



Royal Air Force New Parent Pack

Supporting your Staff during their Adoption Journey and Leave

A Guide for Line Managers

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-ParentWillbg@mod.gov.uk for amendments or updates.

How Long is the Adoption Process?



There is no fixed timescale for placement of a child with an adopter, the timescales are determined by the approval process and how long it takes to match a child with a family. However, you should be aware that it is possible for a child to be placed within 9 months of an adopter's expression of interest.

What is the process?



We have taken advice from SSAFA Adoption Agency on their process however, exact processes may vary between adoption agencies. Overseas adoptions may also vary depending on the country. In the majority of cases, you can expect the following stages.

Initial Enquiry



This could potentially be a difficult stage for adopters as making that first step can be daunting. During this stage an adopter will be sent an information pack and will need to book a phone call to discuss intentions, expectations and their background.

Within a month of the initial enquiry an information session will be held. This is a half-day session and is held at the adopter's home.

Expression of Interest



This is called Stage 1. The timing of progress into Stage 1 is led by the adopter. During the eight weeks of stage 1, statutory checks will be made by the agency and will require the adopter to nominate four referees and undertake a medical examination with their GP. The adopter will also have to complete a Stage 1 Portfolio, which will include their full history including addresses, qualifications and schools attended. Following this an adopter will have to attend a four-day prep group in London at SSAFA HQ (this may be different for Local Authorities). Courses are run every 3 months and the dates will be given to adopters so that they can choose a date, which fits in with their other commitments.

Progression from Stage 1 to Stage 2



There can be a gap of up to 6 months between stages without having to repeat stage 1.

Stage 2



Once an adopter has applied for Stage 2 they will be required to produce a Stage 2 Portfolio and have 40 hours contact with children in the presence of their social worker. This is undertaken in blocks of days and must be completed within 2 months. As a Line Manager you may want to consider allowing the adopter flexible working during this period.

A panel will be held in London over the period of a day where the Agency Decision Maker will make a recommendation on the adopter. This will outline the number and age of children that they have been recommended as suitable to adopt.

Matching Process



During the matching process the adopter will be interviewed by the Local Authority who are considering placing the child. This is a very important meeting, and the adopter will need to be available during the day.

When a child has been matched, the adopter will have to undertake a number of meetings with a medical advisor, the foster carer and attend a Local Authority Panel. This last date cannot be changed and the adopter will have to attend the meeting to continue with the matching.

Placing the Child



Once the child has been placed with the adopter Adoption Leave can start. In order to introduce the child to the family the adopter will visit the child in the foster carer's home, normally over a period of 2 weeks (or longer if required). The child will then move into the adopters' home and regular progress meetings will be held with the social worker.

Time off for adoption appointments



The amount of time off required to attend adoption appointments will vary depending on the adoption authority and the location of the meetings. As discussed previously there are certain appointments that cannot be changed and failure to attend these appointments will jeopardise the adoption. Others are more flexible and can be programmed at a more convenient time for the adopter. The following leave provisions are available for use on these occasions.

Adopters (those taking adoption leave) are entitled to reasonable paid time off for up to 5 pre-adoption appointments once they have told you that they are adopting. The adopter taking paternity leave is entitled to 2 days. This includes time spent travelling to the appointment. There is no entitlement to travel and subsistence.

The 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 their HR Centre or Unit HR for action on JPA.

It is the Line Manager's discretion as to whether additional time is given to facilitate travelling time, e.g. where the unit is remote from the meeting venue. It is likely that an adopter will require additional time away from the workplace for appointments. Line Managers should consider granting special paid leave if they deem it appropriate.

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 the adopter must:

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

Eligibility – Overseas Adoptions

To qualify for adoption leave under the AFOALS when a child is adopted from overseas an adopter 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 they are eligible to adopt and have been assessed and approved as being a suitable adoptive parent.

- Notify their Commanding Officer/Line Manager in writing of when they wish to take Adoption Leave (using [JPA Form R008](#)). This should be no more than 7 days after they are notified that they 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.

What do I need to know about Pay and Leave?

Key dates

The first thing that you need to be aware of is that there are a few key dates from which all leave and pay are calculated from.



Date of Placement

The date the child is being placed with the adopter.

Matching week

The week that the adoption agency notified the adopter that they had been matched with the child.

The intended adoption leave start date

This may not be known yet, but it will become key as all the calculations for the end of leave and pay are taken from this date. See the section 'When can adoption leave start' below.

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 there are qualifying criteria to be entitled to pay.

Adoption leave



It doesn't matter how long an adopter has been serving, they 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.

The names don't really mean anything in terms of leave. Nothing changes in their time off entitlement. The difference is down to the legal protection afforded to returning to your old job which changes slightly at the 26-week point. Up to 26 weeks you can return to your old job. After 26 weeks the service will endeavour to meet the service persons employment and geographical preferences.

Adoption pay



Adoption pay is more complex than leave and depends on a number of factors including how long an adopter has been serving, their commitment type and

their intentions on completing a return of service at the end of their leave period.

The information below is based on straight forward circumstances. If there is a more complex situation or you require further clarification [JSP 760 – Leave Regulations](#) should be referred to as well as having a discussion with the 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 an adopter qualifies for SAP it will be paid through their pay and is subject to their normal tax and National Insurance deductions.
- The first six weeks of SAP will be paid at 90% of their 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 their 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 the RAF pay which is paid for the first 26 weeks of adoption leave. Occupational pay tops up the SAP to their normal pay rate. Entitlement to occupational pay is explained in the table below. So, in terms of money received, what is seen in the bank is the same, but it is made up of SAP and occupational pay.

- **No pay** – Weeks 40-52 (inclusive) are unpaid.

What are the pay entitlements for adopters?



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

If, having read the info below, there is still uncertainty around entitlement, contact your HR Centre or Unit HR.

Return of Service

If paid occupational pay during adoption leave, an adopter is expected to complete a Return of Service of one week for every week of occupational pay. If they don't complete it, they will have to pay back the occupational pay element.



When can adoption leave start?

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



The date an adopter chooses to begin their leave will depend on whether they are adopting a child from within the UK or from overseas as outlined below.

UK Adoptions. An adopter may choose to start their 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 they begin their leave, they should inform their Commanding Officer/Line Manager in writing as soon as possible of the new date on which your leave will start.

Overseas Adoptions. An adopter may choose to start their 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.

Applying for Adoption Leave and Changes to plans

Applying for Adoption Leave



A service person should apply for leave by completing [JPA Form R008](#) and send it to their Commanding Officer/Line Manager for counter signature.

They must provide documentary evidence that they are adopting a child through an authorised adoption agency. A "matching certificate" will be given to them by the adoption agency and a copy of this document should be enclosed.

What notice is needed to change plans before adoption leave starts?



The intended start date can be changed by notification to the 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**
- 28 days before the new start date.

If it is not possible for this much notice to be given, as much notice as reasonably practicable must be given and be provided in writing.

What notice is needed to change leave plans after adoption leave starts?



If an adopter chooses to return to work earlier than their booked leave or extend their leave within the 52-week allocation, a minimum of 56 days' notice must be given by completing Part C of [JPA Form R008](#).

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, the adopter, Career Management and appropriate welfare authorities before a decision is taken. This must be done by an officer of at least OF4 level. If an adopter must be recalled from adoption leave for operational reasons, the outstanding balance of leave will be granted as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.

What Plans need to put in place before the start of adoption leave?

Keeping In Touch (KIT) Plan



The Service is allowed to have reasonable contact with service person whilst they are on adoption leave. It is the responsibility of the service person to put in place a Keeping in Touch (KIT) Plan with you before they go on leave. Between you, you should schedule time to discuss the plan and how they would like to keep in touch with you, and you with them.

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

Note – there is a planner at the end of the service person's 'Managing your Adoption Journey and Leave' booklet for writing a KIT plan down. You should keep a copy and ensure it is passed on to your replacement if you are assigned during their leave period.

Keeping In Touch (KIT) Days



KIT days are designed to enable service person on adoption leave to keep up to date with new developments in the workplace and undertake training without bringing to an end their adoption leave.

An adopter gets 10 KIT days, and it is up to them how many they want to use.

KIT days are reckonable service and, if they are not in receipt of occupational pay, they will be paid a full day's pay, even if they are keeping in touch for part of a day. KIT days do not have to be a full day's work, uniform does not have to be worn and they do not have to be taken at the 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 a return to work plan with their line manager.
- Representative sport.
- Conducting personal service-related admin.

- Researching new posts/units prior to assignment.
- Attend work for a few hours while child has a trial day at nursery or school.

This is not an exclusive list; any activity that a service person wishes to undertake as part of their personal or professional development, or which support their transition back to work should be encouraged.

How to claim a KIT Day



JPAR003 is to be used and can be submitted as a single form for each day or all of them on one form. All that is needed is detail of the KIT Day and for it to be signed by them, their Chain of Command or the organiser of the event. It is then emailed to the relevant HR Centre or Unit HR.

Appraisal Reports



The RAF is committed to ensuring that service personnel are not discriminated against, or treated any less favourably, as a result of adoption. As a period of adoption leave can mean that the service person is out of the work environment for up to 52 weeks, an appraisal report is to be provided for any service person commencing adoption leave. This will be done by either deferring or bringing forward their Appraisal Report; this is to ensure that any reporting gaps are kept to a minimum, and that any promotion board held in their absence will have the most recent possible report to consider. Further details are in [JSP 757](#).

Service Families Accommodation (SFA)



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

If they are single, they will be entitled to SFA prior to the adoption. Once in receipt of a Matching Certificate their PStat can be amended by requesting the update via the [HR Hub](#) or by e-mailing [JPAN001](#) to their HR Centre or Unit HR. Once completed they are then able to make an application for SFA.

Applications for SFA 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.

What do I need to know about returning to work after adoption leave?

Returning to work after adoption leave



This can be an apprehensive time; it can be hard to leave a child in childcare, colleagues and line management may have moved on, or they may have general concerns with settling back into RAF life. It is your responsibility as their line manager to discuss a returning to work plan. This may include a graduated return to work using KIT days whilst they are still on adoption leave or annual leave. If they have returned to work, you may also be able to agree a flexible working pattern. Bear in mind that many adopted children will require ongoing support after placement.

Flexible working arrangements



Flexible working arrangements allow an individual to have a degree of freedom when attempting to balance their 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.

Screening from operational deployment



Personnel who take adoption leave are screened for a period of 18 months post placement unless they notify their Career Manager that they are willing to deploy sooner.

Parental Leave



This is a government provision so available to all parents. It allows 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.

Keeping In Touch Plan

Keeping in touch during Adoption Leave is a Service person's choice, this form is intended to be used by a Service person and a Line Manager to agree a KIT Plan during Adoption Leave. This plan is intended as a guide and a framework for discussion. It should be passed on to a Line Manager replacement if they 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			

