



TE OPE KĀTUA O AOTEAROA  
**DEFENCE FORCE**

# Manager's Guide to Supporting Parental Leave

This resource supplements the  
NZDF Parental Planning Guide

Version 01



HEI MANA MŌ AOTEAROA  
**A FORCE FOR NEW ZEALAND**

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## How to Use This Guide

This resource has been developed to supplement the *'NZDF Parental Planning: A Guide for members of our New Zealand Defence Force,'* as a way to enable managers/1UPs/ command to best support members of their teams who might be preparing for, embarking on and returning from parental leave.

From the first time an individual informs you they will be preparing to take parental leave, through to returning to the workplace following parental leave, this guide will support managers by sharing insights and perspectives from those who have been on parental leave, as well as providing recommendations, tips and tools for the manager's role in providing a holistic approach to making this a positive transition period during a person's career.

This guide aims to bring to life the ways that parental leave is a transformational time in a parent's life and how a manager can support them. Whether it is their first time, second time or more, alongside the joy of a new baby; or excitement of an adopted child

or children, making their family complete; there are many questions and feelings that can emerge for parents as they prepare for, take, and return from parental leave.

Feelings like not wanting to let their unit down or disappoint their manager, to feelings of parent guilt, tiredness, and thoughts about how they will "juggle" expectations at work and at home. Tensions may also arise for parents as they navigate deeply rooted societal norms and expectations around domestic care and labor roles. Questions may begin to arise around identity, career, and confidence to re-enter the workplace.

These feelings and questions are a normal part of becoming a working parent and managers play a vital role in helping them to navigate through to a new daily rhythm. This guide aims to better inform you as a manager in supporting your people through the parental leave journey.



## Why We Have Created This Guide

### Listening To Our Parents

Feedback from NZDF parents across both our uniformed and civilian members who participated in a “Returning to Work with Confidence” parenting programme in 2022 and 2023, told us that they wished that their managers/1UPs were able to have a better understanding of their experiences, challenges, worries, fears and the things that they felt best supported by while preparing for, embarking on and returning from parental leave. Whilst many had positive experiences and returned to supportive workplaces, many of these parents felt their managers/1UPs who had a wider perspective of their experience and awareness of things that enabled a positive supportive workplace, would allow a proactive approach for all parents and parents to be in our Defence Force.

### An Important Role

The actions of a manager play a significant role in how the parent experiences the entire parental leave process, including how well a parent transitions back to the workplace and their ongoing career intentions. Taking parental leave can be both an exciting and challenging time for your team member, and are likely to have a number of concerns about what this might mean for their career. Your actions before, during and after parental leave make a significant difference to how positive this experience will be.

### Supporting Our Managers

With the important role that the manager/1UP plays in how someone will experience all aspects of parental leave, we have invested in creating this guide to support our managers/1UPs. Parental leave is something to be embraced and enjoyed, and when a member of your team taking parental leave, feels seen and supported, their experiences will be more positive and their return to work will be a success. This guide aims to support your understanding as a manager/1UP of the parental leave experience, and provide practical tips and advice to make this the best experience possible.

### Building Understanding

Familial compositions, fiscal pressures and constraints, as well as expectations of shared domestic labor and care of children, have changed considerably in recent years. Meaning that experiences of parents today, whether it be for a new baby or an adopted child, are likely to be quite different those experiences from previous generations. So whether parental leave is something you have personally experienced or not, this guide has been created to build your understanding of how it feels for the employee and to provide context for the support that managers/1UPs are well placed to deliver to make the overall experience more positive for all our people.

## Overview of Parental Leave in the NZDF

### Key points of NZDF Policy relating to parental leave are summarised below:

- If a person is responsible for assuming the care of a child under six years of age, either as the primary carer or the partner of the primary carer, they are entitled to parental leave.
- The following leave provisions are available to eligible members of the NZDF (military and civilian):
  - Parental Leave (PNL), unpaid.
  - Special Parental Leave (SPL), up to 10 days, paid.
  - Keeping in Touch (KIT) hours, up to 64 hours, paid.
- Members may be eligible for one or more types, depending on their circumstances and whether they meet the relevant NZDF policy criteria.
- Members may be eligible for the taxable IRD Paid Parental Leave Payment Scheme (PPL), not exceeding a continuous period of 26 weeks (this can also be shared between primary carers).
- Applications for PPL go directly to IRD by completion of IR 880 (application) or IR 881 (transfer) form. The NZDF Parental Planning Guide and IRD website contain qualifying criteria.
- In the event of preterm babies (live birth prior to 36th week), members are entitled to up to 13 weeks of paid preterm baby leave. This is based upon the time between birth and planned PNL commencement. These payments do not effect normal PPL payments. However, the combined total of PNL taken must not exceed the member's maximum entitlement of 52 weeks.
- Members are encouraged to give as much notice as possible to their chain of command about any intention to take PNL (minimum of three months).
- If a member discloses pregnancy to their manager/1UP, they in turn are not to disclose that information to any other person unless the member consents.
- When members take PNL, the position/paraline they held prior to commencement will usually be held open or filled temporarily.
- When position/paraline holding is not practicable, single Service Career Management should be consulted.
- Where the member's position/paraline or a similar position is not available, PNL may be extended for up to 52 weeks or other considerations may be enacted (Refer DFO 3, Part 8, Chapter 8).

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#### NOTE:

Managers/1UPs are encouraged to access the NZDF Parental Planning Guide and HR Tool Kit (under Parental Leave) for comprehensive information on NZDF policies and processes relating to parental leave.

Managers/1UPs play an important role in determining how positive a person's parental journey will be. Being supportive, available and able to refer your team member to appropriate resources to help them navigate the parental leave process is essential.

Managers/1UPs should note that contemporary family compositions and circumstances may be quite different, and will vary from person to person.

Whilst this guide has been designed to support you as a manager/1UP with your team member on parental leave (PNL), many considerations across the parental leave journey can be taken into consideration for partners/secondary care-givers, who may only take the entitled 10 days Special Parental Leave (SPL). Partners/secondary care-givers who do not take an extended period of parental leave, will also be navigating new family dynamics alongside their careers.

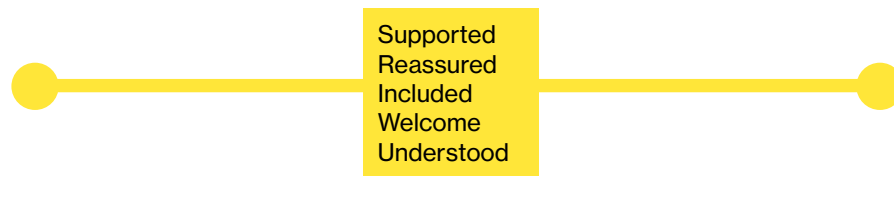
## How this guide is structured

This guide is structured around the four key phases of the NZDF Parental Leave Experience.

Within each phase, the guide will detail key experiences and perspectives from the person embarking on parental, as well as a series of recommended actions for Managers to best support them and provide a positive overall experience during each phase.



### How We Want our People to Feel During the Parental Leave Experience:



#### PHASE 1: SHARING

This is the phase where the person shares with their manager/1UP that they will be taking Parental Leave. Depending on their specific situation, a person may share that parental leave is needed, anywhere from 1 to 8 months before Parental Leave commences.



#### PHASE 2: PREPARING

Commencing after the sharing phase, this phase begins as you as the manager/1UP begin to form detailed plans for the commencement of Parental Leave in partnership with your team member.

You typically would have about 1-6 months prior to Parental Leave commencing in this phase.



#### PHASE 3: ON LEAVE

This third phase of the Parental Leave experience, is when your member of the team begins their absence from the workplace, beginning their Parental Leave. The amount of time on Parental Leave varies considerably person to person, and this length of time will be unique to the individual for a number of reasons. Typically this period of time will range from 3 to a maximum of 12 months. It should be noted that your team member may also wish to use Keeping In Touch (KIT) hours during this time.



#### PHASE 4: RETURNING

The final phase of the Parental Leave experience occurs when the member of your team returns from Parental Leave back to the workplace. The first three months that a person returns back to the workplace following Parental Leave are a vitally important foundation for a person's experiences as a working parent.

There may be multiple transitions in this phase, such as part-time/full-time or flexible working arrangements, and this final phase setting the foundations of returning to work, should be viewed as 0-6 months and beyond.



## How We Want Our People to Feel During the Parental Leave Experience

There are five core feelings we want our members to experience across the Parental Leave Experience.

Being able to identify these and keep them front of mind, will better support you as a manager/1UP on how your team member should ideally be feeling during each phase of the parental leave experience.

Whether your team member is a birthing or non-birthing parent, biological or adoptive parent, primary or secondary carer, is a partner, or is a solo parent, managers/1UPs should strive to have their team members feel supported, reassured, included, welcome and understood.

These five core feelings are based on the experiences of our people on parental leave and how they felt would best encourage a positive meaningful experience of parental leave.

### SUPPORTED

We want our parents to feel supported in terms of a feeling that they know their manager/1UP “has got their back,” or that their manager/1UP will be there for them when they need them. It is also about helping our parents to feel like their manager/1UP is approachable for questions or concerns that may arise.

### REASSURED

This is about managers/1UPs helping parents to feel reassured that this experience will be one that works for them, to be reassured that there are resources (like the NZDF Parental Planning Guide) and ways in which they can be supported through the parental leave experience. It is also about feeling reassured that their needs will be respected and championed by their manager/1UP.

### INCLUDED

We want our parents to feel like they will remain being a valued member of the team whether they announce they might be pregnant, or taking parental leave, through to while they are on parental leave and returning to work. This is about managers/1UPs ensuring that the parent feels included in terms of any team communications, duties, and social events.

### WELCOME

Particularly when returning from parental leave, we want our managers/1UPs to help our parents feel like they are welcome back at work and part of the team. We want our people to feel like they belong and that they feel like they have continued to be a valuable member of the team.

### UNDERSTOOD

It can be easy for parents to feel vulnerable in several ways, especially when returning from parental leave. Parents often feel anxious about getting their duties completed, worried about letting their colleagues down or feel guilty for putting their baby in childcare to come to work. Managers/1UPs can play a critical role in helping parents feel understood, to feel seen in their challenges and to know that it is a normal part of transitioning back to work.

Throughout this resource, the experiences of those on the 2022 & 2023 “Return to Work with Confidence” programmes have been embedded, to bring life to the feelings, experiences and perspectives of our NZDF people preparing for, embarking on and returning from parental leave.

## PHASE 1: SHARING

# 01



### Sharing with Manager that Parental Leave is needed

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#### Key Activities Taking Place:

- Member makes initial contact with you as their manager/1UP informing you they will be taking parental leave.
- Member starts the process of completing associated paperwork and should be encouraged to refer to the NZDF Parental Planning Guide by their manager/1UP.
- Member may start some basic planning for parental leave at this time. Managers/1UPs should be aware that early or preliminary plans may shift, or change, as either the adoption or prenatal period progresses.



## Common Experiences of Parents:

- This can be a time of mixed emotions. Excitement of what is to come and fear of the unknown.
- It is a time of vulnerability. The person's manager/1UP is often one of the first people informed about pregnancy/expecting or adoption and the announcement. How managers/1UPs respond in this initial conversation, has a huge impact on how the remainder of the parental leave process is experienced by a team member.
- Financial considerations weigh heavy in their minds and often may have already started forming a plan on how things might work or what some of the key challenges might be.
- Depending on the requirements of their role, they may also be concerned about the impact on their career, whether and how they might be treated differently and how their relationship with their peers and other team members may change. These are all things that they need reassurance on.

***“I felt scared about telling my 1UP as I worried it would change the way they thought about me.”***

## Role of the Manager/1UP

- In this initial phase, managers need to adopt a supportive, reassuring, and valued approach.
- Actions that demonstrate the support and reassurance include:
  - Congratulating them on their news and enquiring how they are feeling about it.
  - Reassuring them that they are a valued part of the team, and this will not change.
  - Reassuring them that you will not disclose any information of their need for parental leave unless they consent to it.
  - Continue to involve them in tasks and team activities as normal, within health and safety considerations.
  - Ensure they have access to the NZDF Parental Planning Guide.
  - Ensure they know where to find the documentation for requesting parental leave and that you are available to help if needed. Reassure them that this can be completed during work time and check that they have access to a computer.
  - Being aware of the range of additional considerations and that they are able to access support services if needed (*Chapter 2 of the NZDF Parental Planning Guide*).
- Refer them to the additional resources that NZDF has available that might be useful for them including The Force Financial Hub.
- In terms of demonstrating that the parent is valued, actions include:
  - Offer to be the person that walks them through the NZDF Parental Planning Guide and help them identify their actions. It could feel overwhelming to navigate what lies ahead on their own, so having a manager/1UP invested in ensuring they understand fully what their options are can have a really positive impact.
  - Regularly check in with the member on how they are feeling, how the team dynamics feel for them and to be proactive for offering help should they need it.
  - Discuss with the employee on what changes they might need made to their job duties/requirements. NZDF Parental Policies will outline specifics to how these may be approached.
  - As a manager/1UP you will need to work with your team member, to ensure the approach is relevant to their requirements.
  - Discuss with your team member how they would like to manage communication of their parental leave news (including timing) with

the unit and wider team. It is important that you respect confidentiality and not progress news or announcements without their consent to do so.

There are a variety of reasons that influence when a person will feel comfortable to inform their workplace about the need to take parental leave. Keep open, regular communication with your team member once you've been informed and be aware not to make assumptions about personal circumstances, preferences, familial situation or who will assume primary care-giving roles.

When managers/1UPs are invested in ensuring their team member sharing news about an upcoming period of parental leave, feel supported, reassured, included and valued, this phase of the parental leave experience will be more positive.

***“From the moment I told them I was pregnant, I felt supported and understood. It is an exciting time but also a scary one. Being able to count on your manager being there for you on the days when you were not feeling well, made all the difference.”***





## PHASE 1: SHARING CHECKLIST

- Regularly check** in with the member how they're feeling and whether any adjustments are needed to their working arrangements prior to parental leave.
- Check** they are aware of NZDF Parental Leave policies on the HR Toolkit and the NZDF Parental Planning Guide.
- Discuss** when their last day of work might be, and how much parental leave they anticipate they want to take.
- Consider** flexible working arrangements, if practicable. Refer to DFO 3, Part 12, Chapter 1.
- Provide** them with NZDF support resources, Force 4 Families, and HR contacts, if required.
- Check** how/when your team member would like to share with the wider team they will be taking parental leave.

Additional considerations if your team member is pregnant:

- Talk** through any health and safety assessment that might be necessary.
- Check** they have notified their NZDF Medical Practitioner/ Medical Officer (MO). MO should provide them with an MD 906 for medical grading review and fitness testing exemption.
- Complete** 1UP section of MD 906 and forward to 2UP/Commander for actioning.
- Check** they are aware of NZDF-funded healthcare costs.
- Remind** your team member that maternity uniform for 2nd and 3rd trimesters are available through CAPES and NZDF Clothing Stores. Cost centre manager approval is required.

## PHASE 2: PREPARING

# 02



### Preparing to Leave Work to Start Parental Leave

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**Key Activities Taking Place:**

- The team member will complete their parental leave request and begin to make plans for embarking on parental leave and their return to work strategy.
- Managers/IUPs should encourage dialogue and assist to best support their team members plans and strategy.







## PHASE 2: PREPARING

### Common Experiences of Parents:

- By the time the parent is approaching their parental leave start date, it is likely that they will be physically exhausted, probably not getting a lot of sleep and carrying the mental load of things that need to be completed before they leave.
- In addition to work duties, they may have been juggling a number of medical appointments, thinking ahead for childcare solutions, and hoping for some down time before baby arrives.
- It is also common for many parents to feel apprehensive about leaving work especially if it is going to be a challenge financially. There is also often worry at this point about how they manage coming back to work with a baby and the new household dynamics.
- Partners or secondary caregivers, may also be feeling anxious about the arrival of their baby or child, and their changing circumstances. They may want varying amounts of time off to bond with their new baby or child, assist with care-giving and domestic tasks, or support the birthing parent postpartum.
- There are many variations to how individuals may choose to plan their parental leave period, from splitting paid parental periods and

primary caregiver roles, to taking varying lengths of parental leave. These details will be unique to different needs and circumstances. Equally, people may have different cultural needs as they transition towards becoming parents or taking guardianship of children.

- Some parents to be, especially those taking a primary caregiving role, may feel guilty about taking parental leave and worry about their work context changing before they go on parental leave.

***“The biggest worry is that I feel as though I did not start my parental leave on good terms with my immediate managers. I did not feel valued whilst I was pregnant, and I was often at odds with them trying to remain useful just to be forgotten about which is what has happened with previous pregnant people.”***

### Role of the Manager/1UP

- Continuing regular check-ins with your team member is important, especially as they get to the last few weeks before starting parental leave.
- When checking in with your team member, it is important to understand:
  - Whether they need any changes to work duties and ensuring they can attend medical appointments.
  - How they might want to stay connected to work while on leave. They may want to come into some key team sessions or they may want to not be involved.
  - If they do come to work, that they can use Keeping In Touch (KIT) hours to do this (refer NZDF Parental Planning Guide).
  - What their return to work strategy will be and how you can best assist in supporting that plan. This may include discussing what flexible work options are available, support for breastfeeding/expressing etc.
  - Whether flexible working arrangements might be useful for your team member. This may also be beneficial for partners and/or secondary caregivers.
- Ensuring your team members PDR is up to date prior to starting parental leave will ensure this doesn't hold up any career management processes while on parental leave.
- Acknowledging your team members last day at work is important and reinforces that your team member is valued and that they are seen. This can be done in whatever way feels appropriate to you and to your team member. Some managers/1UPs and/or their teams organise a morning tea (or other gathering), where the wider team is able to wish them well and look forward to staying in touch and their return following parental leave.

When managers/1UPs are invested in ensuring their team member preparing for starting parental leave, feels supported, valued and informed, this phase of the parental leave experience will be more positive.

***“While it was good to be leaving work to have my baby, it also felt strange to be leaving a job I loved. I was grateful for a speech my manager did on my last day acknowledging my work and wishing me luck. It really helped me to leave with a sense of still being part of the squadron.”***



## PHASE 2: PREPARING CHECKLIST

- Check** whether they have applied for Parental Leave (PNL) (MD 1241), six weeks prior to expected delivery for biological parent, or 14 days before assuming responsibility of care. Managers/Commanders are required to complete a section of the MD 1241 and forward to HRSC, Career Management (military) and the member.
- Encourage** the member to check whether they are eligible for the IRD Paid Parental Leave Scheme and to complete any associated paperwork required with IRD.
- Refer** your team member to the NZDF Parental Planning Guide, HR Toolkit and other support services link the NZDF Financial Hub.
- Check** whether the member will use Special Parental Leave (SPL) prior to commencing PNL and that they are aware they can use KIT hours while on paid parental leave.
- Check** that the member's PDR is up to date and complete prior to PNL commencement. PDR may fall out of reporting period depending on PNL arrangement.
- Ask** how your team member wants to be kept in touch with while on parental leave and have a plan in place for communication, including who their point of contact will be with the workplace while on parental leave.
- Discuss** their plans for returning to work following parental leave and have a plan in place.
- Ask** the member whether they would like a team/workplace farewell.
- Keep** regular communication with the member to ensure any changes in circumstances or needs are met.

## PHASE 3: ON LEAVE

# 03



### Being on Parental Leave

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**Key Activities Taking Place:**

- Activities in this phase depend on what was agreed on with your team member prior to Parental Leave Starting.
- Any work activities can be covered through Keeping In Touch (KIT) hours and your team member may wish to stay in touch over parental leave to determine how these may best be used to support them.





## PHASE 3: ON LEAVE

### Common Experiences of Parents:

- Being out of the workplace can feel different for many parents. It might be the first time they have not been working for 10 or 15 years. And when your job is a big part of your life – this feels very different.
- Often it can be a time of joy, exhaustion, and anxiety for a parent (all before 9am).
- Some parents feel like they want a complete break from work and others will want to keep in touch. It is an individual's choice that is good to discuss before they go on parental leave.
- Some parents can feel disconnected or forgotten about while on parental leave and may appreciate even a small message to see how they are doing and if any support is needed.
- Many parents may start considering how returning to work will look for them, well before their expected return date. Feelings may also change over the course of their parental leave about when they would like to return to work and some parents can become anxious about returning to work with their new dynamics at home. Personal circumstances can also change over this time and may need more support or access to support resources.

- Every childbirth experience is unique and for some, may have been traumatic or resulted in a childbirth related injury. It is important to note that traumatic birthing experiences can impact both the birthing and non-birthing parent.
- Some uniformed parents may worry about returning to fitness following childbirth and be unsure what access to fitness, medical and other related support they can access while on parental leave.

***“When I left work, it felt weird as I went from this person where that was integral to the unit to a person that had been completely forgotten about.”***

***“I started to think about coming back to work quite a long time before I came back - it was on my mind a lot, particularly getting back up to fitness.”***

### Role of the Manager/1UP

- The key thing in this phase is to carry out what was agreed between yourself as the manager/1UP and your team member before they started parental leave. It might be that you had agreed to have a call every three months to update them, to invite them back into work with their baby to meet the team, or perhaps that they preferred to have no contact.
- Your team member may wish to share the news of the arrival of their baby, child or children and you may want to consider a unit/workplace/ Unit Personal Fund (UPF) funded gift for your team member to congratulate them.
- It is important that your team member does not feel forgotten about and decide what mode of contact they will prefer (personal email addresses or phone number).
- Arrange to have a Return-to-Work meeting about one month before their scheduled return date. In this meeting, it is a good idea to explore what needs they may have around flexible working, breastfeeding/ expressing, getting back to fitness, and work duties. There are a range of support options also available for uniformed members, including return to fitness information, pelvic floor physios and rehab PT, regardless of how birth occurs.

- Remind them that they can use their Keeping In Touch (KIT) hours for any contact with work including activities like informal catch-ups and practicing childcare transitions.
- When managers/1UPs are invested in ensuring their team member on parental leave feels supported, included and connected, this phase of the parental leave experience will be more positive.

***“One of the things I was worried about when returning to work was the feeling that I was not spending enough time with my child. I have a work from home flexible agreement in place, and I've been told this will be extended by my current manager.” This makes me feel great about returning to work.”***



## PHASE 3: ON LEAVE CHECKLIST

**Acknowledge** and celebrate the arrival of your team member's baby, or adopted child/children, and with their approval, share that news with your team. You may want to consider a gift from your workplace to your team member to congratulate them.

**Communicate** with your team member in line with the communication plan you discussed prior to parental leave starting.

**Offer** them opportunities to connect with the workplace and use KIT hours if applicable.

**Check** if any changes to parental leave are required or if any circumstances have changed and they may require additional support.

**Discuss** their return to work plan and provide access to support resources as required.



## PHASE 4: RETURNING

# 04



### Returning to Work Following Parental Leave

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**Key Activities Taking Place:**

- The team member returns to work with a clear plan on what has been agreed in terms of the return to work – including any flexible working conditions, access to breastfeeding or expressing facilities, etc.
- Regular check-in's between the team member who has returned to work and the manager/IUP should occur to ensure your team member feels any changing needs, worries or concerns relating to work, work relationships or personal circumstances, are being accounted for.



# PHASE 4: RETURNING

## Common Experiences of Parents:

- Returning to work is a pivotal moment in the parent's life. There may be mixed feelings upon returning to work. Feelings that include: guilt of not being at home with their baby, anxiety about their financial situation dictating that they have to return to work and feelings of overwhelm as they find their new work/home routine.
- From a work perspective, often the parent is concerned that they will be singled out or that they will be treated differently, they can be worried about their fitness levels (for uniformed personnel), and they can feel anxious that they may have missed out on a lot at work.
- There may be some anxieties, worries or tension about settling back into their role. This can be due to a lack of confidence in their abilities, being worried about expectations set by the person filling their role while away, or not having a good handover experience on return to work.
- While they do not want the fact that they took parental leave to disadvantage them, the reality is that life for them is different now. They may be struggling with sleep, juggling caregiving responsibilities, and feeling a loss of confidence.

- There may be worries or guilt about leaving children in the care of others while going to work, or the possibility of having to be away for extended periods of time. Conversely, some parents may feel guilty because they want to be at work. Experiences and feelings will be unique to each person.
  - Not all parents have traditional family structures, or additional family or community support around them. Some may be solo parents, partners to those who are away frequently or assigned to operational units, or be struggling to create a shared load of domestic labour and childcare with their partner. Many parents may also not feel like they are able to prioritise or have time to spend on their own wellbeing outside of their work and family commitments.
- It can be quite common to return to a new unit or role. When this happens, the parent can put themselves under additional pressure to "prove themselves" to their new colleagues and manager.

Parents who may have elected to work reduced hours may still be expected to deliver the same outputs, creating unfair stress and pressure on the individual as they try to navigate their new demands. Equally some parents may not feel like they are supported with flexible working

arrangements that might have been established for their return to work. Managing family sickness is a challenge for parents, particularly as they transition to childcare where it is easy for viruses to be shared. Parents can feel guilty that they are letting their manager and unit down. Parents can also feel scared for their child/children at these times. These are complex emotions. It is common for young children to have as many as 8-12 colds, respiratory infections and/or stomach bugs a year. Managing family sickness is something that should be anticipated and is best approached in a supportive, understanding and empathetic way, especially as parents are likely to get sick more often too. Some parents may be solo parents, or not have the ability or financial position to call on wider support to care for sick dependents.

*“Overwhelm at the expectations and hours - despite applying for reduced hours (0.6 FTE), the role was still full FTE and expected to be done.”*

*“Knowing that I might need to post to ship and deploy for weeks/months.”*

*“Feeling exhausted from trying to give 100% both at home and at work - not giving enough time to myself.”*

*“I feel awful waking my kiddies up to go to daycare and hardly getting any quality time to spend with them. Then finishing at 4.30pm, picking them up, sitting in traffic, to get home, a very quick play whilst I make dinner then get them to bed between 6-6.30pm. I feel like I don't see them.”*

*“Working out how to juggle starting at work in a promoted role with 2 kids under 3 and a husband that is in the military too in an operations role (meaning he can be required to work at the drop of a hat).”*

*“I'm navigating the guilt of leaving my son at daycare but needing an income.”*

*“Feeling guilty for your workplace/co-workers when you leave early or take sick leave.”*





# PHASE 4: RETURNING

## Role of the Manager/1UP

- This final phase is perhaps the most important and the one where the role of the manager/1UP is fundamental to how the member experiences returning, how welcome they feel and how smoothly they can transition back to their duties.
- Depending on what is appropriate, seek input from them on the work they want to be doing. When developing a plan for the work that your team member will be completing when they return, check in with them and ask them what their preference is. Sometimes there can be good intent by a manager/1UP to not overload them but at the same time it limits their career development.
- Be an advocate for their returning arrangements. Confirm the hours and days they will be working and what support they may need from the wider team for their return. With the permission from your member returning, this can be communicated with the team as part of welcoming them back to work. This helps your team member returning from parental leave to feel seen and supported.
- Managers/1UP should take care to ensure workload expectations match agreed working arrangements and that their parent

is not made to feel like they have to 'make up' for work they might be exempt from.

- Frequent check-ins are important. These are one of the best things you can do to support your parent.

Things to check in on are:

- How their return to work is going and trying to get beyond F.I.N.E – Fine Is Not Enough. Your team member may not want to be an inconvenience, but they may be finding it hard maybe in terms of hours, flexibility or team interactions.
- If your team member is returning to a new unit and you are their new manager/1UP, get to know them and start to build a relationship.
- Listening is important. Your team member may be feeling overwhelmed with no clear next steps. Simply providing a space where they can talk, feel heard and feel seen will be a help to them.
- Whether they would like another parent to buddy up with them as another form of support.
- You should help determine the needs of your team member in accessing wellbeing support (maybe needed due to physical fatigue).

- Ensure they can participate in team and other important events. Where possible, schedule team meetings or updates that are within their working hours. If this is not possible, ensure they are updated on the information needed.

- Put together a 'Handback Plan' and go through this in their first week back. Just like they will have done a 'Handover Plan' when they left, this 'Handback Plan' ensures that their work gets handed back to them. It ensures that there are clear roles and responsibilities between the returning team member and the people that may have been covering in the role while they were on leave.

- Set up a 'While You Were Away' meeting in the first week back. A lot can happen when you are on parental leave. For example - new people, new buildings, different processes, a change in templates, new chain of command or management structure. This meeting is a chance for you to walk through what has been happening while they have been away. It helps them feel in the loop and supported.

- Communicate that you understand the realities of sick dependents, especially in the first 12 months and maintain a supportive relationship with your team member.

- Be proactive on the plan for sickness. For new parents,

we need to expect absences from sickness rather than be surprised by them. Front foot this when they first come back to work about how to handle it. Have a conversation with your parent on the best and most timely way for them to notify you, what your expectations are and how you understand that it will happen. Having these conversations in advance can take the sting out.

- Be conscious of not making assumptions about what the parent may want, or not want to do, or the roles and opportunities they may wish to have now that they have children. Keep an open dialogue with your team member and ensure the same opportunities are accessible as other members of your team.

When managers/1UPs are invested in ensuring their team member returning from parental leave, feels supported, welcome, understood, valued, included and like they belong, returning to work from parental leave, will be more positive.

***“The breastfeeding support plan has been awesome in helping me transition back to work. I love that we have time put aside so that we can breastfeed or pump. My favourite part of the workday is going to feed my boy at lunchtime.”***





## PHASE 4: RETURNING



**Arrange** a pre-return to work catch up with your team member at least 3 weeks before returning to work. Confirm their return to work date and how they would like to be supported in their return to work (flexible working, access to breastfeeding/expressing facilities, fitness support etc.).



**Acknowledge** with their approval, return to work dates and what support might be needed from the wider team as part of their welcome back to work.



**Organise** an acknowledgement of their return to work. You may wish to organise a team get together or a way to recognise they have returned to work and are valued in the team.



**Arrange** a 'Handback Plan' and a 'While You Were Away Plan' meeting. Use these opportunities to proactively discuss any new work routines and arrangements and whether there is any additional support they may need returning to work.



**Continue** to check in regularly with the team member for at least the first 6 months about how things are going, whether circumstances have changed and what support may be needed (flexible working, access to breastfeeding/expressing facilities, return to fitness support etc.).



**Discuss** whether any health and safety assessments for the workplace, or return to fitness programme/plan is needed. Refer to the HR toolkit for further information.



**Arrange** a career management interview with the member to discuss eligibility and availability to attend courses and possible deployments (especially important if they are breastfeeding/expressing), and ensure PDRs are up to date and current.



## Further Support for Managers

### Supporting through loss

The parental leave experience can also be a time of challenge or loss, uncertainty and drastic changes to plans that may have been in place due to a sudden shift in circumstances.

As a manager/1UP there may be times when you need to support your team member as they experience miscarriage or loss of their child. Whilst miscarriage is more common in the earliest trimester of a pregnancy, loss or complications can occur at any point, including at birth or shortly after. Additionally, your team member may have had a series of complications or medical interventions, prior to even informing you about taking parental leave.

Your role as a manager/1UP through all these times remains an important one. It is about creating the space that your team member needs, checking in with them on what they may need, respecting that, and advocating on their behalf. Ensuring your team member is aware of the additional support available for them and making it easy for them to access this, will be essential to your role in supporting your team member through these situations.

Knowing that as their manager/1UP, you are approachable and there for them will be something that they will value and appreciate.

## NZDF and Public Support Agencies Available

### NZDF4U Helpline and Wellbeing Counselling Support

All members of NZDF and the Defence community (including Regular Force, civilians, veterans, reserves and family members).

A health professional (outside of the NZDF) will assess what's going on and discuss support options, text 8881, or email [wellbeingsupport@nzdf4u.co.nz](mailto:wellbeingsupport@nzdf4u.co.nz) for 24/7 confidential support.

### Defence Health

Each Camp and Base has a Defence Health Centre where members of the Regular Force can seek medical advice and support.

Locations and contact details can be located on the NZDF Intranet <http://orgs/sites/nzdf-health/lp/health-centres.aspx>

### NZDF Psychologists

Taking care of your mental health is as important as keeping physically healthy, especially before, during and after pregnancy or assuming the role of primary carer. NZDF Psychologists are experts in applying psychological science to assist people in maintaining good mental health. Information can be found on the NZDF Intranet <http://orgs/sites/NZDFCPO/psy/home.aspx>

### NZDF Social Workers

NZDF Social Workers are available to support wellness and provide advice to all NZDF members (civilian and military) and their families. A list of locations and phone numbers for NZDF social workers can be found on the website <https://force4families.mil.nz/nzdf-social-workers>

### Defence Community Facilitators (DCF)

DCFs will include you in the parenting community for those with young children. They run parenting support groups, coffee mornings, baby equipment loans, etc. They also provide information and resources about Parent to Parent, kindergartens, day-care, if you are posted during pregnancy.

DCF locations and services can be found at <https://www.health.nzdf.mil.nz>

### Human Resource Advisors (HRAs)

HRAs form part of the HR Services Delivery Team and are available to provide advice on HR related matters, including supporting conversations with managers about policy and employment related matters.

A list of locations and contact details for HRAs can be found on the NZDF intranet [http://orgs/imx/hr-toolkit/LP/HRA>Contact\\_Details.aspx](http://orgs/imx/hr-toolkit/LP/HRA>Contact_Details.aspx)

### Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Advisors (SAPRA)

SAPRAs are subject matter experts in the field of sexual harassment, sexual assault and sexual violence. SAPRAs provide advice and information to all NZDF personnel and Civilian Staff on sexual violence prevention strategies and best practice for the response to cases of sexual violence. This includes advice, information and support for victims/survivors, command and bystanders. You can contact a SAPRA by calling 0800 6933 24

### Anti-Harassment Advisors (AHA)

AHAs are available to provide support and guidance if you have experienced any act of harassment or discrimination. AHAs and the reporting process can be found on the NZDF Intranet [http://orgs/imx/hr-toolkit/LP/ww\\_w\\_ah\\_aha.aspx](http://orgs/imx/hr-toolkit/LP/ww_w_ah_aha.aspx)

### NZDF Chaplains

The role of NZDF Chaplains is to provide spiritual, religious and pastoral ministry to members and their families. The locations and contact details for the NZDF Chaplains can be found at <https://www.health.nzdf.mil.nz>

### Financial Information

To help you make better informed financial decisions, the NZDF has brought together a range of resources for you to use. These are available via the NZDF Intranet HR Toolkit [http://orgs/imx/hr-toolkit/LP/pa\\_super\\_g\\_fi.aspx](http://orgs/imx/hr-toolkit/LP/pa_super_g_fi.aspx)

### 0800 MUM 2 BE

Information on how to access services and what you are entitled to receive. 0800 686 223



### **Are you OK?**

Family violence is not OK.  
Are you worried about safety in a relationship? 0800 456 450 – monitored 24/7.  
Or visit [www.AreYouOK.org.nz](http://www.AreYouOK.org.nz)

### **Breastfeeding Support / Lactation Specialists**

Publically funded services in the community for lactation support  
Call Plunket Lactation Support 0800 933 922 – monitored 24/7.  
Or visit [www.NZLCA.org.nz](http://www.NZLCA.org.nz)

### **Whānau Ora – Cultural Services Support services for Māori, Pasifika and Pākehā.**

0800 875 663. Or visit <http://www.tpk.govt.nz>

### **Mokopuna Ora – Healthy Pregnancy and Baby**

Pregnancy and Parenting information and Education Curriculum ‘parenting and healthy baby’ module  
<https://mokopunaora.nz>

### **Find a Midwife / LMC**

[www.FindYourMidwife.co.nz](http://www.FindYourMidwife.co.nz)

### **Find a Māori Midwife**

[www.FindYourMidwife.co.nz](http://www.FindYourMidwife.co.nz)  
select Māori Midwife

### **Find a Pasifika Midwife**

[www.FindYourMidwife.co.nz](http://www.FindYourMidwife.co.nz)  
select Pasifika Midwife

### **Home Birth Aotearoa**

Learn more about home birthing  
[www.HomeBirth.org.nz](http://www.HomeBirth.org.nz)

### **Māori Health Providers**

Directory available on the Ministry of Health website [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

### **Miscarriage Support SANDS**

Organisation supporting families who have experienced the death of a baby. [www.sands.org.nz](http://www.sands.org.nz)

### **Nga Maia Māori Midwives**

Nga Maia is a National Body that represents Māori Birthing  
[www.NgaMaia.co.nz](http://www.NgaMaia.co.nz)

### **Stillbirth Support**

Support services for you and your family following the death of a baby  
[www.wheturangitia.services.govt.nz](http://www.wheturangitia.services.govt.nz)





**HEI MANA MŌ AOTEAROA**  
**A FORCE FOR NEW ZEALAND**