

CHAPTER 11: HOLIDAY, SICKNESS, ABSENCE AND PARENTAL LEAVE

REVIEW CYCLE EVERY TWO YEARS OR AS NEEDED

Version control

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A. Staff Policies

1. General

- 1.1. The policies set out in this Chapter ('the policies') include but are not limited to outlining Chambers' arrangements to give effect to the following statutory rights, and the corresponding responsibilities of employees:
 - a) The right to take time off to attend adoption appointments;
 - b) The right to take time off to attend antenatal appointments;
 - c) The rights of employees who are pregnant or have recently given birth;
 - d) The rights of employees to paternity leave.
- 1.2. The policies do not form part of any contract of employment or other contract to provide services, and may be amended by Chambers at any time.
- 1.3. Unless specified otherwise, the policies apply to employees only. Subject to paragraph 1.4 below, they do not apply to agency workers, consultants, self-employed contractors, volunteers, or interns.
- 1.4. The 'Time Off for Antenatal Appointments' and 'Time Off for Adoptions Appointments' policies set out at sections 4 and 5 below apply to agency workers only once they have worked in the same role with Chambers for at least 12 continuous weeks.
 - a) For the purposes of calculating whether this requirement is satisfied, Chambers will ignore any breaks due to holiday or other leave to which the agency worker is entitled.
- 1.5. The Management Committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of the policies. Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the policies has been delegated to the Finance and HR Manager.
 - a) Questions about the day-to-day application of the policies should be referred to the respective line manager, or alternatively the Finance and HR Manager.

2. Staff Leave

- 2.1. Chambers' policy is that all staff must try to take their full holiday entitlement in the holiday year, which runs from 1 January to 31 December. If this is not possible, a maximum of 3 days may be carried over to the following year, these days must be used by the end of March in the following year. In addition, staff will be discouraged from taking holiday at short notice or half days.
- 2.2. Staff must seek approval from their senior team leader before taking holiday. Staff are responsible for completing their own holiday form for all holiday taken. Each period of leave must be signed off by the senior team leader. Staff must record any approved leave in the Lex diary.
- 2.3. Senior team leaders have responsibility for creating and maintaining their team's cover policy based on pairing of roles. Once agreed one member of the pair must be in Chambers.
- 2.4. The Finance and HR Manager is responsible for keeping staff holiday forms.

3. Staff Sickness/Absence

- 3.1. Any member of staff who is sick or unable to attend work must contact their line manager (or if incapacitated, ask a close family or friend to do so on their behalf) at the earliest opportunity, and no later than 8.30am. If their direct line manager is unavailable, the member of staff should call another senior team leader.

- 3.2. They must also notify the Finance and HR Manager, who is responsible for keeping an accurate record of all absences.
- 3.3. If a staff member feels too unwell to come into Chambers but does feel well enough to work from home, they will need to explain why to their line manager, and seek their agreement to this arrangement, via a telephone call. For example, if the staff member tests positive for an infectious illness (e.g., COVID) but proves to be asymptomatic.
- 3.4. It is not acceptable for staff to unilaterally decide they wish to work from home on the grounds of ill health.
- 3.5. And if a staff member does work from home out of sequence with their rostered working day at home, they will be expected to come into Chambers on their next working from home day to rectify this. Their line manager will inform the COO of the updated working from home date so that the roster and relevant records can be amended. This will be closely monitored by the CEO, COO, and Finance and HR Manager.
- 3.6. On return from absence of fewer than seven calendar days, staff must, on the day they return to work, complete a self-certification form. These are available from the Finance Manager.
- 3.7. For absences of more than seven calendar days, staff must produce a medical certificate, signed by their doctor and stating the reasons for absence. Thereafter staff must produce a medical certificate for every week of continued absence.
- 3.8. Any leave not reported correctly will be taken off annual leave entitlement or deducted from salary if all annual leave has already been taken.

4. Time Off for Antenatal Appointments

- 4.1. A staff member who is pregnant may take reasonable paid time off during working hours for antenatal appointments. This may include any relaxation or parenting classes that a doctor, midwife or health visitor has advised the staff member to attend.
- 4.2. Staff members are requested to give as much notice as possible of the appointment. Chambers may seek the following information/documentation, unless it is the first appointment:
 - a) A certificate from the doctor, midwife or health visitor stating that the staff member is pregnant; and
 - b) An appointment card.
- 4.3. Staff members may take time off to accompany a pregnant woman to an antenatal appointment if they have a “qualifying relationship” with the woman or the child.
- 4.4. A qualifying relationship is limited to where the relevant staff member is:
 - a) The baby’s father;
 - b) The pregnant woman’s spouse, civil partner, or cohabiting partner; or
 - c) The pregnant woman’s nominated doula or birthing partner (and are not covered by a) or b) above).
- 4.5. Staff members accompanying a pregnant woman to an antenatal appointment are requested to give as much notice as possible confirming the date and time of the appointment, and further that:
 - a) They meet (one of) the eligibility criteria set out in paragraphs 4.3 – 4.4 above;
 - b) That the purpose of the time off is to accompany the pregnant woman to an antenatal appointment; and

- c) That the appointment has been made on the advice of a registered medical practitioner, registered midwife or registered nurse.
- 4.6. Staff members may take time off to accompany a pregnant woman to up to two antenatal appointments in relation to each pregnancy.
- 4.7. Staff members must not take more than six and a half hours off for each appointment, including travel and waiting time.
- 4.8. Chambers will pay for up to six and a half hours' absence on no more than two occasions in relation to each pregnancy.
- 4.9. Further time off for antenatal appointments (including subsequent appointments) is at Chambers' absolute discretion.

5. Time Off for Adoptions Appointments

- 5.1. An adoption appointment is an appointment arranged by an adoption agency (or at the agency's request) for a staff member to have contact with a child who is to be placed with them for adoption, or for any other purpose related to the adoption.
- 5.2. Staff members may take time off to attend an adoption appointment once an agency has notified them that a child is to be placed with them for adoption, but before the child is actually placed with them.
- 5.3. Where a staff member and their partner are adopting a child, they must first decide who will be treated as the primary adopter and the secondary adopter for the purposes of time off. This decision must be communicated to Chambers the first time the relevant staff member requests time off for an adoption appointment. This will affect how much time can be taken off.
- 5.4. A primary adopter will normally be the person who intends to take adoption leave when the child is placed with them. Staff members who are primary adopters will not be able to take paternity leave if they decide to take on that role. Persons adopting a child on their own will be treated as the primary adopter.
- 5.5. A primary adopter may take paid time off to attend an adoption appointment on up to five occasions in relation to any particular adoption.
- 5.6. A secondary adopter will normally be the person who intends to take paternity leave when the child is placed with them, although they may also be entitled to take adoption leave if their partner does not take it.
- 5.7. A secondary adopter may take paid time off on up to two occasions to attend an adoption appointment in relation to any particular adoption.
- 5.8. If the agency is placing more than one child with the staff member as part of the same arrangement, this will be treated as one adoption and will not increase the number of appointments you can take time off to attend. Any time off under this policy must be taken before the first child is placed with the staff member.
- 5.9. Staff members are requested to give as much notice as possible of the appointment.
- 5.10. The relevant line manager must be provided with a signed statement or an email from the staff member confirming:
 - a) The date and time of the appointment; and
 - b) That the appointment has been arranged or requested by the adoption agency.

- 5.11. Agency workers may be required to notify their agency as well. It is the responsibility of the agency worker to determine if this is necessary.
- 5.12. Chambers may occasionally request staff members to rearrange an appointment where it is reasonable to do so. In exceptional circumstances, Chambers reserves the right to refuse a request for a particular appointment, but will only do so for good reason.

6. Staff Maternity Leave

- 6.1. Arrangements for time off for antenatal care and to accompany a pregnant woman to antenatal appointments are set out in section 4 above.
- 6.2. In some cases, staff members and their spouses or partners may be eligible to opt into the shared parental leave (SPL) scheme, which provides greater flexibility to share the leave and pay available in the first year. Further information about SPL can be found in section 8 below.
- 6.3. Staff members must give at least eight weeks' notice to opt into SPL, and must remain on maternity leave until at least two weeks after the birth.
- 6.4. All staff members are entitled to up to 52 weeks' maternity leave, consisting of 26 weeks' ordinary maternity leave ('OML') and 26 weeks' additional maternity leave ('AML').
- 6.5. Staff members are requested to notify Chambers as soon as possible that they are pregnant. In particular, before the end of the fifteenth week before the week that a staff member expects to give birth ('the Qualifying Week') or as soon as reasonably practicable afterwards, Chambers must be notified of:
 - a) The week in which the doctor or midwife expected the staff member to give birth ('the Expected Week of Childbirth'); and
 - b) The date on which the staff member would like to start their maternity leave ('the Intended Start Date').
- 6.6. Once a staff member receives a certificate from a doctor or a midwife confirming their Expected Week of Childbirth (MATB1), Chambers must be provided with a copy of the certificate.
- 6.7. Chambers will write to the relevant staff member within 28 days to inform them of the date they will be expected to return to work assuming that they take their full maternity leave entitlement ('the Expected Return Date').
- 6.8. The earliest date from which a staff member can start maternity leave is 11 weeks before the Expected Week of Childbirth, unless the child is born prematurely before that date.
- 6.9. If a staff member wishes to change their Intended Start Date, Chambers must be informed in writing and given as much notice as possible. Wherever possible, Chambers must be informed at least 28 days before the original Intended Start Date (or the new start date if the date is being brought forward). Chambers will write to the staff member within 28 days to inform them of their new Expected Return Date.
- 6.10. Maternity leave should normally start on the Intended Start Date. However, it may start earlier if the staff member gives birth before their Intended Start Date, or if they are absent for a pregnancy-related reason in the last four weeks before their Expected Week of Childbirth. In either of those cases, maternity leave will start on the following day.
- 6.11. Chambers will discuss with the relevant staff member the arrangements for covering their work and the opportunities for them to remain in contact, should they wish to do so, during

their leave. Unless requested otherwise, they will remain on circulation lists for internal news, job vacancies, training, and work-related social events.

- 6.12. Chambers is legally prohibited from allowing the relevant staff member to work during the two weeks following childbirth.
- 6.13. Maternity pay shall apply depending upon the relevant staff member's length of service:
 - a) Less than one year's service: Statutory maternity pay ('SMP') is payable for up to 39 weeks provided staff members have at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with Chambers at the end of the Qualifying Week, and their average earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year. The first six weeks SMP are paid at 90% of their average earnings, and the remaining 33 weeks are at a rate set by the government each year.
 - b) More than one year's service: Staff members will qualify for enhanced maternity pay if they have been continuously employed during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week and have not received any enhanced maternity pay, adoption pay, or shared parental pay from Chambers' employment during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week. This is paid at full basic pay for the first 12 weeks and at 50% of basic pay for the next 10 weeks. These sums include any SMP that may be due for that period. The remainder of the maternity leave period is paid at the statutory rate.
 - c) More than two years' service: Staff members will qualify for enhanced maternity pay if they have been continuously employed during the 24-month period ending with the Qualifying Week and have not received any enhanced maternity pay, adoption pay, or shared parental pay from Chambers' employment during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week. This is paid at full basic pay for the first 12 weeks and at 70% of basic pay for the next 10 weeks. These sums include any SMP that may be due for that period. The remainder of the maternity leave period is paid at the statutory rate.
 - d) More than three years' service: Staff members will qualify for enhanced maternity pay if they have been continuously employed during the 36-month period ending with the Qualifying Week and have not received any enhanced maternity pay, adoption pay, or shared parental pay from Chambers' employment during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week. This is paid at full basic pay for the first 12 weeks and at 90% of basic pay for the next 10 weeks. These sums include any SMP that may be due for that period. The remainder of the maternity leave period is paid at the statutory rate.
- 6.14. Payment of enhanced maternity pay is conditional on staff members confirming in writing, prior to starting maternity leave, that they intend to return to work for at least 6 months. If the relevant staff member later decides not to return to work for this minimum period, they must repay any enhanced maternity pay (but not SMP).
- 6.15. Except for terms relating to pay, the relevant staff member's terms and conditions of employment remain in force during OML and AML.
- 6.16. Annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue during maternity leave. If the maternity leave will continue into the next annual leave year, any annual leave entitlement that is not taken before starting the maternity leave can be carried over and must be taken immediately before returning to work. Annual leave plans should be discussed with the relevant line manager in good time before starting the maternity leave. All annual leave dates are subject to approval by the line manager.

- 6.17. Where the relevant staff member is a member of Chambers' employee pension scheme, Chambers shall continue to make both the employer and employee pension contributions during the entire period of paid OML. Contributions will be based on the relevant staff member's normal salary, in accordance with the pension scheme rules.
- 6.18. Chambers may make reasonable contact with the relevant staff member from time to time during their maternity leave, although this will be kept to the minimum. This may include contacting the staff member to discuss arrangements for their return to work.
- 6.19. Subject to paragraph 6.12 above, staff members on maternity leave may work (including attending training) on up to ten "keeping-in-touch" days during their maternity leave. This is not compulsory and must be discussed and agreed with their line manager beforehand or alternatively with the Finance and HR Manager.
- 6.20. Staff members shall be paid at their normal basic rate of pay for time spent working on a keeping-in-touch day, and this shall be inclusive of any maternity pay entitlement.
- 6.21. Staff members must return to work on the Expected Return Date unless they have informed Chambers otherwise. If the relevant staff member wishes to return to work earlier than the Expected Return Date, they must give Chambers eight weeks' prior notice of the date, ideally in writing. Staff members may be able to return later than the Expected Return Date if they request annual leave or parental leave, which will be at Chambers' discretion.
- 6.22. Staff members are normally entitled to return to work in the position that they held before starting maternity leave, and on the same terms of employment. However, if they have taken AML and it is not reasonably practicable for Chambers to allow them to return into the same position, the staff member may be given another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable.
- 6.23. If the relevant staff member wishes to change their hours or other working arrangements on return from maternity leave, they should make a flexible working request, ideally as early as possible. For further information on staff flexible working requests, please see Chapter 7 (Equality and Diversity).
- 6.24. If the relevant staff member does not wish to return to work, they should give notice of resignation in accordance with their contract.

7. Staff Paternity Leave

- 7.1. Staff members may be entitled to time off to accompany their spouses or partners to antenatal appointments. Arrangements for time off for antenatal care and to accompany a pregnant woman to antenatal appointments are set out section 4 above.
- 7.2. In some cases, staff members and their spouses or partners may be eligible to opt into the shared parental leave (SPL) scheme, which provides greater flexibility to share the leave and pay available in the first year. This is in addition to staff members' right to paternity leave. Further information about SPL can be found in section 8 below.
- 7.3. Paternity leave is available on the birth of a child if the relevant staff member has been continuously employed by Chambers for at least 26 weeks ending with the 15th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth and either:
 - a) The staff member is the biological father and will have some responsibility for the child's upbringing; or
 - b) The staff member is the partner (that is, spouse, civil partner or cohabiting partner) of the mother, and will have the main responsibility (with the mother) for the child's upbringing; or

- c) The child is born to a surrogate mother where the staff member is, or their partner is, one of the child's biological parents, and the staff member expects to obtain a parental order giving them and their partner legal responsibility for the child.
- 7.4. Paternity leave is available where a child is placed with a staff member for adoption by an adoption agency, if they have been continuously employed by Chambers for at least 26 weeks ending with the week in which the agency notifies the relevant staff member that they have been matched with a child.
- 7.5. Paternity leave is a period of one or two weeks' consecutive leave taken when a child is born or placed with the staff member for adoption. The amount of time is the same even if they have more than one child (for example twins). The relevant staff member can start their leave on the date of birth or placement, or later, provided it is taken within eight weeks (56 days) of the birth or placement. (If the baby is premature, the period ends eight weeks after the start of the Expected Week of Childbirth.)
- 7.6. To take paternity leave, the relevant staff member must give Chambers written notice by the end of the 15th week, before the Expected Week of Childbirth (or no more than seven days after the adoption agency has given them notice of being matched with a child), or as soon as they reasonably can, stating:
- a) The Expected Week of Childbirth;
 - b) Whether they intend to take one week or two weeks' leave; and
 - c) When they would like their leave to start.
- 7.7. Staff members can change the intended start date by giving Chambers 28 days' notice or, if this is not possible, as much notice as they can.
- 7.8. Paternity pay shall apply depending upon the relevant staff member's length of service:
- a) Less than one year's service: Statutory paternity pay ('SPP') is payable during paternity leave provided the relevant staff member has at least 26 weeks' continuous employment ending with the Qualifying Week (the 15th week before the Expected Week of Childbirth, or the week in which the adoption agency notified you of a match); and their average earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year. The rate of SPP is set by the government each tax year.
 - b) More than one year's service: Staff members will qualify for enhanced paternity pay if they have been continuously employed during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week and have not received any enhanced paternity pay, maternity pay, adoption pay, or shared parental pay from our employment during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week. This is paid at the rate of the relevant staff member's normal basic salary for the first week of paternity leave and SPP for the second week of paternity leave, and includes any SPP that may be due for that period.
 - c) More than two years' service: Staff members will qualify for enhanced paternity pay if they have been continuously employed during the 24-month period ending with the Qualifying Week and have not received any enhanced paternity pay, maternity pay, adoption pay, or shared parental pay from their employment during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week. This is paid at the rate of the relevant staff member's normal basic salary during both the first and second week of paternity leave, and includes any SPP that may be due for that period.
- 7.9. In order to receive enhanced paternity pay, staff members must first confirm in writing that they intend to return to work for at least six months after their paternity leave (and any shared parental leave in respect of the same child), and that they agree to repay any enhanced paternity pay (but not SPP) if they later decide not to work this minimum period.

- 7.10. The relevant staff member's usual terms and conditions of employment will remain in force during paternity leave, except for the terms relating to pay.
- 7.11. Annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue during paternity leave. If the paternity leave will continue into the next annual leave year, any annual leave entitlement that is not taken before starting the paternity leave can be carried over and must be taken immediately before returning to work. Annual leave plans should be discussed with the relevant line manager in good time before starting the paternity leave. All annual leave dates are subject to approval by the line manager.
- 7.12. Where the relevant staff member is a member of Chambers' employee pension scheme, Chambers shall continue to make the employer pension contributions during the period of paid paternity leave. Contributions will be based on the relevant staff member's normal salary, in accordance with the pension scheme rules.

8. Shared Parental Leave

- 8.1. The definitions in this paragraph apply in this policy.
- a) Expected week of childbirth (EWC): the week, beginning on a Sunday, in which the doctor or midwife expects your child to be born.
 - b) Parent: One of two people who will share the main responsibility for the child's upbringing (and who may be either the mother, the father, or the mother's partner if not the father).
 - c) Partner: your spouse, civil partner or someone living with you in an enduring family relationship, but not your sibling, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, aunt, uncle, niece, or nephew.
 - d) Qualifying Week: the fifteenth week before the EWC.
- 8.2. SPL gives the relevant staff member and their partner more flexibility in how to share the care of their child in the first year after birth, than if they were simply taking maternity or paternity leave. If both the relevant staff member and their partner are eligible, they will be able to choose how to split the available leave between them and can decide to be off work at the same time or at different times. They may be able to take leave in more than one block.
- 8.3. A staff member is entitled to SPL in relation to the birth of a child if:
- a) They are the child's mother, and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the child's father or with their partner;
 - b) They are the child's father and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the child's mother; or
 - c) They are the mother's partner and share the main responsibility for the care of the child with the mother (where the child's father does not share the main responsibility with the mother).
- 8.4. The following conditions must also be fulfilled:
- a) The relevant staff member must have at least 26 weeks continuous employment with Chambers by the end of the Qualifying Week, and still be employed by Chambers in the week before the leave is to be taken;
 - b) The other parent must have worked (in an employed or self-employed capacity) in **at least 26 of the 66 weeks** before the EWC and had average weekly earnings of at least £30 during 13 of those weeks; and
 - c) The relevant staff member and the other parent must give the necessary statutory notices and declarations as summarised below, including notice to end any maternity leave, statutory maternity pay (SMP) or maternity allowance (MA) periods.

- 8.5. The total amount of SPL available is 52 weeks, less the weeks spent by the child's mother on maternity leave (or the weeks in which the mother has been in receipt of SMP or MA if she is not entitled to maternity leave).
- 8.6. If the relevant staff member is the mother, they cannot start SPL until after the compulsory maternity leave period, which lasts until two weeks after birth.
- 8.7. If the relevant staff member is the child's father or the mother's partner, they should consider using their two weeks' paternity leave before taking SPL. Upon starting SPL, any untaken paternity leave entitlement will be lost. SPL entitlement is additional to the relevant staff member's paternity leave entitlement.
- 8.8. Not less than 8 weeks before the date upon which the SPL is intended to start, the relevant staff member must give Chambers a written opt-in notice giving:
- a) Their name and the name of the other parent;
 - b) If they are the child's mother, the start and end dates of their maternity leave;
 - c) If they are the child's father or the mother's partner, the start and end dates of the mother's maternity leave, or if she is not entitled to maternity leave, the start and end dates of any SMP or MA period;
 - d) The total SPL available, which is 52 weeks minus the number of weeks' maternity leave, SMP or MA period taken or to be taken;
 - e) How many weeks of the available SPL will be allocated to them and how many to the other parent (the allocation can be changed by giving Chambers a further written notice, and it is not necessary to use the full allocation);
 - f) If they are claiming statutory shared parental pay (**ShPP**), the total ShPP available, which is 39 weeks minus the number of weeks of the SMP or MA period taken or to be taken;
 - g) How many weeks of available ShPP will be allocated to them and how much to the other parent (the allocation can be changed by giving Chambers a further written notice, and it is not necessary to use the full allocation);
 - h) An indication of the pattern of leave they are thinking of taking, including suggested start and end dates for each period of leave (see paragraph 8.15 and 8.19 for information on taking leave). This indication will not be binding at this stage, but Chambers invites as much information as possible about future intentions; and
 - i) Declarations by the relevant staff member and the other parent that they both meet the statutory conditions to enable you to take SPL and ShPP.
- 8.9. If the relevant staff member is the child's mother and wants to opt into the SPL scheme, they must give Chambers at least 8 weeks' written notice to end their maternity leave ('the curtailment notice') before they can take SPL. The notice must state the date their maternity leave will end. The staff member can give the notice before or after they give birth, but they cannot end their maternity leave until at least two weeks after birth.
- 8.10. Chambers must also be provided with, at the same time as the curtailment notice, a notice to opt into the SPL scheme (see paragraph 8.8) or a written declaration that the other parent has given their employer an opt-in notice and that the relevant staff member has given the necessary declarations in that notice.

- 8.11. The other parent may be eligible to take SPL from their employer before the relevant staff member's maternity leave ends, provided the relevant staff member has given the curtailment notice.
- 8.12. The curtailment notice is binding and cannot usually be revoked. A curtailment notice can only be revoked if maternity leave has not yet ended and one of the following applies:
- a) If the relevant staff member realises that neither they nor the other parent are in fact eligible for SPL or ShPP, in which case the curtailment notice can be revoked in writing up to eight weeks after it was given;
 - b) If the relevant staff member gave the curtailment notice before giving birth, they can revoke it in writing up to six weeks after birth; or
 - c) If the other parent has died.
- 8.13. Once a curtailment notice has been revoked, the relevant staff member and the other parent will be unable to opt back into the SPL scheme, unless paragraph 8.12(b) applies.
- 8.14. The relevant staff member must also provide on request:
- a) A copy of the birth certificate (or if this has not yet been obtained, a signed declaration of the child's date and place of birth); and
 - b) The name and address of the other parent's employer (or a declaration that they have no employer).
- 8.15. Having opted into the SPL system, the relevant staff member must book their leave by giving Chambers a period of leave notice. This may be given at the same time as the opt-in notice or later, provided it is at least 8 weeks before the start of SPL.
- 8.16. The period of leave notice can either give the dates on which the relevant staff member wishes to take leave or, if the child has not been born yet, it can state the number of days after birth that they wish for the leave to start and end. This may be particularly useful if the staff member intends to take paternity leave starting on the date of birth and wish to take SPL straight afterwards.
- 8.17. Leave must be taken in blocks of at least one week.
- 8.18. If the period of leave notice gives a single continuous block of SPL, the relevant staff member will be entitled to take the leave set out in the notice.
- 8.19. If the period of leave notice requests split periods of SPL, with periods of work in between, Chambers will consider the request as set out in paragraph 8.21.
- 8.20. Up to three period of leave notices may be given by a staff member. This may enable them to take up to three separate blocks of SPL (although if a staff member gives a notice to vary or cancel a period of leave, this will in most cases count as a further period of leave notice; see paragraph 8.23).
- a) In exceptional circumstances Chambers may allow a staff member to give more than three period of leave notices but there is no obligation for Chambers to do so.
- 8.21. In general, a period of leave notice should set out a single continuous block of leave. Chambers may be willing to consider a period of leave notice where the SPL is split into shorter periods with periods of work in between. This should be discussed with the respective line manager or alternatively the Finance and HR Manager in good time before formally submitting their period of leave notice. This will give Chambers more time to consider the request and hopefully agree a pattern of leave with the relevant staff member from the start.
- 8.22. If a staff member wishes to request split periods of SPL, they must set out the requested pattern of leave in their period of leave notice. Chambers will either agree to the request or

start a two-week discussion period. At the end of that period, Chambers will confirm any agreed arrangements in writing. If an agreement has not been reached, the staff member will be entitled to take the full amount of requested SPL as one continuous block, starting on the start date given in their notice (for example, if a staff member requests three separate periods of four weeks each, they will be combined into one 12-week period of leave). Alternatively, the staff member may:

- a) Choose a new start date (which must be at least 8 weeks after the date of submission the notice requesting split periods of leave), and tell Chambers within 5 days of the end of the two-week discussion period; or
- b) Withdraw the notice and tell Chambers within two days of the end of the two-week discussion period (in which case it will not be counted as a period of leave notice, and the staff member may submit a new one if they so choose).

8.23. A period of leave may be cancelled by notifying Chambers in writing at least 8 weeks before the start date in the period of leave notice.

8.24. The start date for a period of leave may be changed by notifying Chambers in writing at least 8 weeks before the original start date or the new start date, whichever is earlier.

8.25. The end date for a period of leave may be changed by notifying Chambers in writing at least 8 weeks before the original end date or the new end date, whichever is earlier.

8.26. Discontinuous periods of leave may be combined into a single continuous period of leave. Since this will involve a change to the start date or end date of a period of leave, see paragraphs 8.24 and 8.25 above which set out how much notice is required.

8.27. A request may be made to split a continuous period of leave into two or more discontinuous periods of leave, with periods of work in between. Since this will involve a change to the start date or end date, see paragraphs 8.24 and 8.25 above which set out how much notice is required for the request. Chambers is not obligated to grant such a request but will consider it as set out in paragraph 8.22.

8.28. A notice to change or cancel a period of leave will count as one of the relevant staff member's three period of leave notices, unless:

- a) It is a result of their child being born earlier or later than the EWC;
- b) They are cancelling a request for discontinuous leave within two days of the end of the two-week discussion period under paragraph 29.
- c) It is at Chambers' request; or
- d) Chambers agrees otherwise.

8.29. Where the child is born early (before the beginning of the EWC), the relevant staff member may be able to start SPL in the 8 weeks following birth even though they cannot give 8 weeks' notice. The following rules apply:

- a) If the relevant staff member has given a period of leave notice to start SPL on a set date in the 8 weeks following the EWC, but their child is born early, they can move the SPL start date forward by the same number of days, provided they notify Chambers in writing of the change as soon as they can. (If the period of leave notice already contained a start date which was a set number of days after birth, rather than a set date, then no notice of change is necessary).
- b) If their child is born more than 8 weeks early and the relevant staff member wishes to take SPL in the 8 weeks following birth, the opt-in notice and period of leave notice must be submitted as soon as possible.

8.30. A relevant staff member may be able to claim ShPP of up to 39 weeks (less any weeks of SMP or MA claimed by them or their partner) if they have at least 26 weeks' continuous

employment with Chambers at the end of the Qualifying Week, and their average earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year. ShPP is paid by employers at a rate set by the government each year.

- 8.31. The relevant staff member should tell Chambers in their period of leave notice(s) whether they intend to claim ShPP during their leave (and if applicable, for what period).
 - a) Where this information is not included in the period of leave notice, the relevant staff member may inform Chambers in writing at least 8 weeks before they want ShPP to start.
- 8.32. The relevant staff member's terms and conditions of employment remain in force during SPL, except for the terms relating to pay.
- 8.33. Annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue at the rate provided under the relevant staff member's contract. If their SPL continues into the next annual leave year, any annual leave entitlement that is not taken before starting their leave can be carried over and must be taken immediately before returning to work. Annual leave plans should be discussed with their respective line managers in good time before starting SPL. All annual leave dates are subject to approval by the line manager.
- 8.34. If the relevant staff member is a member of the pension scheme, Chambers shall continue to make both the employer and employee contributions during the entire period of paid SPL. Contributions will be based on the relevant staff member's normal salary, in accordance with the pension scheme rules.
- 8.35. If the relevant staff member's post is affected by a redundancy situation occurring during their leave, Chambers shall write to inform them of any proposals and shall invite them to a meeting before any final decision is reached as to redundancies.
- 8.36. Chambers may make reasonable contact with the relevant staff member from time to time during their SPL although this will be kept to a minimum. This may include contacting the relevant staff member to discuss arrangements for their return to work.
- 8.37. The relevant staff member may ask or be asked to work (including attending training) on up to 20 "keeping-in-touch" days (KIT days) during their SPL without bringing their SPL to an end. This is in addition to any KIT days that they may have taken during maternity leave. KIT days are not compulsory and must be discussed and agreed with the respective line manager or alternatively the Finance and HR Manager.
- 8.38. The relevant staff member will be paid at their normal basic rate of pay for time spent working on a KIT day and this will be inclusive of any shared parental pay entitlement.
- 8.39. If the relevant staff member wishes to end a period of SPL early, they must give Chambers eight weeks' written notice of the new return date. If the relevant staff member has already given Chambers three period of leave notices, they will not be able to end their SPL early without Chambers' agreement.
- 8.40. If the relevant staff member wishes to extend their SPL, assuming they still have unused SPL entitlement remaining, they must give Chambers a written period of leave notice at least eight weeks before the date they were due to return to work. If the relevant staff member has already given Chambers three period of leave notices, they will not be able to extend their SPL without Chambers' agreement. The relevant staff member may instead be able to request annual leave or ordinary parental leave (see sections 6 and 7 above), subject to the needs of the business.
- 8.41. The relevant staff member is normally entitled to return to work in the position they held before starting SPL, and on the same terms of employment. However, if it is not reasonably

practicable for Chambers to allow them to return into the same position, Chambers may give them another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable, but only in the following circumstances:

- a) If the relevant staff member's SPL and any maternity or paternity leave they have taken adds up to more than 26 weeks in total (whether or not taken consecutively); or
- b) If the relevant staff member took SPL consecutively with more than four weeks of ordinary parental leave.

8.42. If the relevant staff member wants to change their hours or other working arrangements on return from SPL, they should make a Flexible Working request. Such requests should be made as early as possible.

8.43. If the relevant staff member decides they do not want to return to work, they should give notice of resignation in accordance with their contract.

9. Pregnancy Loss

9.1. Pregnancy loss is defined as a loss of a pregnancy during the first 23 weeks. This might occur for a range of reasons:

- a) Miscarriage – the spontaneous loss of a pregnancy until 24 weeks
- b) Ectopic pregnancy – when a fertilised egg develops outside of the womb
- c) Molar pregnancy – when an abnormal fertilised egg implants into the uterus
- d) Embryo transfer loss – when an embryo transfer during fertility treatment does not result in a pregnancy
- e) Abortion or termination of a pregnancy following a medical or surgical procedure.

9.2. If a staff member is affected by a pregnancy loss from 24 weeks because of:

- a) stillbirth (the loss of a baby from 24 weeks during labour or birth); or
- b) neonatal loss (the loss of a live born baby up to 28 days after the birth)

they are entitled by law to statutory parental bereavement pay and leave.

9.3. If a staff member is affected by a pregnancy loss in the period up to week 24, see paragraph 9.7 below.

9.4. Pregnancy loss is a difficult experience and a private one. Confidential support is available via a staff member's line manager, the Finance and HR Manager, or via Chambers' Well Being Committee. It is recognised that depending on the circumstances staff members may wish to contact someone else, and they are encouraged to speak to the person that they feel most comfortable sharing their experience with to ensure that the right support can be arranged at the earliest opportunity.

9.5. Should a staff member not feel comfortable seeking support from anyone at work, alternative support options are listed in Appendix 1 to this Chapter, and they are encouraged to contact them.

9.6. A period of 3 days paid compassionate leave is available to initially support absence from work for individuals.

9.7. The length of time off required will vary with each individual's experiences, and there are no restrictions on how much time off is taken nor how that time is taken within Chambers' current policies or how it is processed at the discretion of the business, which will be discussed with the individual to determine the most appropriate support required.

9.8. Any time off taken for pregnancy loss will not trigger any absence management processes in relation to number of sick days required to be taken.

- 9.9. Attending medical or additional support appointments will be facilitated and can be discussed to best support the requirements of the individual.
- 9.10. A phased return to work, temporary change to working arrangements or home working may be appropriate and the options available will be discussed to ensure that any adjustments made are the most appropriate and facilitated in the most appropriate way. Once arrangements are in place, they can be reviewed to ensure they continue to be appropriate for the needs of the relevant staff member.
- 9.11. Further useful information and support may be obtained from the organisations and resources listed in Appendix 1 to this Chapter.

10. Adoption Policy

- 10.1. The purpose of this policy is to outline the arrangements for adoption leave and pay for employees who are:
- Adopting a child through a UK adoption agency;
 - Fostering a child with a view to possible adoption; or
 - Having a child through a surrogate mother.
- 10.2. Adoptions from overseas are not dealt with in this policy but further information is available from the Finance and HR Manager.
- 10.3. In some cases, a staff member and your spouse or partner may be eligible to opt into the shared parental leave scheme which gives you more flexibility to share the available leave and pay. For more information, see the **Shared Parental Leave Policy** in section 8 above.
- 10.4. **Entitlement to Adoption Leave.** In an adoption case or a fostering for adoption case, a staff member is entitled to adoption leave if all the following conditions are met:
- They are adopting a child through a UK adoption agency, or they are a local authority foster parent who has been approved as a prospective adopter.
 - The adoption agency or local authority has given them written notice that it has matched them with a child and tells them the expected placement date.
 - They have told the agency or local authority that they agree to the placement.
- 10.5. Adoption leave may be available if the staff member is adopting through an overseas adoption agency. Please contact the Finance and HR Manager.
- 10.6. In a surrogacy case, staff members are entitled to adoption leave if all the following conditions are met:
- A surrogate mother gives birth to a child, who is biologically the child of either the staff member, or their spouse or partner (or both of them).
 - The relevant staff member expects to be given parental responsibility under a parental order from the court. The child must live with them, and they must apply for the parental order within 6 months of birth.
- 10.7. In either case, only one parent can take adoption leave. If the relevant staff member's spouse or partner takes adoption leave with their employer, the relevant staff member may be entitled to paternity leave (see the Paternity Leave Policy at section 7 above). In some cases, they may also qualify for shared parental leave (see our Shared Parental Leave (Adoption) Policy).
- 10.8. The maximum adoption leave entitlement is 52 weeks, consisting of 26 weeks' Ordinary Adoption Leave (**OAL**) and 26 weeks' Additional Adoption Leave (**AAL**).

- 10.9. **Notification Requirements.** In an adoption or fostering for adoption case, Chambers must be informed in writing by the relevant staff member of the expected placement date, and their intended start date for adoption leave. The relevant staff member must give this information not more than seven days after the agency or local authority notifies you in writing that it has matched them with a child, or if that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as they can.
- 10.10. Once the relevant staff member has received the matching certificate from the agency or local authority, they must provide Chambers with a copy.
- 10.11. In a surrogacy case, Chambers must be notified in writing of the relevant staff member's intention to take adoption leave and give the expected week of childbirth (**EWC**). The relevant staff member must give this information by the end of the 15th week before the EWC, or if that is not reasonably practicable, as soon as they can. They must also complete a declaration confirming their entitlement. When the child is born they must tell Chambers the date of birth.
- 10.12. Chambers will write to the relevant staff member within 28 days of receiving their notification, to confirm their expected return date assuming they take their full entitlement to adoption leave.
- 10.13. In an adoption or fostering for adoption case, OAL may start on a date of the relevant staff member's choosing no more than 14 days before the expected placement date, or on the date of placement itself, but no later.
- 10.14. If the relevant staff member wishes to change their intended start date, Chambers must be informed in writing. The staff member should give as much notice as they can, but wherever possible Chambers must be notified at least 28 days before the original intended start date (to the new date if the date is being brought forward). Chambers will write to the staff member within 28 days to tell them their new expected return date.
- 10.15. In a surrogacy case, OAL will start on the day the child is born, unless the relevant staff member is at work, in which case it will start on the following day. The start date cannot be changed.
- 10.16. Adoption pay shall apply depending upon the relevant staff member's length of service:
- a) Less than one years' service: Statutory adoption pay (SAP) is payable for up to 39 weeks provided the relevant staff member has at least 26 weeks' continuous employment with Chambers ending with the Qualifying Week (the week in which the adoption agency or local authority notified them of a match, or the 15th week before the EWC) and their average earnings are not less than the lower earnings limit set by the government each tax year. The first six weeks' SAP are paid at 90% of their average earnings and the remaining 33 weeks are at a rate set by the government each year.
 - b) More than one years' service: Staff members will qualify for enhanced adoption pay if they have been continuously employed during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week and have not received any enhanced paternity pay, maternity pay, adoption pay, or shared parental pay from Chambers' employment during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week. This is paid at full basic pay for the first 12 weeks and at 50% of basic pay for the next 10 weeks. These sums include any SAP that may be due for that period. The remainder of the relevant staff member's adoption leave period is paid at the statutory rate.
 - c) More than two years' service: Staff members will qualify for enhanced adoption pay if they have been continuously employed during the 24-month period ending with the

Qualifying Week and have not received any enhanced paternity pay, maternity pay, adoption pay, or shared parental pay from Chambers' employment during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week. This is paid at full basic pay for the first 12 weeks and at 70% of basic pay for the next 10 weeks. These sums include any SAP that may be due for that period. The remainder of the relevant staff member's adoption leave period is paid at the statutory rate.

- d) More than three years' service: Staff members will qualify for enhanced adoption pay if they have been continuously employed during the 36-month period ending with the Qualifying Week and have not received any enhanced paternity pay, maternity pay, adoption pay, or shared parental pay from Chambers' employment during the 12-month period ending with the Qualifying Week. This is paid at full basic pay for the first 12 weeks and at 90% of basic pay for the next 10 weeks. These sums include any SAP that may be due for that period. The remainder of the relevant staff member's adoption leave period is paid at the statutory rate.

- 10.17. Payment of enhanced adoption pay is conditional on the relevant staff member confirming in writing prior to starting adoption leave that they intend to return to work for at least 6 months. If the staff member later decides not to return to work for this minimum period, they must repay any enhanced adoption pay (but not SAP).
- 10.18. All the terms and conditions of the relevant staff member's employment remain in force during OAL and AAL, except for the terms relating to pay.
- 10.19. Annual leave entitlement will continue to accrue at the rate provided under the relevant staff member's contract. If the relevant staff member's adoption leave will continue into the next annual leave year, any annual leave entitlement that is not taken before starting their adoption leave can be carried over and must be taken immediately before returning to work. Annual leave plans should be discussed with the staff member's respective line manager in good time before starting their adoption leave. All annual leave dates are subject to approval by the line manager.
- 10.20. If the relevant staff member is a member of the pension scheme, Chambers shall continue to make both the employer and employee pension contributions during their entire period of paid OAL. Contributions will be based on the staff member's normal salary, in accordance with the pension scheme rules.
- 10.21. Chambers may make reasonable contact with the relevant staff member from time to time during their adoption leave, although this will be kept to a minimum. This may include contacting the staff member to discuss arrangements for their return to work.
- 10.22. The relevant staff member may work (including attending training) on up to ten "keeping-in-touch" days during their adoption leave. This is not compulsory and must be discussed and agreed with their line manager or alternatively the Finance and HR Manager.
- 10.23. The relevant staff member will be paid at their normal basic rate of pay for time spent working on a keeping-in-touch day and this will be inclusive of any adoption pay entitlement.
- 10.24. The relevant staff member must return to work on the expected return date unless they notify Chambers otherwise. If the staff member wishes to return to work early, they must give Chambers at least eight weeks' notice of the date, ideally in writing. The staff member may be able to return later than the expected return date if they request annual leave or parental leave, which will be at Chambers' discretion.
- 10.25. Staff members are normally entitled to return to work in the position they held before starting adoption leave, on the same terms of employment. However, if a staff member has taken AAL (or have combined their adoption leave with more than four weeks of parental

leave) and it is not reasonably practicable for Chambers to allow them to return to the same position, Chambers may give them another suitable and appropriate job on terms and conditions that are not less favourable.

10.26. If the relevant staff member wishes to change their hours or other working arrangements on return from adoption leave they should make a flexible working request. It is helpful if such requests are made as early as possible.

10.27. If a staff member decides they do not want to return to work, they should give notice of resignation in accordance with their contract.

B. Members' Policies

11. Members' Parental Leave

Preamble

It is intended that there should be no disparity between any provisions of this policy for full time carers of children of either sex. Furthermore, the concept of parental leave is supported within Chambers. This policy is intended to assist the retention of women and primary carers in Chambers. It is further intended that this policy will enable members to make individual choices about how to manage their leave to achieve a balance that works best for them, which is fair to Chambers, and which promotes the members' eventual return to practice.

Key to this policy is effective communication particularly between the Head of Chambers, the member of Chambers taking the period of leave and the clerks in order to facilitate the return to practice.

It is the responsibility of the Head of Chambers and Chief Executive to ensure that the senior clerks are adequately trained to support this parental leave policy and flexible working with the primary aim to assist the member to keep in touch and return to practice. It is the responsibility of the senior clerks to ensure that all clerks at 7BR are fully conversant with the policy and its implementation.

Chambers appoints mentors to act as a point of contact and support for those undertaking primary carer parental leave and/or flexible working. Those taking primary carer parental leave should contact Anita Guha or Christina Lyons who are available to guide members through this policy. Hanisha Patel is available to discuss options surrounding flexible working. Ben Isaacs is available to discuss secondary carer parental leave periods.

Members' Parental Leave Policy

11.1. A member who is the primary carer of a child is entitled to up to two years of parental leave, or such shorter period as the member may decide upon (the 'primary period'), with an automatic right to return to practice in Chambers thereafter. In respect of the automatic right to return to practice, the Head of Chambers may exercise a discretion in other circumstances.

11.2. A member taking parental leave in accordance with paragraph 8.1. will not be required to pay the earnings contribution on any monies received during the primary period, regardless of whether those monies are received in respect of existing work or new cases. The primary period will commence with the calendar month that the member's child was born or adopted, or the following month, as notified to the Head of Chambers and the Chief Executive by the member taking parental leave.

11.3. In terms of the property rental contribution due by members because of Chambers' ownership of 7BR ('the property rental contribution'), no such contributions is due by the member in respect of their primary period of leave, save in accordance with the terms of

paragraph 8.4, below. A member taking parental leave in accordance with paragraph 8.1. can choose to either pay the property rental contribution during the primary period and enjoy a property rental free period for a period equal to their primary period of leave immediately thereafter, or the member may enjoy a property rental free period during the primary period and resume property rental payments immediately upon its conclusion. As with the Chambers' contribution the relevant period will be calculated by reference to the calendar month that the member's child was born or adopted, or the following month, as notified to the Head of Chambers and the Chief Executive by the member taking parental leave.

- 11.4. Members are entitled to undertake work on existing or new cases during their primary period of leave without becoming liable to property rental or earnings contributions, provided that the amount of work done during the primary period does not broadly exceed the equivalent of 1 day per week or 48 days within a 12-month period. (1 day can be made up of 2 half days or a period of 8 hours). If the member is likely to or undertakes a greater level of work outside of the terms of this policy, the member should inform and discuss matters with the Head of Chambers, as any continuing exemption from Chambers' property and percentage contributions must be subject to further discussion and agreement, which shall be in the discretion of the Head of Chambers, and shall occur before any property rental contribution and earnings contribution falls due.
- 11.5. Where a member is not the primary carer for their child, they are entitled to take up to 2 months of parental leave following the birth or adoption of their child. The member is free to spread the parental leave throughout the first 6 months of their child's life or adoption, but to qualify under this policy a member must take at least four weeks leave during the 6-month period. The member is not required to take the parental leave in weekly or monthly periods, and may choose, for example, to work a 2- or 3-day week during the first few months of a child's life. Members shall give the Head of Chambers and the Chief Executive notice of the dates when parental leave will be taken within 2 weeks of the birth or adoption of their child or as soon as practicable thereafter.
- 11.6. A member taking parental leave in accordance with paragraph 8.5 who takes one month's leave will not pay their chambers property rental payment or earnings contribution for the calendar month when their child was born or adopted. For the purposes of this policy and to promote fairness the monthly earnings contribution/deduction will be calculated by reference to the member's average monthly earnings contribution over the 12 months prior to the month of the birth or adoption of their child. For a member who takes a second month's parental leave, the same terms will apply i.e. no property rental payment will be charged for that month and the average monthly earnings contribution will also be deducted. If, after the relevant calculations have been made, any credit is due to the member on parental leave in respect of the earnings contribution it may be rolled over into subsequent months or returned by BACS transfer if the member prefers. If the parental leave taken is spread broadly throughout the 6-month period, the member taking parental leave and the Chief Executive shall agree in advance which calendar month or months this financial relief will be affected.
- 11.7. If a member is not initially the primary carer for their child, but they decide within the first 6 months post birth or adoption that they would like to become the primary carer for their child then they will be entitled to benefit from one- or two-years of parental leave as set out at paragraphs 8.1. to 8.4 above. However, the first year of parental leave will be reduced by whatever period of parental leave has already been taken, if any.
- 11.8. In advance of taking a period of parental leave, a member should notify the Head of Chambers and the Chief Executive of their current plans. Such discussion should take place in reasonable time to facilitate dealings with clients and the implementation of this policy. Thereafter the member and Senior Clerk in the member's practice area shall agree a timetable of communication which suits the member and is flexible in its approach. Subject to the member's wishes, a member should be contacted at least once by the clerks during their period of parental leave to discuss the ongoing management of the member's practice and

again following the conclusion of the period of leave, in order to discuss the management of the member's return to work.

- 11.9. Members on parental leave are kept in touch with developments in Chambers' news via continued access to Chambers' systems. They are invited to attend any internal Chambers' meetings that they would otherwise have attended had they not been on parental leave, and they are also invited to attend business, marketing and social functions organised by Chambers.

Primary Carer Flexible Working

- 11.10. Upon the conclusion of a primary period of leave a primary carer may return to work on a flexible working basis for a longer period (a 'period of flexible working'), namely up to 7 years after the birth of the primary carer's youngest child during which they undertake work up to the equivalent of 60 days within a 12-month period (1 day can be made up of 2 half days/8 hours). During that period, the member is required to pay half the standard rate of earnings contributions on monies received during that period (at the time of writing, 8%, rather than the full contribution of 16%). The member of Chambers is required to calculate the number of days likely to be worked during their period of flexible working and to notify the Head of Chambers and Chief Executive of the flexible working entitlement in advance. If, for whatever reason, over the previously agreed period, the member in fact works more, the Head of Chambers may determine in their discretion the amount, if any, of additional contribution that may be due to chambers.

Appendix 1

AbortionTalk	abortiontalk.com	AbortionTalk is a charity offering the opportunity to talk about abortion in a non-judgemental and supportive environment. Their trained volunteers provide callers with one-to-one support and space to talk through their experience of abortion.
Arc	arc-uk.org/about-arc	Arc is a national charity offering parents support during antenatal screening and following a termination.
Petals	petalscharity.org	Petals is an organisation providing specialist counselling services after a pregnancy loss.
SANDS	sands.org.uk	SANDS is an organisation that can offer you support if your baby dies during pregnancy or after birth. They also run a helpline 10am - 3pm Monday to Friday and 6pm - 9pm on Tuesday and Thursday evenings: 0808 164 3332
The Miscarriage Association	miscarriageassociation.org.uk	The Miscarriage Association offer support and information to anyone affected by the loss of a baby in pregnancy and works to raise awareness and promote good practice in medical care.
Tommy's	tommys.org	Tommy's is a charity that funds research into pregnancy problems but also provides information for parents-to-be.