



Royal Air Force New Parent Pack

Managing your Adoption Journey and Leave

A Guide for Service Personnel

v3

The contents of this booklet are intended to simplify the procedure and entitlements of adoption leave arrangements and are for guidance only.

The following guidelines do not overrule policy in any way.

Please contact Air-COSPers-Del-ParentWllbg@mod.gov.uk for amendments or updates.

I want to adopt – Who can take adoption leave?

The Armed Forces' Occupational Adoption Leave Scheme (AFOALS) is given to recognise the adoption of a child (or children) up to the age of 18 years and is available to Service personnel adopting a child on their own, or one member of a couple adopting a child together. Only one parent of a couple is eligible for Adoption Leave/Adoption Pay. The other parent may be eligible for Paternity Leave and Pay.

The provisions of the AFOALS apply only to adoption placements arranged through legally recognised adoption agencies. They do not, for example, apply in cases where: a private adoption has been arranged; where someone becomes a special guardian; where a step-parent adopts a stepchild; when a child is in foster care.

Eligibility – UK Adoptions

To qualify for adoption leave under the AFOALS for a UK adoption as you must:

- Be newly matched with a child by an adoption agency recognised in the UK.
- Have notified the adoption agency that you agree to the child being placed with you and agree with the date of placement.
- Notify your Commanding Officer/Line Manager in writing of when you wish to take Adoption Leave (using Form [JPA R008](#)). This should be no more than 7 days after you are notified that you have been matched with a child.

Eligibility – Overseas Adoptions

To qualify for adoption leave under the AFOALS when a child is adopted from overseas you must:

- Be the child's adopter. This is the person who will adopt or has adopted the child or, in a case where the child will be, or has been adopted by two people jointly, whichever of the joint adopters who has chosen to take adoption leave in respect of the child.
- Have received official notification from the relevant UK authority confirming the central authority has, or is prepared to, issue a certificate confirming that you are eligible to adopt and have been assessed and approved as being a suitable adoptive parent.

- Notify your Commanding Officer/Line Manager in writing of when you wish to take Adoption Leave (using Form [JPA R008](#)). This should be no more than 7 days after you are notified that you have been matched with a child.

Personnel adopting a relative from overseas can also qualify for Adoption Leave and Pay if they have been assessed and approved as being a suitable parent. Adoption Leave and Pay will also be available to Service personnel serving in overseas commands who adopt a child through an accredited adoption agency such as the SSAFA Adoptions Agency, subject to meeting the qualifying criteria for Adoption Leave and Pay.

I am adopting – what do I need to do first?

When you are ready tell your line manager



You are under no obligation to inform them straight away, but the earlier you do so the sooner you can start working together to ensure that you have good lines of communication throughout your adoption preparations.

You must provide them with a copy of the 'Supporting Your Staff During their Adoption Journey and Leave – A Guide for Line Managers' booklet, which will help them help you.

Should you and your line manager be struggling to answer any questions that you have, or if you require additional support outside of your chain of command, you should contact your HR Centre or Unit HR in the first instance. If your HR Centre or Unit HR are unable to help, please email Air-COSPers-Del-ParentWillbg@mod.gov.uk including your correspondence with HR in the email trail.

Remember – This may be the first time your line manager has had to support someone through adoption and adoption leave. It could be as new to them as it is to you. They are there to help and support you, but you should lead on discussions including what your adoption agency needs from you and your leave plans.

time spent travelling to the appointment. There is no entitlement to travel and subsistence.

Your time off is to be logged as Pre-Adoption Appointment on JPA. This can easily be done by completing the form [JPAR001](#) (Application for Leave or other Absence Type) prior to your appointment and submitting to your HR Centre or Unit HR for action on JPA.

Did you know? – If you are adopting as a couple, your co-adopter is also entitled to 2 days off to attend pre-adoption appointments. If they are serving this leave is paid and is booked using the form [JPAR001](#) (Application for Leave or other Absence Type) and selecting the box Pre-adoption Appointment.

If they work for another company their company policy will say if the time is either unpaid or paid.

When you are ready tell your career manager



Let your career manager know as soon as you are ready. You may not know what you want to do about the length of leave or future posts at this point but having an early discussion will help them help you with your planning.

Download MyRAF App onto your phone



MyRAF allows you access to things like leave balances and pay statements without the need to log onto MODNet. You should also check out the parenting section, where you can find this leaflet as well as other parenting resources and links.

Time off for pre-adoption appointments



You are entitled to reasonable paid time off for up to 5 pre-adoption appointments once you have told your line manager that you are adopting. This includes

What do I need to know about Pay, Leave and Terms of Service?

Working out your key dates

Before we talk about leave and pay, you are going to need a few key dates at your fingertips so grab a calendar.



Date of Placement – The first piece of information you are going to need is what date your child is being placed with you.

Matching week – The week that the adoption agency notified you that you had been matched with the child.

The date you intend to start adoption leave – You might not know when this is yet, but it will become a key date as all the calculations for the end of leave and pay are taken from this date. Your options for when you can start adoption leave are explained on the following pages.

Did you know adoption leave and pay are separate entitlements?



You will find it easier to get your head around if you know that leave and pay are separate entitlements. Adoption leave is a day one entitlement for employees, but to get the government statutory pay you have to have worked for a company for a set time period.

Adoption leave



It doesn't matter how long you have been serving, you can take up to 52 weeks of adoption leave.

Those 52 weeks are broken down into 2 periods:

- Ordinary Adoption Leave (OAL) is weeks 1 – 26 inclusive.
- Additional Adoption Leave (AAL) is weeks 27 – 52 inclusive.

Note – You can't stop and start adoption leave. If you return to work, you can't go back on to adoption leave. If you want to do this, then either use a KIT day or Shared Parental Leave options should be explored. There is another leaflet in this series on Shared Parental Leave.

Adoption pay



Adoption pay is more complex than leave and depends on a number of factors including how long you have been serving, your commitment type and your

intentions on completing a return of service at the end of your leave period. The information below is based on straight forward circumstances. If you have a more complex situation or require further clarification [JSP 760 – Leave Regulations](#) should be referred to as well as having a discussion with your HR Centre or Unit HR.

There are 2 parts to adoption pay, the bit that the Government pays which is called Statutory Adoption Pay, and the bit that the RAF pays, which is called Occupational Adoption Pay.

- **Statutory Adoption Pay (SAP)** – This is the Government allowance that is paid for the first 39 weeks of adoption leave. If you qualify for SAP it will be paid through your pay and is subject to your normal tax and National Insurance deductions.
- The first six weeks of SAP will be paid at 90% of your average weekly earnings (including Recruitment and Retention Pay (RRP)) before tax.
- The remaining 33 weeks will be paid at the lower of either the standard rate of SAP or 90% of your average weekly earnings.

Average Weekly Earnings are calculated in accordance with the Governments [employer's guidance](#). The current rate of SAP is published [Here](#).

- **Occupational pay** – This is your RAF pay which is paid for the first 26 weeks of your adoption leave. Occupational pay tops up your SAP to your normal pay rate. Entitlement to occupational pay is explained in the table below. So, in terms of money received, what you see in your bank is the same, but it is made up of SAP and occupational pay.
- **No pay** – Weeks 40-52 (inclusive) are unpaid.

	2			6				12								26											39										52															
				Occupational Pay 26 Weeks																																																
Statutory Pay 6 Weeks – Paid at 90% AWE				Statutory Pay 33 Weeks – Paid at lower of standard rate or 90%																																No pay 13 Weeks																

What pay am I entitled to?



We mentioned earlier that not everyone is entitled to SAP or occupational pay. It all depends on how long you have been serving. Whether you are adopting from the UK or overseas also has slightly different qualifying criteria as well.

If, having read the info below, you are unsure of your entitlement, contact your HR Centre or Unit HR.

Statutory Adoption Pay

Qualifying criteria for SAP – UK adoptions.



- You must have served for a continuous period of at least 26 weeks into the Matching Week.
- You must have average earnings at least equal to the Lower Earnings Limit.

In addition, you must provide documentary evidence to show that you are adopting a child through an adoption agency. This is usually a matching certificate or can be a letter from the agency confirming that you have been matched with a child. The evidence provided must include:

- Your name and address.

- The date the child is expected to be (or was) placed for adoption.
- The date you were told by the adoption agency that you had been matched with a child.

Qualifying criteria for SAP – Overseas Adoptions.

- You must have served for a continuous period of 26 weeks into the Matching Week.
- You must have average earnings at least equal to the Lower Earnings Limit.

In addition, you must provide documentary evidence to show that you are adopting a child. The evidence provided must include:

- a copy of the Official Notification from the relevant UK authority that they have agreed that you are suitable to adopt a child from overseas.
- Your name and address
- Evidence of the child's date of entry into the UK, such as copies of the entry clearance documents.

Occupational Pay



Length of Service	Pay Entitlement
Less than 26 weeks continuous service by the Matching Week and still serving in the Matching Week.	You will not be entitled to occupational pay; nor will you be entitled to statutory pay. Depending on your individual circumstances you may be entitled to other state benefits.
26 weeks or more, but less than a year's continuous service by the Matching Week and still serving into the Matching Week.	You will be eligible for 39 weeks of statutory pay if you earn on average £123 per week. You will not be entitled to occupational pay.
One year's continuous service by the Matching Week, and still serving into the Matching Week and have stated your intention complete your Return of Service following adoption leave.	You will be entitled to 39 weeks of statutory pay and 26 weeks of occupational pay.
One year's continuous service by the Matching Week, and still serving into the Matching Week and are not returning to duty after your leave having exercised an option point or PVRd (i.e. will not complete a return of service).	You will be entitled to 39 weeks of statutory pay. You will not be entitled to occupational pay.

Return of Service

If you get paid occupational pay during your adoption leave, you are expected to complete a Return of Service of one week for every week of occupational pay. If you don't complete it, you will have to pay back the occupational pay element.



- 28 days before the new start date.

When can I start my adoption leave?



You should give a minimum of 28 days' notice of your intention to take adoption leave. The service understands that this can sometimes be difficult as placement can take place at short notice. If this happens, you should give notice as soon as is reasonably practicable.

The date you choose to begin your leave will depend on whether you are adopting a child from within the UK or from overseas as outlined below.

UK Adoptions. You may choose to start your leave at any time between 14 days before the expected placement date and the date of the placement itself. If the date of placement changes before you begin your leave, you should inform your Commanding Officer/Line Manager in writing as soon as possible of the new date on which your leave will start.

Overseas Adoptions. You may choose to start your leave on either the date the child enters the UK or a date no later than 28 days after the date the child enters the UK. Adoption leave must not be used to cover the period spent travelling overseas to arrange the adoption or to visit the child. Either annual leave or unpaid leave should be used for these purposes.

How do I apply for adoption leave?



You should apply for Adoption Leave using [JPA Form R008](#). In order to apply for adoption leave you must provide documentary evidence that you are adopting a child through an authorised adoption agency. A Matching Certificate will be given to you by the adoption agency and a copy of this document should be enclosed with [JPA Form R008](#).

What do I need to do if I want to change my plans before my adoption leave starts?



You can change your intended start date by you notifying your Commanding Officer/ Line Manager and Unit HR of the new date. This must be done by the earlier of:

- 28 days before the original start date.

or

What do I need to do if I want to change my plans after my adoption leave starts?



We understand that you may want to change your dates during your leave. If you want to return to work earlier than your booked leave or extend your leave within the 52-week allocation, a minimum of 56 days' notice must be given by completing Part C of [JPA Form R008](#).

Adoption of more than one child or second placements



If more than one child is adopted as part of the same placement arrangement, the entitlement to Adoption Leave remains the same as for a single child. If children are adopted as part of separate placement arrangements over a period of time, then there will be an entitlement in respect of each separate placement.

Second Separate Placement During a Period of Adoption Leave



If you are already on adoption leave and have a further entitlement because of a separate adoption placement, at least 56 days' notice in writing must be given of your intention to start the further period of adoption leave.

If you adopt through a completely separate adoption placement, whilst you are already on adoption leave for a previous placement and the matching week for the second placement occurs during OAL, the second period of paid OAL will run concurrently with the balance of the previous period of OAL. However, you would not be granted two sets of adoption pay concurrently. You would only be paid additionally for the period of the OAL in respect of the second placement, which did not overlap, with the OAL for the first placement.

The maximum amount of adoption pay that will be paid during the period of OAL in respect of the second placement, which does not overlap with the first, is the standard rate of SAP per week, regardless of length of time served. Any element of SAP to which you may be entitled will be included as an integral part of any Adoption Pay awarded.

Deferral of, or recall from, adoption leave



It is recognised that recall from or the deferral of adoption leave could have major consequences for the

adoption. For this reason, the deferral of, or the recall from, adoption leave will only be considered if required for operational reasons in a major emergency. If deferral or recall is being considered, careful consultation will be needed between you, your chain of command, Career Management and appropriate welfare authorities before a decision is taken. This must be done by an officer of at least OF4 level. If you have to be recalled from adoption leave for operational reasons, the outstanding balance of leave will be granted as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.

How are my Terms of Service affected?

It should be noted that, unlike the Armed Forces' Occupational Maternity Leave Scheme, which allows Servicewomen to choose to leave the Service prematurely on the grounds of pregnancy, there is no right to leave the Service prematurely on the grounds of adopting a child.



Paid leave

During paid periods of adoption leave your normal terms and conditions of service apply, and your leave is reckonable service for purposes of pay increments, seniority, promotion, pension, annual leave and public holidays. It doesn't matter if it is occupational or statutory pay you are in receipt of.

Unpaid leave

If any of your adoption leave is unpaid such as the last 13 weeks of Additional Adoption Leave (weeks 40-52 inclusive), or if you are not entitled to claim statutory pay, then this is classed as reckonable service for pay increments, seniority, promotion, annual leave and public holidays but **NOT pension**. You can apply to extend your service to take account of this by e-mailing your HR Centre or Unit HR who will assist you in completing an Application for Extension to Service. This will be staffed to Career Management by your HR staff. Applications for Extensions of Service are also a check sheet action for HR staff and you should therefore be contacted by your HR Centre or Unit HR in regard to this on your Return to Work.

Annual Leave Allowance

Your Annual Leave continues to accrue when you are on adoption leave. You may want to consider factoring in using some up at the end of your adoption leave.

Employment after adoption leave

If you opt to return to work at any point up to the end of your Ordinary Adoption Leave (up to and including week 26) then you have a right to return to your old post,



if you so wish. If you are returning to work at any point during Additional Adoption Leave (week 27-52 inclusive), the Service will endeavour to meet your geographical and posting preferences in accordance with normal Service arrangements. Before you go on adoption leave discuss keeping in contact with your Career Manager whilst you are away, your career aspirations, posts you are interested in and any key dates such as house moves etc.

What happens to my annual appraisal?



As a period of adoption leave can mean that you are out of the work environment for up to 52 weeks, an appraisal report will be provided for any person commencing adoption leave. This will be done by either deferring or bringing forward your annual report; this is to ensure that any reporting gaps are kept to a minimum and that any promotion board will have the most recent possible report to consider. For further information refer to [JSP 757](#).

You should discuss your appraisal requirements with the HR Clerk administering your adoption leave, who will liaise with the appraisal team and your Line Manager. This is part of the administration process for adoption leave and your HR Clerk will ensure the necessary action is taken.

If you are selected for promotion while on adoption leave, you will not be overlooked for assignment to a suitable appointment in the new rank on the grounds of adoption absence. Your career manager will contact you to discuss your options.

Service Families Accommodation (SFA)



If you are Married/Registered in a civil partnership and your Personal Status Category (PStat) reflects this on JPA you will be able to apply at any point.

If you are single, you will be entitled to SFA once you have been approved for adoption by your adoption agency. you must apply to change your PStat via your HR Centre or Unit HR, then you are then able to make an application for SFA. Changes to PStat is done by e-mailing [JPAN001](#) to your HR Centre or Unit HR.

Housing applications are made using the [e1132 form](#) (for security reasons it does not work on the internet). More information is available through Pinnacle at www.pinnacleservicefamilies.co.uk.

If you are unable to access MODNet at all whilst on adoption leave you should e-mail Pinnacle at HomeServices@pinnacleservicefamilies.co.uk who will be able to assist you.

What plans do I need to put in place before I go on adoption leave?

Keeping In Touch (KIT) Plan



The Service is allowed to have reasonable contact with you whilst you are on adoption leave. It is your responsibility to put in place a Keeping in Touch Plan (KIT) with your line manager before you go on leave. You should schedule time with them to discuss how you would like them to keep in touch with you, and you with them.

You should also discuss any opportunities for using your KIT days. It is ok if you don't know what you want to do with them right away, but your line manager may not know what they are, so cover them in the discussion as they may be aware of things coming up. You may also want to take the opportunity get a date in the diary that falls towards the end of your adoption leave to discuss your return to work.

Note – There is a planner at the end of this booklet for writing your plan down. You should keep a copy and give a copy to your line manager.

Keeping In Touch (KIT) Days



KIT days are designed to enable you to keep up to date with new developments in your workplace and undertake training without ending your adoption leave.

You get 10 KIT days, and it is up to you how many you want to use.

KIT days are reckonable service and, if you are not in receipt of occupational pay, you will be paid a full day's pay, even if you are only keeping in touch for part of a day. KIT days do not have to be a full day's work, you do not have to wear uniform and they do not have to be taken at your workplace.

Examples of KIT days include;

- Office briefings.
- Service briefings such as Armed Forces Pension Society.
- Branch/Trade conferences.
- Meetings with career managers or line managers.
- Courses.
- Discussing your return to work plan with your line manager.
- Representative sport.
- Conducting personal service-related admin.
- Researching new posts/units prior to assignment.
- Attend work for a few hours while your child has a trial day at nursery or school.

How to Claim a KIT Day



You should use [JPAR003](#). You can either use one for each day or claim for them all on one form. All you need to do is write the detail of the KIT Day and get it signed by your Chain of Command or the organiser of the event and email to your HR Centre or Unit HR.

Childcare considerations



As a service parent you are responsible for making your own arrangements for childcare and meeting the costs involved. Waiting lists can be very long for nursery places so you should start thinking about places before you start adoption leave. The RAF Families Federation has excellent information about [childcare and early years education](#) as well as tax free childcare for those eligible.

Do I need to do anything whilst I am on adoption leave?

Yes, there is just a little bit... but first we want to say that it is not unusual as a new parent to feel down or to struggle with your mental health. Whilst your adoption agency may offer you support, please remember that the service is also here to support you. Please do book an appointment with your Medical Officer, or GP if you want to discuss it further or seek treatment. Also, the Parental Mental Health booklet will talk you through common mental health symptoms and show you how to self-refer to DCMH. Please do not struggle alone.

About that admin...

Remember to use your KIT days - Feedback from new parents shows that they found that engaging with parenting networks, Hive activities, other serving parents and using KIT days was really beneficial to their wellbeing.

Did you know? – You can find a list of MOD Staff Networks on the MyRAF App in the Parenting section.

Remember – Let your line manager or HR Centre/ Unit HR know of any changes in your personal circumstances that may affect the support you need whilst on leave or for your return to work.

Did you know – There is a RAF Parents Return to Work Support Group. Chat to your Hive and see if there is one local to you or email the team at Air-ParentSupportNetwork@mod.gov.uk.

I am ready to return to work – what do I need to do?

Screening from operational deployment



You will be screened from operational deployment for a period of 18 months post placement unless you notify your career manager otherwise.

Flexible working arrangements



Flexible working arrangements allow you to have a degree of freedom when attempting to balance your work and personal life. While flexible working is not a right, all service personnel are entitled to request a flexible working arrangement so they may better balance the demands of personal life and their Service commitments.

Flexible working does not just mean variable start and finish times; there are a number of options available. The booklet [Flexible Working and You](#) outlines everything you need to know.

Registering a child on JPA



You should register your child on JPA at the earliest opportunity. This is likely to be on your return to work. You should use the [HR Hub](#) if possible, where you can complete a request online to add your child to JPA and upload any supporting documents required. If you cannot access the [HR Hub](#), you will need to fill in [JPAN005](#). The completed form and a scanned copy of your child's matching certificate should be emailed to your HR Centre or Unit HR.

Did you know – the [HR Hub](#) is accessible via your personal devices through Defence Gateway, making it easy to upload any supporting documentation?

Don't forget – if the other parent is serving, they will also need to complete [JPAN005](#) and email to their HR Centre or Unit HR with a scanned copy of the matching certificate so their JPA can be updated.

Update your Will



You may wish to update/write your will on becoming a parent. If you have uncomplicated circumstances, you can complete a basic service Will form. As these need to be completed in hard copy and kept at the Wills Library in Glasgow, your HR Centre or Unit HR will

need to provide you with the forms (will and envelope). Once completed the original needs to be returned to your HR staff for logging and onward post.

Details of a Private Will can be submitted via a Will Declaration on the [HR Hub](#). If the [HR Hub](#) is unavailable you should e-mail your HR Centre or Unit HR to let them know where it is held so they can update JPA.

Did you know you can get parental leave?



This is a government provision so available to all parents. It allows you additional leave to care for a child by, for example, spending more time with the child during the early years, to settle a child into new childcare arrangements or to accompany a child during a stay in hospital. Parental Leave allows each parent of each child to take 18 weeks unpaid leave. Parental Leave can be taken up to the child's 18th birthday. Parental Leave is unpaid and, therefore, is non-reckonable service.

Paternity Leave and Shared Parental Leave



Separate leaflets have been produced outlining the Armed Forces Paternity and Shared Parental Leave entitlements and is available on MyRAF or the [RAF Health and Wellbeing SharePoint site](#) under Parenting.

HR Centre Contact Details

The Subject line of your email must be formatted like this
YYYYMMDD-App Title-Surname-Service Number-Station-O/OS/OSP

Air-HRCentre1-Ops-GMB@mod.gov.uk Benson, Brize Norton, Halton, High Wycombe, Northolt, Odiham, Boscombe Down, St Mawgan, 78 Sqn Swanwick
Air-HRCentre2-GMB@mod.gov.uk Waddington, Cranwell, Scampton, Henlow, Coningsby, Wittering, Aldergrove, 39 Sqn (USA), Syerston
Air-HRCentre3-GMB@mod.gov.uk Honington, Marham, Holbeach, Neatishead
Air-HRCentre4-GMB@mod.gov.uk Cosford, Shawbury, Stafford, St Athan, Valley
Air-HRCentre5-GMB@mod.gov.uk Boulmer, Fylingdales, Leeming, Linton-on-Ouse, Spadeadam
Air-HRCentre6-GMB@mod.gov.uk Lossiemouth

Keeping In Touch Plan

This form is intended to be used to agree a KIT Plan during adoption leave.

Note for line managers – This plan should be passed on to your replacement if you are posted during a service person's adoption leave.

Service Person's Details

Name	
Service No	

Address(es) during adoption leave	Address 1	Address 2
Landline		
E-mail		
Mobile		

During adoption leave I would like to be contacted:				
	Phone	E-mail	Text	Notes
2 Weekly				
Monthly				
Other				<i>Please specify</i>

KIT Day Plan

	Date	Place	JPA Form R003 Auth and sent to Unit HR/HR Centre
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

