



Dear < Name >

I'm writing to ask you to support a cause close to my heart and to consider changing your current parental leave policy to support staff whose babies are born prematurely. I would like you to sign up to the [Employer with Heart 2.0 charter](#), launched in 2018 (and updated in 2023) by premature baby charity [The Smallest Things](#).

Not many people know that maternity leave automatically begins the day after birth. When that birth is premature, it can be days or weeks before a premature baby can be held for the first time and often months before bringing a fragile baby home from hospital.

My personal experience

<My baby/babies was/were born at *** weeks and spent *** days in hospital.>

Lines, monitors and life-support machines become the 'norm' for parents of babies in neonatal intensive care (NICU). They sit beside an incubator each day, hoping their baby will survive, then return home each night with empty arms. I don't know anyone who thinks this time should count towards parental leave.

The costs of prematurity

The cost of premature birth can be high, with parents spending in excess of £2,000 over the course of an average NICU stay. Parents should not have to worry about financial pressures whilst their baby remains in intensive care.

Shockingly 40% of mothers experience postnatal depression following neonatal intensive care (compared to 5-10% of mothers who give birth without complication at full term) and almost a quarter of parents are diagnosed with PTSD following a neonatal stay.

Parents need time to recover from the trauma of premature birth and NICU, as well as time to bond with their baby, before returning to work.

Please act now

As a compassionate employer, I hope you will recognise the significant and unique needs of families like mine by extending paid parental leave and signing up to The Smallest Things' Employer with Heart 2.0 charter.

More details are available on [The Smallest Things website](#) where you can [download the Employer Guidance Pack](#) / I have attached the Employer Guidance Pack for more information.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this issue and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

<Name>