



# EMPLOYER WITH HEART

What, why and how



# Agenda

- What is The Smallest Things Employer with Heart charter?
- Why should we sign up?
- Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) legislation
- About The Smallest Things
- How to sign up



# What is The Smallest Things Employer with Heart charter?

The Smallest Things Employer with Heart charter outlines the additional support and extended leave we believe parents/carers of premature babies require. It has two basic asks:

1

**Extend leave** for parents and partners who have a premature baby (before 37 weeks' gestation) by the number of days a baby is born prior to their due date. This extended leave will be at full pay.

2

**Support parents and partners returning to work** following the birth of a premature baby. Babies born too soon can have ongoing medical needs, requiring regular hospital appointments and check-ups. Consider formal and informal flexible working patterns and offering additional paid or unpaid leave.



**The Smallest Things**

Registered charity 1171631 / @thesmallestthingscharity / hello@thesmallestthings.org / thesmallestthings.org



## What is The Smallest Things Employer with Heart charter?

Employers who sign up to the charter will receive The Smallest Things Employer with Heart Charter Mark 2.0 and join the growing number of businesses and organisations whose logos appear in the Employer with Heart hall of fame on our website. You'll be sent a hi-res charter mark logo to use on any of your digital and print communications. We'll also celebrate the good news on our social channels.



**“It’s so important for new parents to feel supported. In that moment, everything else takes a back seat and it’s wonderful that Sony Music are acknowledging that by introducing this.”**



Paloma Faith on the news that Sony Music had become an Employer with Heart



Some companies and organisations from the Employer with Heart hall of fame



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## What is The Smallest Things Employer with Heart charter? .....

### Award-winning employers

The Smallest Things works with companies and organisations to promote the changes they have made. Our **Employers with Heart** are frequently in the news, gaining coverage in trade press and local papers, as well as national and regional broadcast news.



#### BBC 4's Woman's Hour

Listen to trustee Sarah Miles talking to Jane Garvey on BBC 4's Woman's Hour about our 'Employer with Heart' charter



#### Guardian Public Service Awards: workforce wellbeing winner



#### Waltham Forest Council wins national workforce wellbeing award

Employers with Heart have gone on to win national awards, for example the Guardian Public Service Award for Workforce Wellbeing was won by Waltham Forest Council for introducing extra leave on full pay to employees who have a baby born preterm.



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# Why should we sign up?

## Maternal mental health

**40%**

of mothers develop postnatal depression following premature birth (compared to 5-10% of mothers delivering at full term).\*



**24%**

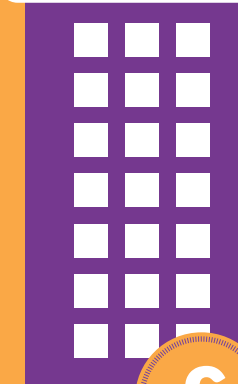
of parents to babies born prematurely between March 2017 and May 2021 reported a diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder\*\*

**60%**

of parents say that their maternity leave and time with their premature baby was too short.\*\*



HOSPITAL



More than

**50%**

of babies born prematurely were readmitted to hospital following discharge home from neonatal care.\*\*



**COST** - an average stay in neonatal care will cost a family in excess of £2,994 through travel costs, eating away from home, parking charges, unpaid leave from work and childcare costs for siblings.\*\*\*  
Nearly half of parents (48%) say that having a premature baby affected their financial circumstances.\*\*



\* SN Vigod, L Villegas, C-L Dennis, LE Ross. (2010) Prevalence and risk factors for postpartum depression among women with preterm and low-birth-weight infants: a systematic review

\*\* The Smallest Things. (2021) After NICU 2021: A Post Pandemic Report

\*\*\* Sky News (2022) reported via Bliss: The very real costs of having a premature baby



## Why should we sign up?



As a compassionate employer you recognise the unique, yet significant needs of employees following the premature birth of a child.



Giving mothers extended leave to recover from the physical and mental trauma of premature birth ensures that they are fit and able to return to work. This reduces the significant risk of mothers taking long-term sick leave once they return to work.



Giving partners additional paid leave to be with their baby in hospital as well as when their baby is discharged will support their return to the workplace. **Research suggests that 66% of partners returned to work while their baby was still receiving neonatal care.\***

\* BBC News (2019) reported via Bliss: Parents of sick babies need more leave, charity says

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## Matt's story

“My son Harry spent 107 days in hospital, taking up 3.5 months of my wife Sally's maternity leave. Harry and Sam were born 15 weeks early at 25 weeks' gestation in October 2015. Sadly, despite fighting hard, Sam passed away after 16 days yet Harry fought on with lots of challenges. When we finally brought Harry home he was on oxygen and most days were spent at check-ups or hospital visits. It wasn't until he was six months that appointments became less frequent and by then we were already planning Sally's return to work as a teacher.

If we had received additional leave, we would have been able to spend more time with Harry and cherish being together as a family. We could have had some time to come to terms with the loss of Sam and be more prepared and able to commit to returning to the workforce. Bringing in additional neonatal leave will support families all over the country and enable them to focus on those precious moments you never get back.”

Matt, Dad to Harry and Sam, born at 25 weeks







“

## Sarah's story

“When it was time for me to discuss returning to work after maternity leave, I asked for more time. My employer said no. I'd spent 197 days of my maternity leave visiting my premature, sick babies in neonatal intensive care. My daughter Eva died on Day 201. It felt like my maternity leave was ending before it had even begun. I had a long list of follow-up appointments for Charlotte, my surviving twin, and for myself. My focus needed to be on her health, her development, her nutrition and our bond. How could I leave that to someone else? There was no choice: I resigned.”

Sarah, Mum to Charlotte & Eva, born at 28 weeks

”



## Heather's story

“My employer had signed up to The Smallest Things Employer with Heart charter so I got an extra 10 weeks of paid maternity leave. If this had not been in place, I would have missed out on Spencer walking for the first time. It has made a huge difference to my family.”

Heather, Mum to Spencer, born at 30 weeks, and Neonatal Nurse at Birmingham Women's & Children's Hospital (an Employer with Heart)

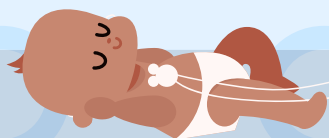


# Prematurity in numbers

Every year

**60,000**  
babies in the UK  
are born premature

(prior to 37 weeks' gestation) and make up 38% of babies requiring admission to specialist Neonatal Intensive Care Units\*. This is around 8% of all births.\*\*



## The World Health Organisation categorises pre-term birth as;

- Extremely preterm - less than 28 weeks' gestation (5% of UK preterm births)\*\*
- Very preterm (28 to 32 weeks' gestation) (11% of UK preterm births)\*\*
- Moderate to late preterm (32 to 37 weeks' gestation) (85% of UK preterm births)\*\*

As might be expected, those born earliest require the greatest level of support, have a greater risk of co-morbidities and spend longer periods of time in hospital before coming home.

\* Bliss (2023) Statistics about Neonatal Care

\*\* Office for National Statistics. (2013) Pregnancy and ethnic factors influencing births and infant mortality.

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## How much will this cost us?

The number of families affected by premature birth is small. Just **8% of births** end in pre-term labour, with the majority (85%) of premature births happening between 32-37 weeks, therefore requiring less additional leave. We believe that the small costs involved will be outweighed by the successful return of parents to the workplace.

# Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) legislation

Following eight years of fighting for change for families of premature babies, including a petition with more than 357,000 signatures, **The Smallest Things** was thrilled to see the Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Bill become legislation. However, the changes do not go far enough.

- Stuart C McDonald MP's **Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Bill** promised to change the law for working parents of babies who spend time in neonatal care. It became law in summer 2023 yet is not expected to be available to families until 2025. We continue to urge the government to bring this date forward.
- Neonatal leave will be available to employees as a Day One right and will apply to parents of babies who are admitted into hospital up to the age of 28 days, and who have a continuous stay in hospital of seven full days or more, up to a maximum of 12 weeks.
- Entitlement to Statutory Neonatal Pay, like other family-related pay rights, will be available to employees who meet continuity of service and minimum earnings tests, to provide both consistency and ease to employers who will administer the entitlement. The leave will be paid at a rate of around £160 per week, up to a maximum of 12 weeks.



Click to watch Stuart C McDonald MP speaking in Parliament.

# Employer with Heart charter: above and beyond new statutory legislation

## Why should we make this change now for our employees?

- Statutory Neonatal Leave and Pay will not come into effect until **2024 at the earliest** and will only cover the time a baby is in hospital.
- It does not take into account the **developmental needs of a baby born too soon** or the ongoing appointments, medical interventions and readmissions to hospital that occur after coming home from neonatal care.
- **Extending leave by the number of days a baby was born prior to their due date** gives parents time to recover from the trauma of neonatal intensive care, time to bond with their baby and time for their baby to grow and develop

so that they can return to work.

- Families who experience prolonged periods of time in hospital face **mounting costs associated with hospital stays**.
- Paid at a statutory rate for the duration of time their baby is in hospital, many families will be forced to return to work too soon.
- Babies born prematurely develop according to their due date – this is called their **corrected age**. Extending leave by a baby's due date rather than length of hospital stay ensures that they have reached **developmental milestones** ready for a childcare setting.

“We passionately believe that time spent in a neonatal unit, helplessly watching your fragile baby in an incubator covered in wires and tubes and surrounded by beeping machinery, should not count as parental leave. Not only is precious time with a newborn replaced by fear and worry over health issues (or even survival), but the journey does not end when (and if) a baby leaves hospital.”

### The Smallest Things

The impact of Covid-19 on maternity and parental leave | House of Commons Petitions Committee

## Going back to hospital

OVER

1 / 2

of premature babies were readmitted to hospital following discharge from NICU



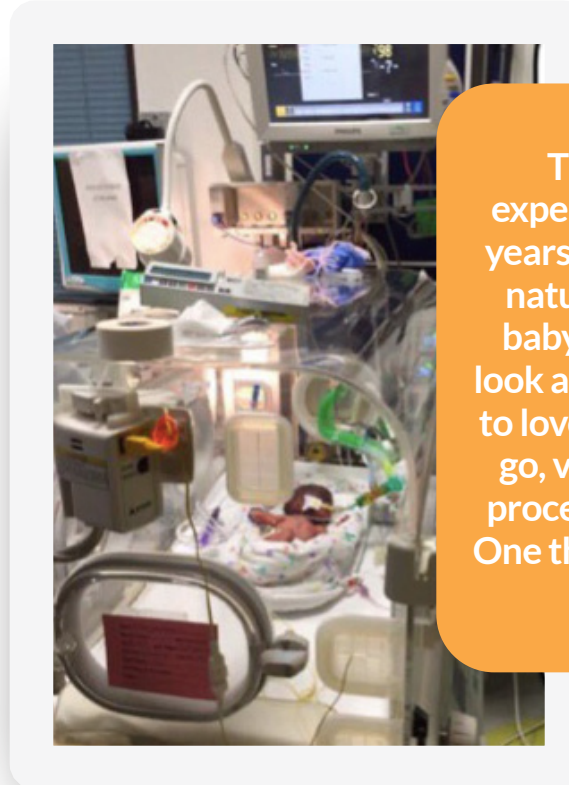
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# About The Smallest Things

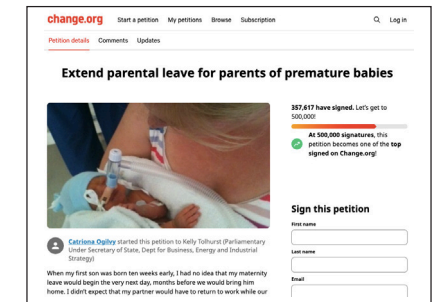
**The Smallest Things** is a registered charity supporting the needs of families and their babies born prematurely. The charity recognises the significant impact a premature birth has upon a family, both financially and emotionally, and understands that the neonatal journey does not end when parents bring their baby or babies home from hospital. The charity is dedicated to making the world a better place for families after neonatal intensive care and in improving outcomes for children born prematurely.



The most traumatic experience of my entire 35 years, PPROM at 26 weeks, natural delivery of a 1lb4 baby I was scared to even look at let alone allow myself to love. 98 days of touch and go, ventilators, infections, procedures, and heartache. One thing is for certain this is **#notmatleave**

Syreata Leigh  
**#NotMatLeave**

## Parent power leads to historic law change



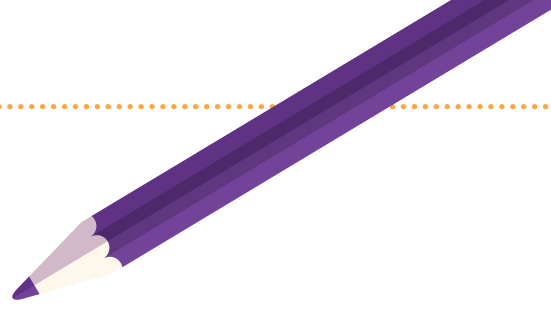
More than 357,000 people have signed the petition to extend parental leave for parents of premature babies since 2015. The charity organised a march to Parliament to present the petition to then Business Minister Margot James and has met various ministers since. Thanks to the power of parents, we've been able to continue calling on the government to make this change and kept the campaign on the parliamentary agenda.

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# How to sign up



## Becoming an Employer with Heart is simple:

1. Send a signed copy of the Employer with Heart charter (next slide), along with relevant amended parental leave policies to [hello@thesmallestthings.org](mailto:hello@thesmallestthings.org)
2. Once your policies have been reviewed, we will send you the **Employer with Heart charter mark** and add you to our online 'Employers with Heart' hall of fame.
3. We'll work with you to promote and celebrate the changes you have made.
4. Why stop there? Ask any suppliers, contractors or partners you work with to sign up to the charter too!

## Supporting The Smallest Things

The Smallest Things is a tiny charity making a big impact. Run largely by volunteers and without government income, we rely solely on the support and generosity of others.

We ask private companies for a minimum donation of £200 to cover Employer with Heart administrative costs. There is no fee for charities or public sector employers. You can also support our work in other ways:

- Choose The Smallest Things as your company's charity partner
- Fundraise for and support our annual events
- Promote The Smallest Things and the work we do through social media channels



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# The Smallest Things Employer with Heart charter

Parents facing the worry and uncertainty of visiting their premature baby in hospital should not spend that time as maternity or paternity leave. We understand that premature babies need more time; time to develop, time to grow and time for parents and babies to bond at home after neonatal intensive care. That is why we're signing up to The Smallest Things Employer with Heart charter – supporting parents of premature babies

## We agree to:

- 1. Extend leave** for parents and partners who have a premature baby (before 37 weeks' gestation) by the number of days a baby is born prior to their due date. This extended leave will be at full pay.
- 2. Support parents and partners returning to work** following the birth of a premature baby. Babies born too soon can have ongoing medical needs, requiring regular hospital

appointments and check-ups. We will consider formal and informal flexible working patterns and additional paid or unpaid leave.

## The Smallest Things Employer with Heart charter

Employer name

Company/organisation name:

Signed:

Name and position:

Date:

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