employer to promote gender equality in a goal-oriented and systematic way. This applies to both public and private employers, regardless of the number of employees.

According to the Equality Act, the employer must facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life. Particular attention must be paid to the organisation of work. The employer may do this taking into account its own resources and other related matters.

The employer is required to strive without prejudice to ensure that employees are able to equally exercise their parenthood.

This may sometimes require individual solutions, such as arranging specific shifts for single parents or other working hour arrangements.

“Adopt a positive approach to family leaves, even though they increase the organisation of work. Flexibility supports the employee's well-being and increases commitment to the employer.”





Fathers also have the right to care for a sick child at home and to take parental and child care leave. All parents should be encouraged to take family leave.

In Finland, the purpose of the Equality Act is to prevent discrimination based on sex and promote equality between women and men, as well as to improve the position of women, especially in working life.

### Workplace plans, rules and law

Developing workplace guidelines and good practices is a key tool for establishing workplace policies for all workers on reconciliation of work and family life.

The size of the organisation, the sector in which it operates and the nature of tasks affect the policies and rules.

Rules and plans that have been prepared carefully and in cooperation make everyday operations easier and support equality, therefore it is worth taking time to prepare them. You should review the legislation or use an external expert.

Workplace equality and non-discrimination plans are good tools for also preparing and monitoring the equal and non-discriminating treatment of family leaves and practical guidance at the workplace.

Equality and non-discrimination plans must be developed so as to encourage systematic corrective and development measures as well as monitoring them and assessing the implementation of the measures. At a workplace with a minimum of 30 employees, the employer has to prepare

an equality plan pursuant to the Equality Act, particularly concerning pay and other terms and conditions of employment. An equality plan can also be drawn up for smaller workplaces.

### Workplace culture

The collective agreement covering the sector or company often includes provisions on family leave, in particular their pay. The workplace can also prepare its own rules that should be recorded in the guidelines and operating

#### SEE THE LINKS FOR USEFUL ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- » Equality in working life and society. [Read more on the Ombudsman for Equality's site.](#)
- » [Read more about the legislation on family leaves in Family leaves and legislation – remember these.](#)
- » This is how the law defines equality. [Read more: Act on Equality between Women and Men.](#)
- » THL guideline on preparing an equality plan. [Read more: Planning phases.](#)
- » What should be taken into account in equality planning? [Read the practical checklist, PDF.](#)
- » [Diverse families in working life. Read more in the guide, PDF.](#)





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*“At the Finland for All Families network, we hope workplace to take an ambitious approach to the opportunities for family leave. Find out how family leaves work in different family situations and encourage all parents to use their share of the leave.”*

– Anna Moring, Leading Expert,  
Finland for All Families network

practices. The legislation and applicable collective agreement must always be complied with.

It is desirable that the workplace culture includes transparent and consistent operating models and clear objectives. A culture that encourages even critical discussion and feedback serves the common good.

Rules and operating practices should be built in such a way that they take into account taking family leave, the actual family leave period and returning from family leave.

At the end of the family leave, the employee has the right to return, primarily to their previous job. If this is not possible, the employee must be offered a job corresponding to the previous job, in accordance with the employment contract. If this is not possible, either, the employee must be offered another job corresponding to the employment contract.

### Encourage! Forget traditional attitudes

Equal treatment, family leaves and reconciliation of work and family life must apply to all workers, regardless of their sex or family structure. Hidden attitudes and unspoken practices can be reflected in families' solutions. For families, it is very important that the workplace also takes a positive attitude towards fathers' family leaves. An employee should not have to worry about the announcement of family leave or be afraid of its negative impact on the job description or career. It is important that families dare to plan their solutions freely from their own points of view.

The diversity of families and the equality and non-discrimination of different family structures are one of the key principles of the family leave system.

The Finland for All Families network has published a guide on working communities' family friendliness. The guide takes into account different family structures and family-related crisis situations. The publication also contains a lot of tips that are not found in the previous guidelines on family friendliness. You can find the guide in the link list on the previous page.



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# Family leaves and legislation – remember these!

What does the legislation say to the employer about the affairs of the person taking family leave? When should you primarily read the law, when should you rather read the collective agreement (TES and VES)?

The law determines the minimum conditions for the rules of working life. However, a collective agreement (TES) can provide for better conditions for the employee's own sector.

In addition to these, the employer may agree with the employee or the entire work community on their own solutions if there is more room for manoeuvre in the work tasks. It is recommended to seek the appropriate solutions for your workplace and openly discuss with the employee how to organise their family leave period in the smoothest way possible.

We put together a list of important legislation to remember. In addition, sector-specific collective agreements (TES) define some of the points of the agreement in more detail. Up-to-date legislation is available on the Finlex online service. You can access the legislation in the list via the links.

## Employment Contracts Act

- Chapter 4 on family leaves: The content of the Act includes, for example, the determination of family leaves, the protection of pregnant workers, partial parental and child care leave and work, notification of leaves, return to work and the obligation to pay wages.
- Employment Contracts Act, chapter 4, section 8, subsection 2: An employee has the right to go to a maternity clinic during working hours without loss of earnings, if the time could not be scheduled outside working hours.
- Please refer to your sector's TES or VES agreement for details.

» [Read more about the Employment Contracts Act.](#)

## Working Hours Act

- The content of the Act includes, for example, the possibility of flexibilities when returning from family leave, clarifications to this in the TES agreement.
- Chapter 4: flexibility, flexible working hours, working time account, reduced working hours.

» [Read more about the Working Hours Act.](#)







*"At workplaces, it is worthwhile to boldly find out how flexibilities can be introduced."*

– Anja Lahermaa, STTK ry

## Health Insurance Act

- The Act determines Kela's allowance benefits and reimbursements paid to the parent and the employer.
- Chapter 7: The employer's right to Kela's daily allowance benefit when the employee is paid a salary (section 4).
- Chapters 2, 3, 4: Accident insurance and liability for sickness, examinations, etc. (also during an employee's pregnancy).
- Part 4, chapter 14: Reimbursement for the cost of parental leave to the employer.
- Part 3, chapter 7, section 4: The employer's entitlement to daily allowance benefit.

» [Read more about the Health Insurance Act.](#)

## Equality Act

- Equality Act, section 1 and Non-discrimination Act, chapter 2, section 7: preparing an equality and non-discrimination plan.
- Equality Act, section 7: direct and indirect discrimination, such as discrimination and harassment on grounds of sex, is prohibited on grounds of pregnancy, parenthood, gender identity and its expression.
- Equality Act, section 8: discrimination in employment: employer's conduct and discrimination.
- Non-discrimination Act, chapter 2, section 7: employer's obligation to promote non-discrimination.
- Non-discrimination Act, chapter 3: prohibitions of discrimination and retaliation.

» [Read more about the Act on Equality between Men and Women.](#)

» [Read more about the Non-discrimination Act.](#)

## Annual Holidays Act

- Chapter 2, e.g. section 7: accumulation of annual holiday on family leave: family leave accumulates annual holiday (equal to working days) for 160 allowance days.
- Chapter 3: percentage-based annual holiday pay (general determination).

- Chapter 4: holiday compensation Employee's part-time work and determination of holiday compensation on family leave, chapter 4.
- Chapter 5: timing of annual holiday on family leave and incapacity for work (e.g. childbirth) at the beginning and during annual holiday.

» [Read more about the Annual Holiday Act.](#)

The terms and conditions of employment in each sector may have been agreed upon in collective agreements contrary to the minimum requirements laid down by the legislation. In this case, collective TES and VES agreements of different sectors are in many cases the primary sources of information compared to the legislation.



*"Family leaves are a normal situation. The employer should think about the principles in advance so that the practical arrangements for family leaves run smoothly."*

– Katja Miettinen, Confederation of Finnish Industries EK



The legislation determines the basic provisions on which the details of collective agreements are based.

In many situations, the law allows flexibility for the employer and the employee to agree between themselves.

### Where can I ask for help?

If you are an organised employer, you can get help with questions from the employers' and entrepreneurs' associations. For employees, the shop steward or your own trade union can help you with your questions.

The Ombudsman for Equality monitors matters related to equality, while the occupational safety and health authorities oversee matters related to non-discrimination.

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*"Know your sector's collective agreement and key legislation. The collective agreement often includes provisions on the payment of salary during family leave. The Employment Contracts Act includes provisions on the notification periods of family leaves."*

– Laura Häyrinen, Confederation of Finnish Industries EK

### USEFUL ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- » How to promote equality at work? [Read more on the Ombudsman for Equality's website.](#)
- » The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman provides advice on good practice. [Read more on the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman's website.](#)



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# Before family leave

“Employees are a company’s most important asset. Their well-being is significantly affected by how they can reconcile their work and family life. The solutions start from the attitudes of the workplace. It is in everyone’s interest in the working community that family leaves have been prepared for and the operating principles have been thought in advance. It is worth considering how to make the organisation even more family-friendly.

It is not companies, politicians or labour market organisations that decide to have children. However, together we can build a society in which work and family can be seamlessly combined.”

– Laura Häyrinen, Confederation of Finnish Industries EK

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# Employee's plan for leave – let's do it together!

When the employer and the employee taking family leave jointly prepare a plan on taking family leave, both parties benefit. The family-friendly approach and practices of the workplace are a successful starting point.

Circumstances in the family and private life often affect an employee's well-being and ability to work. They also affect absence from work, for example when a child falls ill and on family leaves.

Workplaces should be prepared for these situations. Promoting a family-friendly atmosphere and bringing issues up early on create well-being.

Even before family leave, it is a good idea to make an initial plan on returning to work and future work. It is important to arrange for a substitute or to allocate work to others before taking family leave.

It is advisable to think about substitute arrangements together with the person about to take family leave. Knowing that work will go smoothly can make it easier for the employee to take family leave and later return. In the pre-

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*“How will communication with the employee on family leave be organised? Before the family leave begins, the employer and the employee should discuss how to inform the employee about workplace matters during the family leave and how to facilitate the return from the family leave in due course.”*

**– Laura Häyrinen, Confederation of Finnish Industries EK**

liminary discussion on family leave, the employer has a good opportunity to bring up options that the employee may not have considered yet, such as working part-time or sharing family leave with their spouse.

Equal parenthood is supported by encouraging both





parents to take family leaves at the workplace. Equal family leave has a positive impact on family life and make absence from working life more evenly distributed between the parents. Going through the alternatives may affect the rate at which the employee returns to work from family leave.

Remember that for an employee, family leave is only a short period of time in their long working life. During the course of one's career, the ability to work, life and needs for competence development vary. When there is a good atmosphere at the workplace, different situations in life can be discussed openly and solutions can be considered together.

”

*“You should suggest the employee to tell you about taking family leave and their plans on returning already before the notification periods laid down by legislation.”*

– Laura Häyrinen, Confederation of Finnish Industries EK



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**TALK, ASK AND ACT!**

- Congratulate the employee on the new family member!
- Find out about their work situation, objectives and how to reach them.
- Prepare a preliminary plan on the duration of the family leave, returning to work and associated thoughts together.
- How is the employee going to schedule and allocate the family leaves?
- You can tentatively schedule a corresponding discussion on the return, which will also identify the needs for induction after the family leave.
- Are they going to share the family leaves with their
- Do they have desires of advancing to more demanding positions in their career?
- Is part-time possible during the parental or child care leave?
- Is remote work possible?
- Are substitute arrangements required?
- How will the salary be paid during the leave?
- What do you agree on the possession of the work phone, computer and other work equipment?

Source: TTL and Akava - Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland



# Recruiting a substitute for the duration of the family leave

Consider whether to distribute the work within the organisation, hire a substitute or both? There are many possibilities. Substitute arrangements should always be initiated in good time.

The role of the future substitute does not have to be identical to that of the person taking family leave. Therefore, it is good to find out in advance which tasks can be performed internally in the organisation and which can not.

It might not be necessary to distribute all of the work of the person taking family leave internally. For example, it might be that only some tasks can be taken care of by someone else temporarily. Temporary supplements may be paid for the additional responsibilities.

If it is decided to hire a substitute, the job description should be defined carefully. This also makes it easier to write the recruitment advertisement. Estimate the duration of the substitute task and consider the time and resources required for inducting the new person. Family leaves can vary in duration, and they can also be split.





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*“Substitution is a legal basis for concluding a fixed-term employment contract. It is not mandatory to know the exact date of termination of the contract in advance. It is possible to agree on it to be terminated when the employee on family leave returns to work.”*

– – **Laura Häyrinen, Confederation of Finnish Industries EK**

Family leave substitution is a sufficient basis for concluding a fixed-term employment contract, and the duration can also be agreed on a preliminary basis.

### Time together for the substitute and substituted person

The substitution can start even before taking family leave, providing the person taking family leave and their substitute with time to plan the transfer of tasks together.

When the parent returns to work from family leave, it is again good to have some time for a joint discussion

between them and their substitute. This makes it easier to return to work and organise future work. The substitute’s employment contract can be extended if the substitution continues for a longer period.

### A substitute can be an investment in the future

In tasks requiring special expertise, it can be challenging to find someone with the same skills and experience as the person taking family leave.

It is good to leave room for detailing the job description already in the application phase. If the estimated duration of the substitution is short, there may not be time to induct the substitute into all tasks.

As the employer, you are the best at assessing the needs of your business, so there is no single universal recommendation for recruiting a family leave substitute.

The substitute’s employment relationship does not have to end at the same time as the permanent employee returns from family leave. Therefore, it is good to be aware of human resources and new skills needs in the future in advance. When recruiting, think about what kind of expertise the substitute can bring to your organisation and what kind of expertise you will need in the future. Recruiting a substitute can also be an investment in your company’s future



### CONSIDER AT LEAST THESE THINGS

- Can some of the work be reorganised internally?
- Is this a short-term or long-term substitution?
- What kind of expertise and experience does the substitute need?
- How much time is there for induction?



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# How does unemployment security work for people on family leave and their substitutes?

The employer can remind its employees of joining an unemployment fund at a general level. It is also good to get to know how these things affect the security of your employees.

Before family leave, the situation of unemployment security is the same for an employee who takes family leave and the substitute as it is generally in working life. It is important that the employee has a valid membership of an unemployment fund.

Only a member of an unemployment fund can receive earnings-related daily allowance during unemployment, lay-off, part-time work or part-time entrepreneurship. Unemployment security matters should be in order in time in case the employee's fixed-term employment ends.

The employer as such does not have the right to know whether the employees belong to an unemployment fund. However, the employee should tell them about the opportunity to join and be a member of a fund.

## Substitute's unemployment security

If you hire a substitute for your employee during family leave, also remind them of membership of an unemployment fund.

Substitute positions are typically fixed-term. However, this does not affect the accumulation of the condition regarding previous employment. The term of the condition regarding previous employment is six months, so even a relatively short period as a substitute can accumulate the right to earnings-related daily allowance.

When the substitute period ends and the work does not continue, the substitute must remember to register as an unemployed jobseeker no later than on the first day of unemployment. The payment of the unemployment benefit may only begin from the date on which registration as a jobseeker is valid.

If the termination of the employment relationship is attributable to the employee, this may have impacts on unemployment security. Therefore, the employment authorities always investigate the reason for the termination



## THE ESSENTIALS OF UNEMPLOYMENT SECURITY

- Unemployment benefits include labour market subsidy, basic unemployment allowance and earnings-related unemployment allowance.
  - Labour market subsidy and basic daily allowance are applied for from Kela.
  - Those who fulfill the condition regarding previous employment but are not members of an unemployment fund can apply for basic daily allowance.
  - Those who do not fulfill the condition regarding previous employment can apply for labour market subsidy. This typically applies to young people who have just entered the labour market. This applies to also those who have already used the maximum period for payment of basic daily allowance or earnings-related daily allowance and have not yet fulfilled a new condition regarding previous employment.
  - Those who are members of an unemployment fund and fulfill the condition regarding previous employment can apply for earnings-related daily allowance.
  - Earnings-related unemployment allowance is calculated from income before unemployment
- » [Read more: Use this calculator to estimate the earnings-related daily allowance.](#)



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*"The end of family leave has no effect on unemployment security. The most important thing is membership of an unemployment fund. If the work immediately decreases or ends after the leave, the employee can apply for earnings-related daily allowance from their unemployment fund. This requires that they have maintained their membership for the duration of the family leave."*

– Petja Eklund, YTK

of the employment relationship.

The substitute’s employment relationship being terminated due to the expiry of the fixed-term employment contract has no negative impacts on unemployment security.

### Unemployment security of a person on family leave

While an employee is entitled to family benefits, they are not entitled to unemployment benefits.

However, membership of an unemployment fund should be maintained. Retaining the membership also retains the condition regarding previous employment that the emp-

loyee may have accumulated before the family leave.

This makes it possible to ensure that income security is maintained. If the employment relationship ends or, for example, layoff begins after returning from family leave, the employee can apply for earnings-related daily allowance.

Normally, the condition regarding previous employment can be examined over a period of a little over two years. However, the period of family leave is “skipped” in unemployment security. There may be up to seven years of such “skipped” period. In practice, therefore, family leaves hardly ever interrupt income security, as long as the employee remembers to keep the unemployment fund membership in force.

#### READ MORE: USEFUL LINKS CONCERNING UNEMPLOYMENT SECURITY

- » [Comprehensive information package and quick guide to applying for earnings-related daily allowance](#)
- » [This is how social benefits affect the earnings-related daily allowance](#)
- » [Kela: Quick guide to unemployment benefits](#)
- » [Unemployment funds' contact information](#)



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#### CHECKLIST FOR THE EMPLOYER

- Encourage and remind the employee to join an unemployment
- Tell the employee that the membership should be maintained for the duration of the family leave.
- If the work decreases or ends, remind the employee to register immediately as an unemployed jobseeker.
- Ensimmäisen työttömyysetuushakemuksen voi tehdä, kun työttömyyttä tai lomautusta on kestänyt kaksi viikkoa.



#### CHILD HOME CARE ALLOWANCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE FAMILY IS A CONFUSING EQUATION

Child home care allowance is a family-specific benefit, which is reduced from the unemployment benefit.

The child home care allowance is deducted from the unemployment benefit regardless of which of the parents the allowance has been granted. This gives rise to confusion in many cases.

The situation can be, for example, this: One of the parents is unemployed and child home care allowance has been granted to the other parent who returns from family leave partly to work. The employed parent's granted child home care allowance is deducted from the unemployed parent's unemployment benefit.



## “At Hydac, every family leave is an individual case”

At Hydac, everything related to family leaves is reviewed on a case-by-case basis and according to the team’s situation. What is certain is that every baby gets a Hydac bodysuit as a gift.

We are a male-dominated working community, so the majority of family leaves have been short. Of course, fathers have also taken longer parental leaves, but so far not that much.

### **Before leaves: substitute, induction and communication**

As the happy family occasion is approaching and the time of the leave is determined,

we decide on a case-by-case basis whether to recruit a substitute and whether the substitute will be from our own personnel or someone from the outside. Longer family leaves are also a great opportunity for our own personnel to develop their skills through job rotation.

If there is a substitute for the dura-

tion of the leave, it is agreed together how long an induction period can be arranged. From the point of view of the induction period, it is necessary to consider how long the person taking family leave and the substitute will be working concurrently.

In particular, two points are taken into account when concluding the employment contract with the substitute. Firstly, the duration of the leave is not yet certain. Secondly, the person returning from leave will also have an opportunity to familiarise themselves with their duties again, i.e. the substitute and the returning person will be working at the same time.

When the longer leave is drawing closer, the supervisor agrees with the employee on how to keep in touch during the leave: what kind of mat-

ters concerning the entire company and the employee’s own team will be communicated to the employee. We also agree on the means of communication.

At the minimum, the employee on family leave is invited to the whole company’s events, such as Christmas and summer parties.

Good tip: save this discussion, for example, in your HR system so that even after any supervisor changes we know what the person on leave wished for.

We also have informed the supervisors of this and systematically implemented it.

The HR system sends a reminder two weeks before the start of the leave.

### **THIS IS WHAT WE DO**

Hydac is a Finnish hydraulic company established in 1985. The company has 75 employees with approximately 45 job descriptions. We are part of the German Hydac Group, which has a global sales network. The network operates globally, without forgetting locality and service. Hydac has been awarded the Family Friendly Workplace label of the Family Federation of Finland.





## During leaves: congratulations and communication

During the family leave, we respect the will of the person on leave regarding communication. If they want to focus on their family to the fullest, they are allowed to do so. No contact will be made except for inviting the person to joint recreational events.

We deliver Christmas gifts and the like to those on family leave in the same way as to all personnel.

We hope that while on family leave, the employee feels that they are an equal member of the working community.

Once the baby is born, we will inform all employees about the happy family occasion through our internal communication channel.

Naturally, we request permission to publish it. Once the family is home, we send flowers home and slightly later a Hydac bodysuit for the baby.

When a longer period of family leave is drawing to a close, the supervisor contacts the employee. Then either the return date or an extension of the leave is agreed.

## After leave: induction and flexibility

If necessary, a personal induction programme is prepared for the first weeks after returning from longer family leave. This depends on the job description, changes in it (new software, procedures etc.) and the length of the leave.

As part of the induction plan, we conduct a joint follow-up discussion between the employee, supervisor and HR to ensure that the employee is up to date with their work tasks. The discussion covers any needs for further induction.

After returning, there is a statutory possibility of working shorter working days.

Our company is flexible in this regard, based on the employee's own family situation. As a rule, the employee can choose how much to shorten their working hours and how.



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Hydac Oy

If "the employee wants to focus on their family to the fullest, they are allowed to do so. No contact will be made except for inviting the person to joint recreational events."





# “At first, I was concerned about taking maternity leave, but I got a lot of support”

“When I took maternity leave in spring 2021, I was concerned about taking full-time leave. How would my job be taken care of and my role fulfilled during my long absence? The concern subsided when I had conversations with my employer. It all worked out.

They quickly found a substitute for my work. It was good to know that my work was continued and we found the right person. I felt more comfortable, and I could gradually let go of my duties before I went on full maternity leave.

We concluded with the employer that I could be there for the new worker, if necessary. The new employee would be able to get off to a very thorough start in their position.

The flexibility of the process as a whole and the employer’s attitude made letting go of work stress-free. They understood my changed situation in life and were ready to give me as much time as I needed.

### Back to work: a lighter task

In March 2022, I was ready to return from maternity leave to work. I once again had a talk with the employer. I now felt that my previous job would be too stressful and time-consuming in my new situation in life. I was ready for a lighter job role.

“To me, it was very important that my employer was prepared to offer me shorter working hours, for example.”

We found a job position that fulfilled my wishes and had a balance between day-to-day life with a child and work that was just right for me. To me, it was very important that my employer was prepared to offer me shorter working hours, for example.

Taking maternity leave was a splendid experience for me in almost every respect. My values changed completely as my family grew.

Experiencing support from the workplace and flexibility made me understand what I want from my job. If I need more challenges and responsibilities later on, I know that I can safely discuss the development of my role and responsibilities safely with my employer. It’s great that the workplace provides the opportunity to do this.”



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### THIS IS WHAT WE DO

Koti Puhtaaksi Oy specialises in the production of continuous home cleaning services. We are an employee co-owned company founded in 2011 and we have won several awards for being a good employer. We operate in the Uusimaa region, Turku, Tampere, Jyväskylä and Oulu.





# During family leave

“Expertise is the most valuable capital workplaces have. On family leave, expertise can increase and develop in a new direction. Keep in touch with your employee and provide training!”

– *Susanna Bergendahl, MiB*

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# Employee's skills may increase during family leave

Family leave is not a negative thing in terms of expertise. On the contrary, from the point of view of learning, family leaves can be the most rewarding time. Many people want to maintain and develop their expertise during family leaves.

In many cases, both the employer and the employee may be concerned about what will happen to competence during family leave. Many things might change in the workplace during the leave, and there may be new projects, ways of working or systems introduced.

The employee is also likely to change during family leave. Having a child is a huge change in identity. The employee's values, motivational factors and professional interests may have taken a new direction.

Parenting also teaches skills that are valuable in working life as well. The ability to prioritise, motivate others, identify and word one's own and others' feelings are necessary in working life. In many jobs, it is important to understand the needs of families with children as a clientele.

During family leaves, many people reflect on the direc-

tion of their careers. It is not at all unusual to think about changing jobs or careers. So, if you want to commit the best talent, also offer those on family leave development and career prospects in your organisation. The employer should make sure that the employee can also develop their skills during family leave.

In general, a break from work may offer new opportunities for learning.

## Can the employee track what is happening at work?

The needs of those on family leave vary. Some want to make a complete break from working life, while others want to keep track of what is happening at the workplace. Not everyone has the resources to focus on something other than family life.

Do not make assumptions on behalf of the employee. Openly ask the person taking family leave how they would like to keep in touch during family leave. Desires may change over time, accept this as well.

When a parent stays up to date with the day-to-day life of the workplace while on family leave, they can maintain their competence. Many people also want to hear about changes or new career opportunities opening up at the workplace even during their leave. A person on family





leave can be invited to team meetings remotely or on-site with the baby. Also keep the person on family leave in mind if there are new projects starting at the workplace that the employee could participate in after their return. If the employee so wishes, they can participate in the meetings of the project or otherwise monitor their progress.

Keeping in touch helps the employee to keep up with the changes and gives an opportunity to feel connected to the working community. Therefore, when an employee takes family leave, you should not take away their keys and access to workplace systems. If the employee so wishes, they could monitor the workplace intranet, for example, so that they can keep up to date with the current issues at the workplace. This makes the induction easier when returning from family leave.

### Lectures with the baby?

Family leave is often an excellent time for learning. Many people proactively study at an open university, read professional literature or listen to podcasts. Employers can support studies by contributing to course fees, for example. If your organisation has an employee-specific annual budget for training, you can offer the employee on family leave an opportunity to take advantage of it.

You should inform those on family leave about training opportunities at the workplace. Many people are happy to participate in training courses for variation in their daily lives and to develop their skills. You can encourage

“You should ask the employee if they would like to keep track with what is happening at work and take part in meetings. Regular contact during leave can ultimately make it easier to return to work.”

the employee to participate with the baby. A little baby hardly does do much harm in lecture-form training. The parents are often very discreet and make sure that the baby will not disturb others. During family leaves, there may be time for networking. Parents caring for children at home often meet many other parents. Those acquaintances can also become important for working life, and people share their knowledge with each other in networks. For example, Mothers in Business network of career-minded mothers

offers dozens of trainings and networking meetings for mothers on family leave across Finland each year. The employer can pay the employee’s membership fee for the network.



**STUDYING DURING FAMILY LEAVE IS EASY IN THIS WAY:**

- Online courses and seminars
- Open university courses
- Professional podcasts and YouTube videos
- Participation in various professional networks
- Volunteering and NGO activities

### You can work on family leave

The main challenge for the employer caused by family leaves is generally not the cost, but the absence of key staff. However, family leave and work can be combined, if the employee so wishes. At the same time, working provides an opportunity for the employee to develop their expertise.

Even before taking family leave, the employee should discuss the opportunity to work part-time during the leave. Living in a family with children, situations can change



quickly, so flexibility on both sides is good. Think together about what kind of tasks are easy to reconcile with family leave. For example, work assignments that can be done remotely or otherwise unrelated to time and place may be good options while on family leave.

If the employee works part of the family leave, how is the substitute chosen? You should consider the big picture of what new skills a substitute could bring to the organisation and how to make the best use of the expertise of the employee on family leave.

An employee who combines part-time work and family leave is entitled to apply for partial parental allowance. In this case, the daily working hours can be a maximum of five hours.

## Get to know your employee again

A person who returns from family leave to work may have changed to some extent. They may bring with them new skills that are worth taking advantage of. The employee may also be inspired to try out a new career at the workplace.

The person returning from family leave should be asked at an early phase before returning to work what it feels like to return, what they have learned during family leave and what kind of work tasks now seem motivating.

Some people want to return to work flexibly, for example through part-time work. However, you should not automatically assume that a parent wants to slow down at work.

On the contrary, motivation to invest in a career and take on more demanding tasks can be strong. Do not assume;

instead, ask directly about the employee's motivation and wishes. Those returning from family leave often need to update their skills in relation to things that have changed. However, remember to discuss what the employee has learned while

on family leave and how to benefit from these new skills. A person returning from family leave may need support in strengthening or redefining their professional identity.

On the other hand, during family leaves, professional identity may have strengthened or developed in a new direction through studies, hobbies or volunteering. Consider together how professional identity could be supported at the workplace after family leaves.

- » How does partial parental allowance work?  
[Read more on Kela's website.](#)
- » [Kela's family leave system and support for the employer in a nutshell](#)
- » This is how work and year with a baby were combined.  
[Read more in the Mothers in Business blog.](#)



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# How are substitutes arranged at small male-dominated workplaces?

The current system of family leave can encourage fathers to use family leaves more. How is work organised at a small male-dominated workplace if it is not possible to hire a substitute?

Family leaves often present workplaces with challenges in terms of work organisation, substitutions and coping with agreed tasks. The solutions vary according to the size of the organisation, the workplace and the tasks of the individual employee. If there is a good model for family leave at the workplace and the culture is family-friendly, much has already been achieved.

I personally work for an expert organisation with less than 20 employees. They all are male. There are five offices, two of which have one employee. Our organization has relatively functional structures and the attitude towards fathers' family leaves is positive. Yet there are challenges.

## Typical small workplace challengest

Fathers' periods of family leave have usually been a few weeks. In that case, a substitute is not hired, instead the situation is managed by rearranging and prioritising

work. Many people taking leave anticipate and do their work overlapping with the family leave largely beforehand.

A family leave of a few months is a bigger challenge to the working community. Often, skills and tasks are quite differentiated and the pace of work is intense, so colleagues cannot simply take on the work of the those on family leaves.

Hiring a substitute for a short term can be challenging, especially in the case of demanding expert tasks. The substitute's induction can be limited, and it takes time for the substitute to learn the operating culture.

Following the family leave reform, it is to be expected that fathers will increasingly take family leaves. At the same time, the flexibility in the use of parental leave will increase; it can be timed and split up very freely. Many working communities and employers may be facing a new situation.

## Priority, division of work and schedules

If a substitute cannot be hired to replace the person on family leave, priority must be given based on necessity and scarcity in order to cope with the reorganisation of work.

The new planning of work should be started well in





”

*“Has your organisation made sure that no single area of expertise depends on just one person? The employer should consider in advance which practices promote retaining expertise. It is important that day-to-day life continues smoothly even when an employee is on family leave.”*

– Laura Häyrinen, Confederation of Finnish Industries EK

advance. The work of the employee on family leave should be prioritised in such a way that they have time to do their urgent tasks before the leave.

They should both have time to prepare the work to be reassigned and induct their colleagues into them.

Colleagues’ tasks should also be reorganised so that they can cope with the work that is being reassigned. The tasks of the entire organisation need to be rescheduled.

What if each employee is the only specialist in their tasks? Excessive differentiation of expertise can be proactively prevented. Work tasks should be recycled. The job descriptions and working methods should also be recorded as clearly as possible. Another aspect of a good operating culture is that everyone tells each other openly about their work. This makes it easier to reassign the tasks of

those on family leave between several colleagues. In the best case, the division of work is done by listening to the wishes of the employees.

### A positive culture supports success

A positive work culture and structures that support family leave are a prerequisite for smooth family leave arrangements. A spirit of appreciation is required from employees at the workplace.

If the shared culture and structures are in order, a climate of trust will emerge. The employee dares to talk about their plans well in advance and openly, and the working community will have time to prepare for the change. And a good culture can mean that a co-worker can call a colleague on family leave and ask for advice about work-related tasks.

Too strained an organisation and scarce resources do not bend to support family leave and the return from it. Instead, family- and life-friendly flexibilities, a more porous organisation and good result-making ability increase the adaptability of the working community. Employees have the right to take family leave with good and confident minds.



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### WHAT WILL BE THE SOLUTION TO SHORT AND FRAGMENTED PERIODS OF LEAVE?

- The employer can encourage taking longer periods of leave, which can make hiring a substitute a good option.
- The workplace can agree on rules and a basic framework.
- The basic framework should be brought up and reviewed in consultation with the personnel in advance and made generally known.
- If fragmented short periods of family leave make it too difficult to operate, the employer is not required to agree to such splitting.
- The employer should also keep the option of part-time work present in the discussions. It can also provide a good opportunity for being more involved in the child's everyday life.

» [Read more about substitute arrangements in this guide chapter Recruiting a substitute for the duration of the family leave.](#)

» How to combine working life and being a father? Save the Children's digital publication is looking for an answer. [Read more in the publication Uudet muuttajat – Työelämä & isyys.](#)



# “The most important thing is to talk honestly and constructively”

Every employee is an individual for us, and we want to take care of their well-being. When planning shifts, we always consider the employee's wishes. We want to support the reconciliation of parenting and work.

Our shop has long opening hours and we need a lot of employees.

In addition to us, the company employs 15 employees on a permanent basis.

Employees on family leave are very important and pleasant to us. The commerce sector may not be able to offer every employee a full 37.5 hours of work per week. However,

we can offer a job that also allows employees to spend time with their children at home. Some of our employees alternate with their shiftwork spouse in childcare, so time use is sometimes challenging in families.

We allow employees to work the right amount of work for their situation in life, earn money and maintain their professional skills in the rapidly changing world of retail. It is great that we get to work with our skilled employees in different stages of life.

The scheduling of shifts in a small, owner-led company is flexible. The wishes of the employees can be taken into account. It is up to each K-Group retailer to decide how shifts are planned.

K-Group shops have shared systems, but each shop has its own operating philosophy.

### How we do it in practice

Before an employee takes family leave, we discuss when they want to take the leave and for how long they intend to be absent. Our message is that all the arrangements are possible and suit us. We just want to know them well in advance so that we can prepare for them.

When the time to return to work approaches at the end of the family leave, we meet with the employee and discuss the time of return, work tasks, number of hours per week and the timing of work, i.e. whether morning, evening or weekend shifts suit the employee the best.

The employee talks about their wishes and we,

for our part, tell them how to meet their wishes. In the course of the dis-

### THIS IS WHAT WE DO

Kirsi and Tommi Jarkkola jointly own K-Market Pornainen and have worked together for more than 18 years. Their shop is located in Pornainen near the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.



“It is important to us to emphasise that everything will work out. In our opinion, the key to communication is to build trust.”



cussions, a consensus usually emerges.

We inform employees in Teams and WhatsApp groups which week's shifts are currently being planned.

The employees report their own wishes concerning the shifts and we plan the shifts based on them. Those on family leave can report the shifts that they can work. The shifts are often influenced by, for example, the spouse's job, our employee's possible second job, part-time entrepreneurship or studies.

### Ask for wishes, make changes flexibly

Listen and ask about the employee's wishes. Tell them that plans can be changed. The most important thing is to talk honestly and constructively. Even if they are not comfortable with the agreed arrangement.

Good employees are worth holding on to, so a well-managed family leave will commit the employee to the company. We believe that everything you give will come back to you.

It is important to us to emphasise that if an employee knows what they want, things can be made to work. Working hours can be shortened and tasks changed. However, in such a manner that the employee's previous contract remains valid (working hours and tasks). The employee is entitled to return to their previous work when their family situation allows and if they so wish.

In communication, building trust is important. Our employees and their well-being as individuals mean a lot to us.

Children grow fast, and we want to support the reconciliation of parenting and work.

This is life, and it includes both work and family. As well-balanced as possible.



AUTHOR

**Kirsi ja Tommi Jarkkola**  
shop owners,  
K-Market Pornainen





# After the family leave

“Make the return to work smooth. Together with the employees, find out how the flexibilities can be used at your workplace and how they are agreed upon in practice.”

– Anja Lahermaa, STTK ry

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# Get to know your flexibility – get back to work smoothly!

At every workplace, it is worth exploring opportunities that promote work-family balance. Supervisors and the management should encourage employees to present their ideas for flexibility.

The workplace situations vary, so the available means can be different in different workplaces. Employees' needs for flexibility vary. Even if not all flexibilities could be implemented at all workplaces, at least some of them could be implemented at all workplaces.

The workplace should customise and adopt the opportunities for flexibility that specifically suit them. They can be recorded in the equality plan.

The employer must ensure that all supervisors have up-to-date information about the flexibility available at the workplace and actively encourage supervisors to provide it to their employees.

It must also be ensured that all employees are aware of these opportunities. This is particularly important when the employee returns to work from family leave. When the end of family leave approaches, the manager and employee should discuss how to make the return to work as

smooth as possible and what flexibilities the employee can be supported with. It is a good idea to agree on how the employee will be inducted once back at work. The longer the employee has been on family leave, the more important the re-induction is.

## Remote work

The employer and the employee can agree on the place of work flexibly. If the tasks do not require the presence of the employee at the workplace, remote work makes it easier to reconcile the employee's work and family life.

Remote work refers to work that could be done at work, but is agreed to be done elsewhere, for example, at the employee's home or holiday home. Remote work can be full-time, in which case all work is done remotely, or part-time, for example, so that the employee works remotely on certain days of the week. Remote work can be regular or occasional.

The workplace should prepare instructions for remote work, which can be updated, if necessary. In order to avoid any ambiguity, it is recommended, at least for regular remote work, to prepare a written remote work agreement, which includes all the conditions for remote work.

The guidelines should be prepared in cooperation with the employees.





## Part-time work

Voluntary part-time work agreed for a fixed term during the infant phase can make it easier for the employee. When full-time work changes to part-time work, the amount of work must be reduced in proportion to the reduction in working hours.

It is also important that the employee can influence the timing of the working hours. It can be very important to the employee whether they can choose between a four-day working week or shorter working days.

On the basis of the Employment Contracts Act, an employee who has worked for the same employer for at least

six months during the previous 12 months, may be granted partial parental leave until the end of the second school year of the child in basic education.

Even in other cases, it is worth discussing the possibilities of working part-time to arrange the child's care with the employee.

## Flexibility in shift planning

The employer can be flexible by allowing the employee to influence the timing of their working hours. The supervisor should plan the working hours in such a way that the employees' situations in life are taken into account as much as possible. For example, the specific needs of parents of small children, especially in shift work, can be taken into account in shift planning.

At the workplace, it is worth considering whether working hours can be arranged as flexible. In a flexible working hours system the employee can choose the time to start and stop work within the flexible limits. This allows the employee to influence the length of their working day.

Daily breaks can be arranged as flexible. The employee can take them with different durations on different days.

When flexible working hours are introduced, at least one consecutive period of fixed working hours, the daily working hours flexibility limit and the timing of the flexible time, the timing of rest periods and the maximum accumulation of overruns and underruns of regular working hours must be agreed upon.

In a flexible working hours system, it is possible to agree

### NOTE!

Opportunities for flexible working hours improve the reputation of the employer in the eyes of jobseekers. The reconciliation of work and leisure is an increasingly important criterion for many jobseekers. However, the rules should be made clear at the workplace and visible to everyone



## RETURNING SMOOTHLY FROM THE FAMILY LEAVE

- Agree with the employee on returning to work.
  - Discuss wishes and competence development. Review the job description and tasks.
  - Survey the opportunities for flexibility, remote work and lighter start to work.
  - Organise proper induction and remember a
- positive reception for the returning employee.
- A positive attitude towards the everyday life of a family with children is an important way of support.
- Lotta Savinko, Akava - Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland

also on a balance leave that can be taken either as a partial working day or a full working day.

## Working time account

A working time account can be set up at the workplace to give the employee more flexibility in the reconciliation of work and leisure time. The working time account is a system in which hours worked, leaves earned or monetary benefits converted into time off can be saved and combined.



## Work-related travel

Flexibility can be increased by considering whether travelling to the site is absolutely necessary for each trip. The supervisor plays a crucial role in this.

At least part of work-related travel could be avoided with information technology. Meetings can probably also be attended remotely sometimes, for example with Teams, Zoom or Skype.

Flexibility for parents of young children can be increased by agreeing on meeting practices at the workplace.

If it is agreed that no meetings will be held at the workplace early in the morning or late in the afternoon, it will be easier for parents to take care of taking their children to early childhood education, i.e. day care, and picking them up.

## Timing of family leaves

The family leave system allows for flexibly timing family leaves and work.

The employee has the right to take 1–4 periods of parental leave per calendar year. The minimum length of the periods is 12 working days. The employer and the employee may agree on more than four periods of parental leave and also on the periods being shorter than 12 working days.

Parental leave can also be taken as partial parental leave. In this case, the employee's daily working time is no more than 5 hours per day.

The use of partial parental leave requires that the employer and the employee agree on part-time work during it. Parental leave may be taken until the child reaches the age of 2.

Flexibility offered by the workplace to the employee benefits everyone – the employee and their family as well as the employer. The positive impacts are very clearly reflected in customer service, for example.

The flexibility included in a good HR policy has a positive impact on the employee's health, coping, well-being at work, work motivation, work commitment and work productivity.

### READ MORE ABOUT FLEXIBLE WORKPLACES

- » Looking for ideas on how to increase the flexibility and productivity of work and the organisation? [Read more: Finnish Institute of Occupational Health TTL's flexibility guide, PDF.](#)
- » How to support the parents of young children and employees who care for their elderly family members? [Read more: 10 best workplace practices for reconciling work and life.](#)



TEXT:

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# Return from family leave – good leadership and managerial work lead forward

Day-to-day management and leadership culture have a significant impact on the development of an equal working community. Openness, discussion and family-friendly rules support the return to work.

Managers must be familiar with the rules relating to family leave, support employees in organising their work and take care of administrative obligations. The emergence and maintenance of an equal community also requires the support of senior management and a positive attitude towards reconciling family and work.

Consistent managerial work and good HR policy improve work motivation. They contribute to the productivity of work and the employees' commitment.

At best, there is an atmosphere at work where employees have the courage and desire to communicate their needs and wishes. Reconciling work and family should also be included in performance reviews.

## Discuss and build a strong connection

Dialogue with the employee should be established even before family leave. The way to create it is to take care of a spirit of trust in the working community. When the foundation is good, it is natural to openly discuss the needs and wishes of the employee returning from family leave.

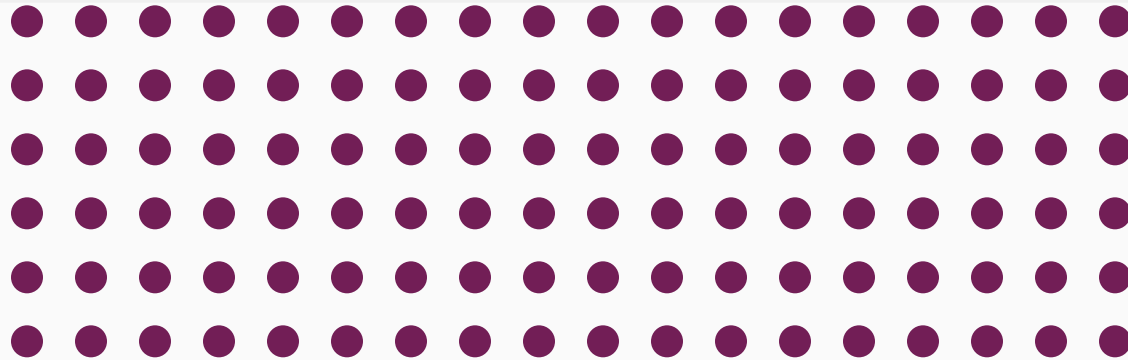
The manager should remember that every family is unique. There are diverse families, or the parent can be a single parent, for example. You should also discuss coping with the employee. You can ask if they need peer support or flexibility in work.

Ask and let your employee tell you. The questions help you establish a stronger connection with the employee

When an important life stage can be discussed openly with the employee, the employee's commitment to the company also increases.







and learn something new. You will better understand their needs and can clarify how the needs of the individual can be combined with the company's objectives.

Questions open up situations in also other respects. You can hear more clearly what is going on. This allows you to also prevent burnouts or other challenges. You should always support the well-being of your own employees.

### Give the employee your time

Building and maintaining a good connection requires the supervisor to invest time and effort in the individual employee and the entire working community. Strengthening the connection strengthens well-being at work.

If your company has performance reviews or other forms of discussions in use, dare to speak up about the family situation. Ask how the transition from family leave to working life has been. Offer low-threshold support or occupational health services, if necessary.

You should also discuss the employee's interests and skills that they have accumulated during the family leave. It makes sense to harness the employee's potential and strengths in a way that is appropriate to the situation.

Find out about the career plans of the employee. Can you customise the career path towards the strategic intent?

When an important life stage can be discussed openly, the employee's commitment to the company also increases. Encourage them in their successes and remind the

returning employee that work affairs will come back to them one piece at a time.

Boldly embrace new things and practices. Together with the employees, you can develop the day-to-day rules.

For example, discuss when to start and end meetings (taking children to and picking up from day care), how to implement the induction in practice and how to deal with requests for assistance.

Check the rules from time to time. In the best case, the community reinforces the feeling that different situations in life are taken into account and appreciated. Clarity increases the experience of openness. In a safe environment, it is easy for employees to demonstrate their strengths and skills.



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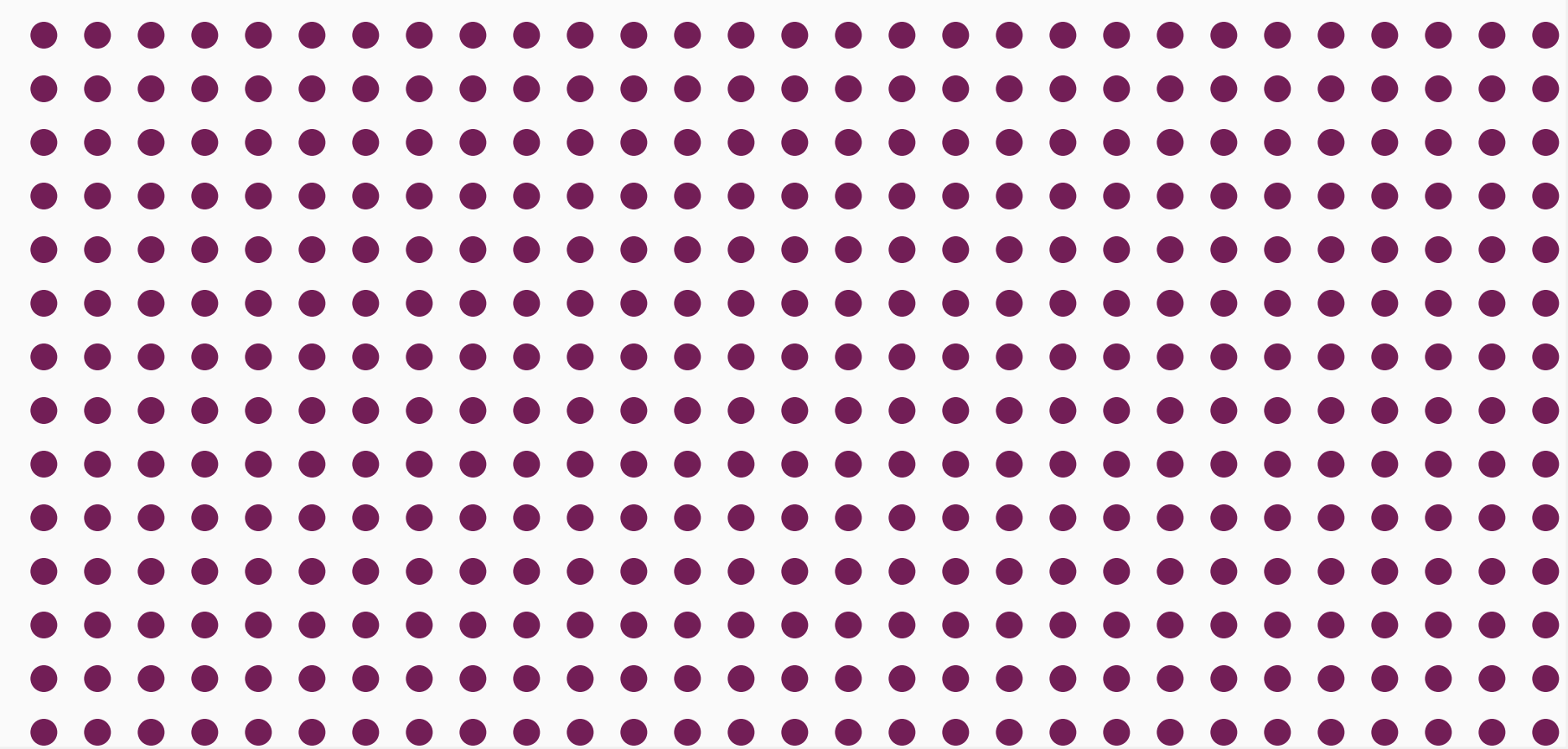
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### USEFUL LINKS TO THE LIVES OF DIVERSE FAMILIES

- » The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL) offers information and support to families with children. The page also features MLL podcasts. [Read more about MLL's parent web and tips for e.g. difficult family mornings.](#)
- » Are you a single parent, co-parent, pregnant alone, alternating parent or widow? Do you need something to do and peer support? [Read more on the Single Parents' Association website.](#)

- » Yhden Vanhemman Perheiden Liitto wants to improve the social, economic and legal position of single-parent families. [Read more about the association's support forms, events and groups.](#)
- » The Sateenkaariperheet – Rainbow Families Finland website shares diverse information, concrete guidelines and opinions of the Sateenkaariperheet ry association. [Read more about rainbow families and the association's objectives.](#)





# Family friendliness goes beyond family leaves

A good indicator of a family-friendly environment is what people at the workplace think about taking family leave. Family friendliness is not only a matter for families with young children, but it also brings positivity and flexibility to the entire working community.

What is your working community's attitude towards family leaves? Do you equally encourage all parents to take family leave? These are practical questions, and you can assess the family friendliness of your workplace when considering the answer.

The employer should show that it cares for an employee's family situation, because family is an important life content and resource for the employee.

Well-being in the family is also reflected in the ability to work. You show that you value the employee when you also show interest in their family. In practice, the employer should record the principles related to the reconciliation of work and family. Remember that they are part of working capacity and well-being. When things have been thought through, it is easier for both sides to bring family matters up at the workplace. Matters can be recorded, for



## HOW TO STRENGTHEN A FAMILY-FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

- Involve family friendliness in well-being at work and work capacity management. Also add the topic to the performance review template.
- Indicate that the employer has a family-friendly attitude.
- Communicate about the family leave policies at the workplace. Take this into account already in the induction.
- Speak out loud about the distribution of family leave between parents in your working community.
- Encourage spouses to take family leaves, too.

### NOTE!

Family means different things to different people. It is not just about your own children. A family-friendly company does not put child-less workers in a secondary position, for example, when scheduling holidays.





example, in the equality and non-discrimination plan, work capacity or well-being at work management plan or organisational strategy

Family-friendly practices start with the company's strategy. Ultimately, the top management decides how family-friendly the organisation is.

The management's strategic intent becomes visible by communicating openly. What are the practical measures to promote family friendliness?

The management also provides the supervisors with sufficient resources and authority to take things forward. Even minor measures can enhance a family-friendly atmosphere?

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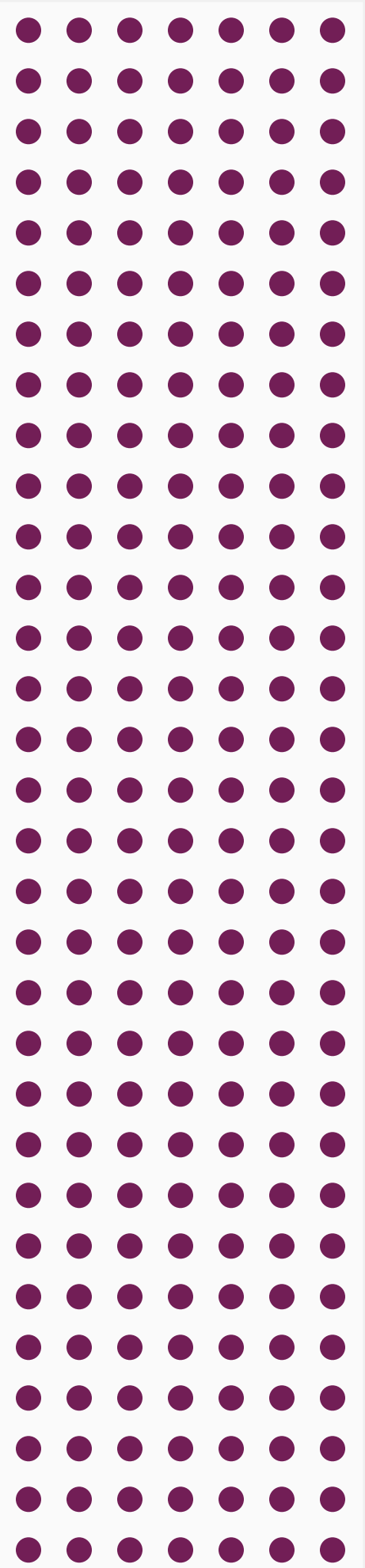


## HOW TO STRENGTHEN A FAMILY-FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE

- What measures will be taken, who will take them and when will they be taken before taking family leave?
- What happens during family leave, for example, how does the supervisor keep in touch?
- What to do when an employee returns to work after family leave? Reassignment of work, induction, use of flexible working hours or another new solution?
- When and with regard to which work should changes be made in the employee's duties or should the employee be reassigned to completely other duties? List the tasks that the employee can perform in advance.

## USEFUL IDEAS FOR RECONCILING WORK AND LIFE

- » The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health TTL has prepared a guide for workplaces on reconciling work and life. [Read more in the Työ ja elämä guide, PDF.](#)
- » TTL's study surveys the stress caused by international work-related travel and its effects on health and well-being. [Read more about reconciling work involving travel and family, PDF.](#)
- » The Family Federation of Finland Väestöliitto grants "Family-Friendly Workplace" certificates. [Read more: How to get the label.](#)
- » A family-friendly workplace is equal towards employees. [Read more about Päijät-Sote's policies.](#)
- » Do you need clear instructions and practices for developing family friendliness? [Read more in the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health TTL's abundant study material package.](#)
- » The Family Federation of Finland Väestöliitto has prepared guidelines for family-friendly recruiting. [The Family Federation of Finland Väestöliitto has prepared guidelines for family-friendly recruiting.](#)





## “Together, we made DNA an award-winning family-friendly workplace”

DNA produced clear family leave guides for both employees and supervisors. We develop our practices in an agile manner based on employee feedback. For us, family means more than nuclear family.

DNA has been systematically developing family-friendly values since 2016. At that time, we joined the Family Friendly Workplace programme of the Family Federation of Finland Väestöliitto.

Two years later, our work was rewarded with the Family-Friendly Workplace

certificate, which we received as the first large corporation in Finland. The certificate was renewed in 2020 and it is valid for three years. Renewal requires reaching a certain agreed level in a survey carried out with the Family Federation of Finland Väestöliitto. So, what has DNA done?

“We conducted a personnel survey, which provided us with valuable information about our development targets. Based on the study, we will improve the employee experience of the company’s family friendliness,” says **Iitu Hietamies, HR Manager at DNA**.

“The results of the study have always been processed at the management group level. So far, we have prepared a plain-language guide for employees considering family leave,

for example,” she adds.

The employees have thanked DNA’s family leave guide in particular for providing information in a comprehensible and easy way.

This guide explains, among other things, what options the worker has for their family leave, how to apply for it and where to find more information.

“Our personnel survey provided us with valuable information about development targets. We discussed them even at the management group level.”

“One of our employees commented that if only we would have had the guide when she was pregnant with her first child,” says Hietamies.

“Our employees found Kela’s pages very difficult to understand at first. For first-timers, family leave on the whole and the terms are not obvious immediately.”

### Separate guide for supervisors

Taking family leave also has a big impact on the team that the person leaves. Therefore, we also made a guide for supervisors, so that they can take the necessary things into account when a team member is absent. Among other things, the guide reviews questions about how to keep in touch with the team member

### DNA HAS 1,600 EMPLOYEES

DNA Plc is a Finnish telecommunications group that provides voice, data and television services. The company has millions of subscription customers. It provides consumers with telecommunications services and companies with communications and networking solutions. In 2021, the company had 1,600 employees. DNA is part of the Norwegian Telenor group.





during their leave and what to take into account when returning to work approaches.

“We started the preparation of the supervisors’ guide by sending a survey to everyone who had had a long absence in the past three years.

We received information about what could have gone better and what we had succeeded in. We also asked for the general opinion about how often a manager is desired to be in contact during the leave. This provided the framework for the guidance, even though it is a very individual matter,” says Hietamies.

At DNA, we modified our own policies based on the feedback from the survey.

For example, it was decided to invite persons who were on family leave or who were otherwise absent for a long time to participate in joint events in the future, even during their absence.

“By listening to the personnel, we have developed our operations in

relevant matters. It is important that the supervisor is able to support their team members in the best possible way in a family leave situation. This will avoid misunderstandings and unpleasant situations.”

In order to make the family leave reform as clear as possible to everyone, DNA

revised its own family leave guides in 2022. In addition, the company organises briefing sessions for the personnel on the subject together with an external partner.

### DNA also has a grandparent leave

“We have consciously aimed to see family as a concept that is as extensive as possible. For example, we want to take into account the elderly in the family by offering them support so that the whole family feels better,” Hietamies emphasises.

DNA has a grandparent leave in use. It is a paid leave of one week for gran-

dparents, intended to help the grandparent and grandchild to be together and to help the family with children in everyday life. Also employees who have become grandparents through a blended family or adoption are entitled to the leave.

“Yet, we still have a lot of work to do. We are constantly developing our family-friendly practices, and we are trying to take our employees in different family situations into account more and more equally,” says Hietamies.



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# Employer's checklist on family leaves

## BEFORE

- Read the new guidelines on family leaves on the Kela website.
- Take a positive view of the employee's new situation.
- Agree on a common policy on work equipment and communication during family leave.
- Plan substitute arrangements and the organisation of work in the working community for the duration of family leave.

» Go to the section

## DURING

- Invite your employee on family leave to participate in social events in the working community.
- Encourage the employee on family leave to think about their interests and explore them during family leave, for example through different courses.
- Schedule a time in your calendar for contacting the employee at the end of the family leave.
- Adopt an open attitude towards your employee's wishes and changing situations

» Go to the section

## AFTER

- Reserve time for induction and discussion. Also discuss the situation of the employee's family at the time of returning to work.
- Review the job description and tasks.
- Ask what kind of skills the employee has accumulated during family leave.
- Discuss the flexibilities that apply to your organisation, such as remote work.
- Advise the employee returning from family leave to ask for help and support with a low threshold.
- In the working community, talk about how day-to-day life with a small child can get tiresome, and that it is normal.

» Go to the section





# Concluding remarks

Laws and regulations should always be remembered. The sense of workplace cohesion and family friendliness are also created with small gestures every day. Ask the others how they are doing. Encounter the person and be present. Acknowledge good things, encourage and support.

Clarity and openness increase well-being, a sense of security and commitment to the working community. When the employer keeps the dialogue open, the employee is ready to display their talent and use their best expertise.

Preparing the guide for employers has been a fruitful effort. We have put our knowledge and insight into this guide. The tips in the guide are applicable to many stages in life and work throughout the working community.

We hope that the guide has provided employers, managers and supervisors with clarity concerning the family leave reform – and concrete ways to have meaningful discussions in the working community.

I would like to extend my gratitude the entire author team and partners. Special thanks to the companies who made their stories and ideas available to readers.

Together we are more!

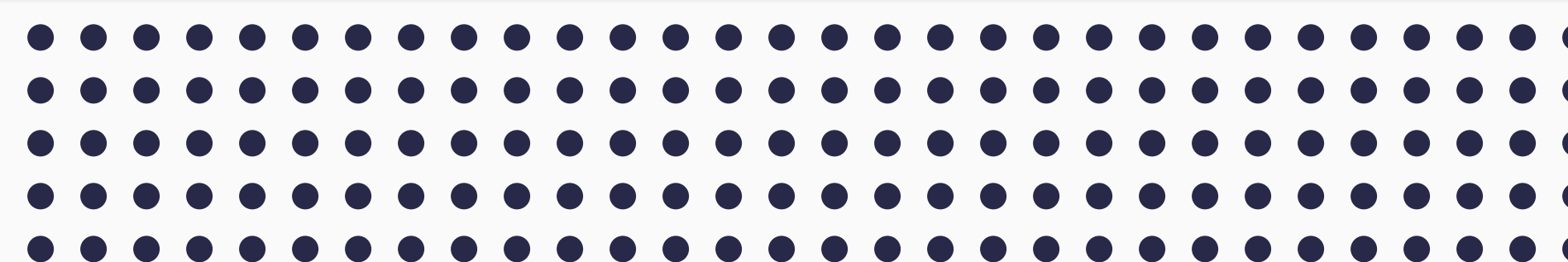


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#TogetherWeAreMore







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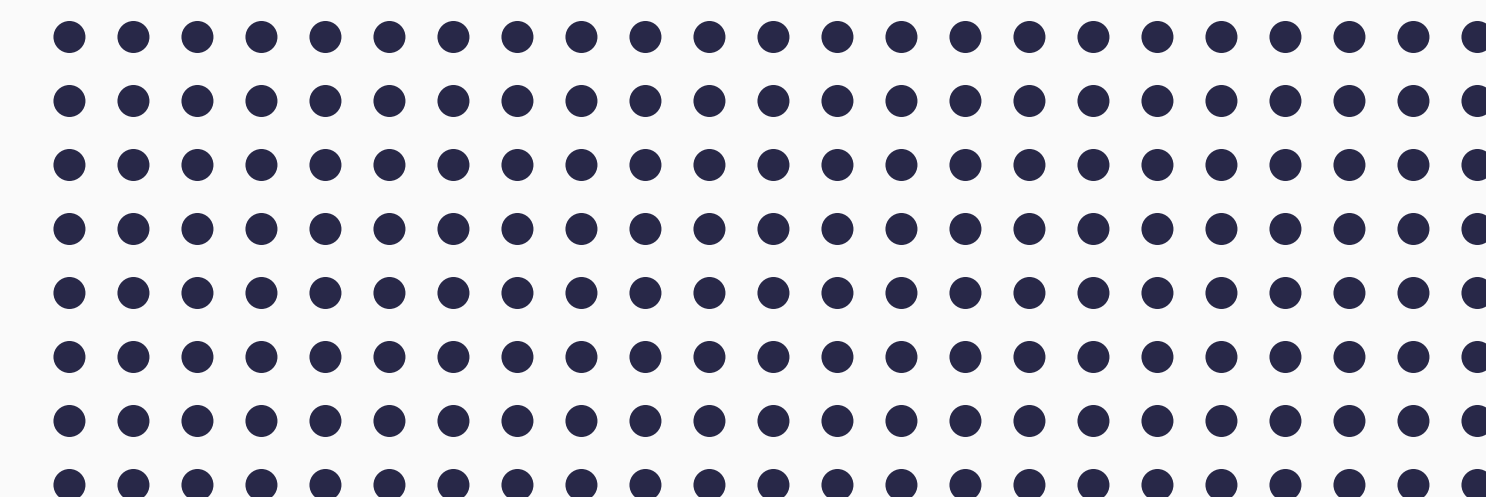
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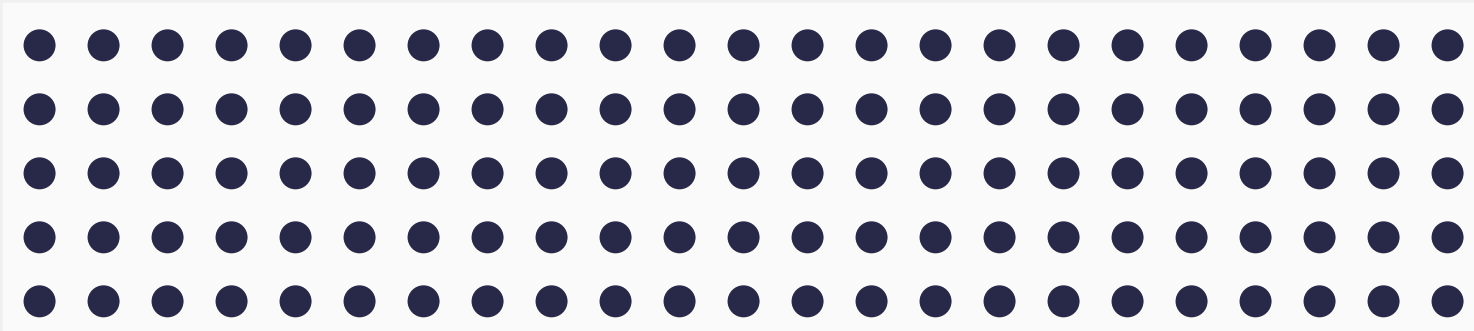


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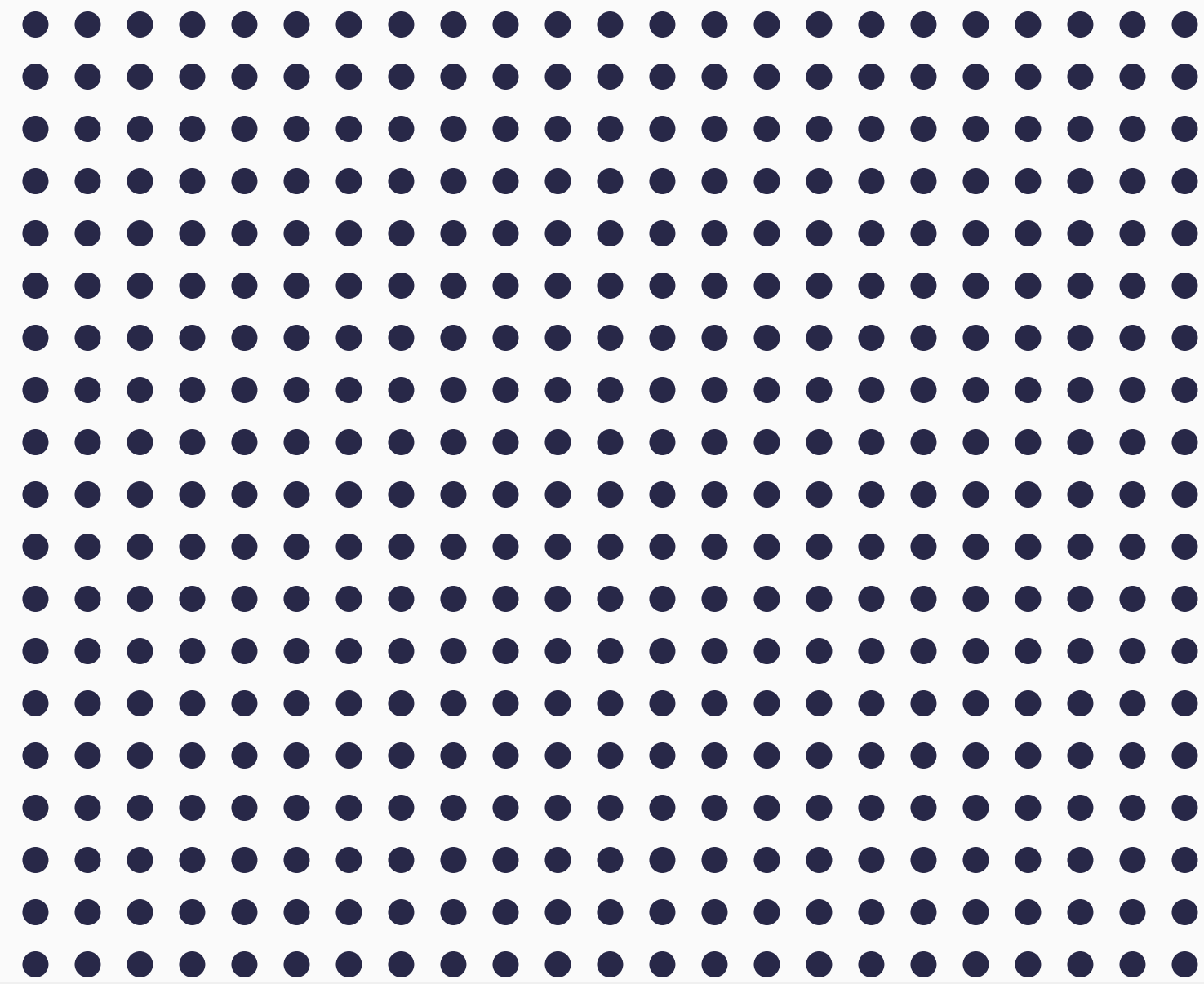


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