

Pregnancy and Parenting Policy

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Section 1: Overview

1.1 Purpose and Scope

- 1.1.1 This policy aims to provide advice and guidance to participants who become parents during the programme and includes information on time away from studies related to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, and adoption.
- 1.1.2 The policy provides Frontline staff with a point of reference where they have a role in advising participants around pregnancy and parenting during the programme.
- 1.1.3 This policy applies to participants across all years of the programme. However, in years 2 and 3 participants should refer to their employer's policies on pregnancy, maternity, paternity, shared parental leave and adoption for further information on their entitlements.

1.2 General principles

- 1.2.1 Frontline believes that becoming pregnant, becoming a parent, or caring for a child should not prevent a participant from succeeding on the programme.
- 1.2.2 Frontline aims to provide an environment that is supportive to parents and carers and will advise participants of the different options available to them via this policy.
- 1.2.3 Frontline has a duty to ensure that where participants take time away from study, they are fit and ready to return to the programme. Consequently, participants who take extended leave during the programme will have some conditions to meet upon their return (see [section 2.4](#) for further information). In addition, participants may be required to undertake further checks where changes in their health or circumstances are disclosed.
- 1.2.4 Parental leave does not count towards a participant's eligibility for an intercalation during the programme. Participants who have taken a period of parental leave and who have not already taken a period of intercalation can apply for an intercalation in line with the [intercalation policy](#). This can be for an intercalation immediately following the period of parental leave, but the usual process for requesting an intercalation must be followed.
- 1.2.5 Information shared by participants in requesting or returning from intercalation will be held confidentially and shared only with those involved in decision making around intercalation and return to study. This may include those outside Frontline, where partner organisations such as Lancaster University and relevant local authorities are involved. Information which constitutes disclosure of a possible disability or change to a disability will be referred to Lancaster University's Disability and Inclusive Practice Service as appropriate, so that reasonable adjustments can be made or reviewed during the intercalation process and on return to the



programme. Information which raises a credible concern around the safety of participants or others may be shared with emergency contacts or external agencies as necessary to mitigate risks.

1.3 Responsibilities

- 1.3.1 This policy is owned by the Chief Social Worker, who is responsible for its implementation.
- 1.3.2 During year 1, Consultant Social Workers (CSWs) and Practice Tutors will be expected to implement this policy. During year 2 and 3, participants should liaise with their local authority employer, and whilst registered with Lancaster University, with their dissertation supervisor as well.
- 1.3.3 Where necessary, Principal Practice Tutors (PPT) and/or Heads of Delivery will support staff with the implementation of this policy.
- 1.3.4 Frontline's academic registry team will record all time away from studies and where relevant (where participants are registered, or expected shortly to register, as students with Lancaster University) will notify Lancaster University of changes.
- 1.3.5 The role of the Suitability team is to support with processing and review of health and conduct checks from intercalations. They will also review participants' self-declaration form responses, and where changes in conduct and health are confirmed since time away, will invoke any additional checks as necessary. A representative from the suitability team may be a member of the return to study panel, if required.

1.4 Parental leave entitlement

- 1.4.1 Year 1 participants are entitled to the following pregnancy and parenting leave:
 - **Participants who have given birth:** must take two weeks maternity leave from the date of the birth. This includes leave from all academic teaching and their practice learning experience.
 - **Additional maternity leave:** participants who are the main carer are entitled and encouraged to take up to 52 weeks maternity leave (inclusive of the two weeks maternity leave that must be taken).
 - **Shared parenting leave:** participants who are fathers, or are partners of the mother or primary carer (including in same sex relationships) and expect to be responsible for raising the child, are entitled to take up to 52 weeks off from the child's birth/adoption if they wish to share parental leave with their partner. Leave of up to four weeks, taken immediately after the birth/adoption or within the following three months, can usually be



accommodated without intercalation (a placement extension may be necessary). Longer periods of leave will usually require an intercalation.

- **Adoption leave:** participants about to become parents through adoption are entitled to leave mirroring that of maternity and shared parenting leave above.

1.4.2 Participants in years 2 and 3 are local authority employees and should refer to their employer's policies on pregnancy, maternity, paternity, shared parental leave and adoption for leave entitlements in relation to their employment.

1.4.3 In relation to the programme and teaching, year 2 and 3 participants are entitled to the following pregnancy and parenting leave:

- **Participants who have given birth:** must take two weeks maternity leave from the date of the birth. This includes leave from all programme activities.
- **Additional maternity leave:** participants who are the main carer are entitled and encouraged to take up to 52 weeks maternity leave (inclusive of the two weeks maternity leave that must be taken)
- **Shared parenting leave:** participants who are fathers, or are partners of the mother or primary carer (including in same-sex relationships), and expect to share responsibility for raising the child, are entitled to take up to 52 weeks off from the child's birth/adoption if they wish to share parental leave with their partner. Leave of up to four weeks, taken immediately after the birth/adoption or within the following three months, can usually be accommodated without intercalation (an extension to the relevant stage of the programme may be necessary). Longer periods of leave may require an intercalation.
- **Adoption leave:** participants who become parents through adoption are entitled to leave mirroring that of maternity and shared parenting leave above.

Section 2: Procedure

2.1 Notifying Frontline of a pregnancy

2.1.1 Participants should confirm any suspected pregnancy with their GP and are encouraged to notify Frontline at least 15 weeks before their due date. Year 1 participants should notify their CSW and practice tutor, and year 2 and 3 participants should notify their local authority employer and their Frontline contact (usually a PT or dissertation supervisor).

2.1.2 Frontline will only share information about a participant's pregnancy on a need-to-know basis (see 1.2.5 above).

2.1.3 Frontline will allow participants time off from the programme to attend medical appointments related to their pregnancy or their partner's pregnancy. Participants will need to meet the



attendance and engagement requirements of the programme and therefore will be expected to catch up on missed studies. For further information on this, please refer to the [Attendance and Engagement policy](#).

- 2.1.4 Frontline will work with placement providers to ensure that a risk assessment is carried out for year 1 participants during their pregnancy. This should include any contrasting learning experience placement(s). Where there are additional or specific health needs Frontline may, in consultation with the participant, also refer them for an occupational health assessment.
- 2.1.5 During year 2 and 3 of the programme the participant's employer should carry out a risk assessment in line with their responsibilities as an employer.

2.2 Notification of two weeks' maternity leave

- 2.2.1 Participants who have given birth and who choose not to take a longer period of maternity leave **must** take two weeks maternity leave immediately following the arrival of their child via an authorised absence.
- 2.2.2 Participants in year 1 will need to communicate their taking of two weeks maternity leave to their Practice Tutor and CSW. In years 2 and 3, participants should contact their local authority employer and their Frontline contact (usually a PT or dissertation supervisor). This should be in advance of the date (where possible).
- 2.2.3 Taking more than the required two weeks maternity leave during year 1 will likely mean that an extension to the end of a participant's placement is required. This will be considered in accordance with Frontline's [attendance and engagement policy](#).

2.3 Requesting extended time away from studies (up to 52 weeks)

- 2.3.1 A participant who wishes to take a period of parental leave of four weeks or less should communicate this intention to their practice tutor and CSW (if in year 1), or their local authority employer and Frontline contact (in year 2 or 3). As much notice should be given as possible. Taking parental leave during year 1 will usually mean that a placement extension is required, and this will be considered in accordance with Frontline's [attendance and engagement policy](#).
- 2.3.2 A participant wishing to take an extended period of parental leave which is longer than four weeks should submit a parental leave request via Frontline's [time away from study request form](#), along with any additional evidence to support the request.



- 2.3.3 Once a request has been submitted, relevant Frontline staff (Practice Tutor/Dissertation Supervisor, Principal Practice Tutor, Partnerships and Placement Manager, Academic Registry) will receive notification.
- 2.3.4 Participants are advised to meet with their Practice Tutor or dissertation supervisor to discuss impact and details of the requested leave on their studies, or for discussion of related concerns in the period preceding leave e.g., around medical appointments, extensions to assessment deadlines, etc. Principal practice tutors may reach out to discuss the request with the participant, where additional information would assist them in setting conditions of return or considering the request, and if so, notes of the conversation will be attached to the intercalation request.
- 2.3.5 All participants taking an extended period of parental leave will normally be required to meet the following conditions upon their return to the programme:
1. Undergo a new **enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check** (in year 1 this will be co-ordinated by Frontline, in years 2 & 3 it will be the responsibility of the local authority to complete. In both cases it is the responsibility of the participant to supply accurate information in a timely way);
 2. Complete a **self-declaration form**, where participants will be asked to confirm whether there have been any changes since their time away e.g., to their health, or where they live;
 3. Write and submit a **short reflective account** (normally between 500 and 1000 words) in which they indicate how they have kept up to date with social work practice during their leave and reflect upon their time off. A template will be provided for this;
 4. If there are any concerns about the participant's health (whether connected to pregnancy/childbirth or not) either prior to parental leave or during their time away from study, an Occupational Health assessment may be required. OH reports will be shared with prospective placement providers to ensure that appropriate adjustments and support can be in place for returning participants.
 5. Any other conditions that are deemed necessary.
- 2.3.6 The Principal Practice Tutor will normally review the standardised return conditions to determine whether any additional conditions are required and will confirm alongside this additional return information (e.g., planned date of departure, intended return date etc.).
- 2.3.7 Participants are entitled to up to 52 weeks of time away from studies due to extended parental leave. The length of time off will be determined by a participant's personal circumstances and preference, alongside the structure of the programme of study. Where the duration of a participant's parental leave means that they are unable to return at an appropriate programme point (i.e., they have missed a point of return that would enable them to complete outstanding



elements of their programme year), participants may be required to immediately intercalate following on from their parental leave, as outlined in [clause 1.2.4](#). Participants who take parental leave of more than four weeks within year 1 will usually be required to return at a point as close as possible to 12 months later. Participants who have completed year 1 may be able to take shorter periods of parental leave, returning to study within the same academic year or at an earlier point of the following year. In all cases, dates of return will be determined in consultation with the participant and on a case-by-case basis, to balance the need for time away from studies with the optimal opportunity to return to study successfully.

2.3.8 Once the above steps are complete, information pertaining to the participant's parental leave will be submitted on Frontline's record system for the Head of Delivery to review.

2.3.9 Following approval of a period of extended time away from studies, the participant will be sent written confirmation of the details of their time away and the conditions of return. This will contain relevant information, including:

- the standardised conditions of return the participant is required to meet in advance of their planned date of return;
- where relevant, any additional conditions of return that have been set;
- expected date of return;
- bursary end date (year 1 only);
- additional steps that will need to be taken where information is disclosed upon a participant's return (e.g., where there has been a change in health or conduct);
- the participant's academic record at the point of departure.

2.3.10 Where participants take parental leave before the end of year 1, Frontline would normally expect them to return to placement in their previous local authority. However, where the time away from studies means that they return to a new cohort, this cannot always be guaranteed.

If a participant cannot return to complete the year 1 placement learning experience in their previous local authority because this placement is no longer available, Frontline will make reasonable efforts to place the participant into another local authority upon their return. However, placements are provided at the discretion of local authorities and, therefore, Frontline cannot guarantee it will be able to find such a placement.

2.3.11 Participants who take parental leave from their studies in years 2 or 3 can do so whilst remaining in local authority employment, or to coincide (wholly or in part) with a period away from work, whether through paid or unpaid leave. A condition of return to study in year 2 and 3 will be that the participant is also returning to work in the same local authority or another which is also Frontline-partnered, though a participant who has completed their ASYE may in some cases be allowed to resume study in year 3 whilst still on parental leave from their local authority role. A participant who has left social work employment would not be permitted to return to study.

2.4 Returning from time away



- 2.4.1 Typically three months before a participant's intended date of return, Frontline will ask the participant to confirm whether they intend to return to programme. Where the participant is returning to complete year 1, teams responsible for securing their local authority placement will be in touch as necessary through the year.
- 2.4.2 Where a participant confirms that they do not wish to return to the programme, relevant teams will be made aware, and the participant will be withdrawn from the programme.
- 2.4.3 Where a participant does not adequately respond to communication from Frontline in relation to their return to study, (e.g. where no response is received, either to the initial return to study email or subsequent communications, after two reminders) they will be deemed withdrawn (see [Withdrawal Policy](#)). Attempts will be made to contact participants at the contact details held on record – it is the participant's responsibility to update contact details if they change during the period of intercalation. Relevant teams will be made aware, and the participant will be withdrawn from the programme.
- 2.4.4 If a participant wishes to complete the programme but cannot return on the date that was initially agreed, they may request a further period of leave via Frontline's [intercalation policy](#).
- 2.4.5 Where the participant intends to return, conditions of return checks will commence. Frontline will monitor the completion of checks and invite the participant to attend a return to study meeting, normally six weeks in advance of their intended return date.
- 2.4.6 Typically, for the completion of return checks, the participant will liaise with Frontline's admissions and support team, who will support the participant in processing their suitability-related checks.
- 2.4.7 If new information is disclosed when completing the above conditions that indicate additional information is required (e.g., an occupational health assessment), the participant will be notified of what is required and the date by which the information must be provided.
- 2.4.8 The participant is responsible for independently completing their reflective account in a timely way.
- 2.4.9 Even where conditions of return are met, the participant's return to programme is always subject to the availability of a local authority placement (in year 1) or their remaining in employment as a child-focused social worker (years 2 and 3). To support the securing of a suitable placement, Frontline may share with local authorities appropriate information on the participant's reasons for intercalation, reflections on their time away and evidence that conditions of return have been met.
- 2.4.10 Participants who are returning to study (i.e. who have completed conditions of return in part or in full) may in some cases be offered one or more of the following opportunities:
- to complete one or more shadowing days, especially if a placement is being considered at a local authority other than the one where they were placed prior to intercalation



- to participate in a reflective conversation, either in person or remotely, with a prospective Practice Tutor or Consultant Social Worker
- to complete an inclusion passport, and/or to work with the Lancaster University Disability and Inclusive Practice Service to consider whether an Individual Learning Support Plan would be beneficial in supporting their return to study

These offers are not guaranteed, and are optional (though strongly recommended) where they are offered, unless they have been a condition of return. Participation may assist in securing a suitable placement in a timely way.

Expenses incurred by the participant, for instance in travel to the place where shadowing will take place, cannot usually be reimbursed, but participants are encouraged to inform Frontline if their financial circumstances are an obstacle to accepting such an offer.

The return to study meeting

- 2.4.11 Participants will usually receive confirmation of the time and date of their return to study meeting at least 10 working days in advance. If the participant cannot attend, the meeting will usually be rescheduled, but can also reach a decision in the absence of the participant if the Chair deems it appropriate to do so.
- 2.4.12 The return to study meeting will normally include the Principal Practice Tutor. Depending on the complexity of the conditions of return, and whether additional concerns have arisen during the return checks, a member of the Admissions and support team and the Head of Delivery, or nominee, may also attend. Other relevant Frontline staff may be asked to review the conditions of return submission where the panel deem this necessary.
- 2.4.13 Where required (usually when a placement has not yet been secured), the Partnerships and Placement Manager (PPM) may also be in attendance.
- 2.4.14 Occasionally a member of staff from a local authority which is considering whether or not they are able to offer a placement may attend for part of the meeting, to meet the participant and hear their reflections. They do not contribute to the decision as to whether the participant has met the conditions of return
- 2.4.15 The return to study meeting will review the participant's submission and supporting documentation against the conditions of return to establish whether the conditions of return have been met and the participant is approved to return to the programme, subject to the availability of a local authority placement (year 1) or their continued employment as a child-focused social worker (years 2 and 3). For those who are permitted to return, any ongoing support needs will be identified and, where necessary, support mechanisms put in place. The Chair of the meeting, or their nominee, will record the outcome on the student record.



- 2.4.16 Where the participant is returning to complete year 1, PPMs will have confirmed in advance of the panel whether a placement at the local authority in which the participant was originally placed, remains available for their return, and if not, will have explored alternatives.
- 2.4.17 If it is confirmed that the participant has met the conditions of return to study, and the local authority placement/employment is still available, or another suitable placement/employment has been found, the participant will be notified of their return to programme. The Chair of the return to study meeting will inform Academic Registry so that the student record can be updated and, if necessary, the outcome reported to Lancaster University.
- 2.4.18 If it is confirmed that the participant has met the conditions of return to study and a reasonable alternative placement has been found but the participant does not wish to take up the placement, the participant will be deemed withdrawn. Relevant teams will be made aware, and the participant will be withdrawn from the programme.
- 2.4.19 If it is confirmed that the participant has met the conditions of return to study and a placement cannot be found, the participant will be given the option of one further intercalation and Frontline will attempt to secure a placement during this intercalation. Once intercalated, the [intercalation policy](#) then applies.
- 2.4.20 If the participant does not wish to take this intercalation the participant will be deemed withdrawn. Relevant teams will be made aware, and the participant will be withdrawn from the programme.
- 2.4.21 If the return to study panel determines that a participant has not met the conditions of return to study, the participant will be required to leave the programme, and will be excluded. Exclusion of a participant who intercalated or took parental leave during a period of registration as a student of Lancaster University must be ratified by a Lancaster University examination board.

Ratification of an exclusion by the examination board, where applicable

- 2.4.22 Frontline's registry will inform Lancaster University that a participant is to be excluded so that this decision can be ratified by an examination board.
- 2.4.23 The examination board will consider the recommendation of the return to study panel together with minutes of the panel and details of the case. The role of the exam board is to consider and ratify the recommendation made in respect of the participant. The exam board must also confirm, to its satisfaction, that due process has been followed at the hearing and that all relevant information has been fully considered.



2.4.24 The examination board will either:

- Ratify the recommendation of the Frontline return to study panel that the participant should be excluded; or
- Fail to ratify the recommendation of the Frontline return to study panel request that the return to study panel is reconvened.

2.4.25 A participant whose exclusion is ratified by the examination board will be notified of their exclusion and will be given the opportunity to appeal the decision. Information about the appeals process can be found in the Academic Appeals chapter of Lancaster University's Manual of Academic Regulations and Procedures.

2.4.26 Ratification and appeal processes may not be complete by the date originally scheduled for a participant's return. In cases where ratification is declined or appeals are upheld, return to study may be delayed until an appropriate return point, which may in some cases mean a delay of a year or, rarely, more.

Section 3: Other information for parents and carers

3.1 Readiness for Practice residential

- 3.1.1 The Readiness for Practice stage is a high-intensity five-week programme, where private weekend study is expected. The programme is predominantly online but includes some mandatory in-person attendance, including at a three-day residential. The residential may include evening events.
- 3.1.2 Frontline does not provide childcare facilities at the Readiness for Practice three-day residential or at any teaching days, although childcare suitable for families may be available locally for participants to book independently. Frontline will support in directing participants to providers where these are known, but provider availability is not guaranteed, and it is the responsibility of the participant to cover these costs.
- 3.1.3 Frontline does not provide multi-person accommodation at the three-day Readiness for Practice residential, with rooms supplied to participants through the venue for single person usage only. Alternative accommodation suitable for families may be available locally for participants to book. Frontline will support in directing participants to providers where these are known, but availability is not guaranteed and it is the responsibility of the participant to book.
- 3.1.4 It is the responsibility of the participant to cover the additional costs accrued from choosing to stay in alternative accommodation. Where this means that the participant is a day delegate at our residential venue (attending venue during the day for teaching, with lunch and refreshments included), rather than a 24-hour delegate (staying overnight in single person room, with meals and refreshments covered) participants will be able to apply for a partial reimbursement of the



difference between these two rates per person per night, from Frontline. Frontline cannot provide meals for family members/non-participants.

3.2 Teaching days

- 3.2.1 The programme includes in person teaching days in year 1, and online teaching days in all three years.
- 3.2.2 Frontline does not provide childcare facilities for any teaching days.
- 3.2.3 We ensure that teaching days do not fall on national bank holidays and try where possible to ensure that teaching days do not fall on key religious dates. Although we endeavour to avoid other key dates that can impact participants, such as school holidays, this is not always possible due to the frequency of teaching days across all years of the programme, along with the fact that school holidays vary across England and by school type.

Section 4: Relevant references

[Frontline policies and documents](#)

- 4.1.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:
 - Attendance and engagement policy
 - Intercalation policy
 - Bursary & financial policy
 - Transfer policy
 - Withdrawal policy