Maternity and Paternity Pay Proposal

March 2026

1. Executive Summary

This paper seeks approval from the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to enhance Cleveland Fire Brigade's maternity and paternity pay provisions. The primary recommendation is to increase maternity pay to 12 months full pay for eligible employees, positioning Cleveland Fire Brigade as a sector-leading employer and strengthening recruitment, retention, wellbeing, and equality outcomes across the organisation.

An alternative option is presented, offering 9 months full maternity pay, with employees able to use their annual leave to extend their total time away from the workplace to 12 months. This offers flexibility and improved financial security, while carrying a lower direct cost.

The paper also proposes enhancing paternity pay to 2 weeks full pay, supporting shared parenting, gender equality, and early parental bonding.

Financial modelling based on the Service's average maternity and paternity cases demonstrates an estimated additional cost of £35,836 per year. However, this investment is expected to generate long-term savings by improving retention, reducing turnover of experienced firefighters and staff, and enhancing the Brigade's reputation as a family-friendly, inclusive employer.

The recommended approach, 12 months full maternity pay and 2 weeks full paternity pay, aligns with national equality aims, supports safe return-to-work planning, and represents a meaningful cultural commitment to valuing and supporting CFB employees and their families.

2. Background

The FBU national women's committee (NWC) has outlined the stark disparities in the maternity provision across the country. Equality is a Trade Union principle and priority which is why the FBU launched the 'Equality Matters' campaign in May 2023 to ensure that equality is a part of everything we do as a union. Fight for 52 forms an important part of the Equality Matters campaign as it seeks to address imbalances in the maternity provision across the UK Fire and rescue Services, which includes a case to promote and encourage 52 weeks full maternity pay and other wider provisions such as occupational hazards, inclusion, and recruitment and retention.

On 02 May 2023, the FBU wrote to all UK fire employers at the National Joint Council (NJC) and highlighted the obligation on national employers to address the inadequate maternity provisions in the fire and rescue service, ensuring that maternity provision in our service is fit for purpose. Included within this was requests that:

- Under-representation of women in the fire and rescue service is addressed, to make opportunities attractive for women, with the best possible maternity provisions and eliminate obstacles to recruit and retain women in the service.
- Look to address increased risks to expectant mothers, foetuses, and newborn babies from firefighting related contaminants: noting the UK National Health Service (NHS) advice that exclusive breastfeeding (breastmilk only) is recommended for around the first six months of a baby's life, followed by breastfeeding alongside solid foods into the baby's second year.
- Better support is given to those who are statistically more likely to be primary carers in a career already facing the challenges of regular shift based work.

3. Current Position

Cleveland Fire Brigade currently provides 26 weeks full pay followed by Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) for eligible employees, which is aligned to National Joint Council (NJC) provisions.

Maternity Leave:

- Up to 52 weeks leave for all employees.
- For those with 1 year's qualifying service:
    - **Weeks 1–26:** Full pay
    - **Weeks 27–39:** SMP only
    - **Weeks 40–52:** Unpaid
- For those without qualifying service: statutory entitlements apply.

Paternity Leave:

- 2 weeks paternity leave
- **1 week at full pay**, **1 week at SMP**

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4. Proposal

Before considering specific options, it is important to acknowledge the strategic intention behind enhancing maternity and paternity pay. Improving these provisions is not solely a financial decision; it is a deliberate investment in workforce stability, organisational culture, and long-term equality outcomes. The policy changes proposed below are designed to support Cleveland Fire Brigade's ability to attract, retain and nurture a diverse, committed workforce, while also aligning with national

expectations around modern, family-friendly employment practices. The proposal also supports the national FBU campaign ‘Fight for 52’, attached at Appendix 2. The options presented allow ELT to consider the level of enhancement that best balances these strategic aims with the Service’s financial position.

4.1 Option A (Recommended): 12 Months Full Maternity Pay

Provide **52 weeks of maternity leave on full pay** for eligible employees. This represents the most comprehensive and supportive approach, offering the strongest alignment to organisational values and delivering the greatest impact on recruitment, retention, wellbeing, and equality.

4.2 Option B (Alternative): 9 Months Full Maternity Pay + Annual Leave

Provide **39 weeks full pay**, with employees able to utilise accrued annual leave to achieve up to 12 months away from the workplace with pay. This option delivers an enhanced offer while moderating financial impact, and still provides employees with considerable flexibility and stability during maternity leave.

4.3 Option C (Recommend) : Enhanced Paternity Pay

Increase Occupational Paternity Pay to **2 weeks full pay**, supporting early parental bonding, encouraging shared caregiving responsibilities, and reinforcing the organisation’s commitment to gender equality.

5. Rationale

5.1 Attraction and Retention

Enhanced maternity pay would significantly strengthen Cleveland Fire Brigade’s position as an employer of choice. Offering 12 months full pay creates a highly competitive benefits package that helps attract skilled applicants and reduces the likelihood of losing trained personnel to organisations with better family-friendly policies. Replacing experienced staff is resource-intensive and costly; therefore, investing in enhanced maternity pay supports long-term workforce stability and reduces recruitment and training costs.

5.2 Employee Wellbeing and Engagement

Providing extended full pay during maternity leave demonstrates a strong organisational commitment to employee wellbeing. Many new parents experience considerable financial pressure in the first year after childbirth. Removing or reducing this pressure enhances mental health, allows employees to focus on recovery and bonding with their baby, and supports a smoother, healthier return to work. This type of investment also strengthens morale, loyalty, and long-term engagement.

5.3 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Women in male-dominated professions, including firefighting, often experience the "motherhood penalty," where career progression and earnings are adversely affected after having children. Enhanced maternity pay directly helps mitigate this disadvantage by improving financial security and supporting longer and healthier periods of leave. Strengthening maternity provision also aligns with Cleveland Fire Brigade's equality commitments and reinforces its status as a fair, inclusive, and progressive employer.

5.4 Reputation and Employer Brand

Introducing 12 months' full maternity pay would position Cleveland Fire Brigade as a leading employer both regionally and nationally. This proactive step reflects our organisational values and demonstrates our commitment to supporting families, promoting equality, and investing in our workforce. A strong employer brand contributes to increased interest from potential applicants and enhances public perception of CFB as a modern, people-focused organisation.

5.5 Workforce Health and Operational Readiness

Firefighting is physically demanding, and the return to operational duties requires full physical recovery and confidence. New mothers may experience elevated 'Relaxin' levels for up to a year, especially if breastfeeding, increasing the risk of injury, joint instability, and musculoskeletal issues. Enhanced maternity pay allows mothers the time they need to recover properly, reducing potential injuries and supporting operational readiness upon their return.

5.6 Alignment with National and Sector Priorities

The proposal supports the wider objectives of the FBU's Equality Matters campaign and aligns with national public sector priorities to improve gender equality and family-friendly employment conditions. Other public sector bodies have already enhanced their maternity provisions, indicating sector momentum and establishing this approach as an emerging best practice standard.

6. Benchmarking

- FBU research highlights significant disparity across UK fire and rescue services.
- The UK provides 39 weeks paid leave, below the average of 51 weeks.
- Several services nationally have already implemented or piloted extended maternity pay, demonstrating feasibility.

7. Financial Impact

Financial modelling indicates:

7.1 Option A (Recommended): 12 Months Full Maternity Pay

- Average additional annual cost for CFB £34,812 per year

7.2 Option B (Alternative): 9 Months Full Maternity Pay

- Average additional annual cost for CFB £19,562 per year

7.3 Option C (Recommend): Enhanced Paternity Pay

- Average additional annual cost for CFB £1,024

This reflects an average of:

- **0.67 maternity cases per year (Corporate) Based on 2 staff in last 3 years**
- **1 maternity case per year (Operational) Based on 3 staff in last 3 years**
- **2 paternity leave per year (1 corporate and 1 operational) based on last 3 years**

While there is a recurring cost, this may be partly offset by savings from reduced turnover, reduced training replacement costs, and improved retention of experienced personnel. The green book costs (which are included in the above calculations), £13,318 and £7,461 respectively, are likely to be covered by existing budgets as we do not normally replace corporate roles whilst on maternity leave. Operational costs will be covered by the Services overtime budget.

Appendix 1 details the financial calculations

8. Risks and Mitigations

Risk	Mitigation
Financial impact if implemented ahead of NJC national agreement	Conduct cost modelling before policy change.
Perception of inequity between staff groups	Consider phased review of other family-friendly provisions (adoption, shared parental leave)
Budget pressures	Present business case linking retention benefits and long-term savings

9. Recommended Option

It is recommended that ELT approves:

- **Option A – 12 months full maternity pay, plus**
- **Option C - 2 weeks full paternity pay.**

Implementing these options would represent a significant and positive step for Cleveland Fire Brigade. It would demonstrate a strong commitment to equality, health and safety, and workforce wellbeing, and help with the recruitment and retention of female firefighters.

There are some services around the country that have implemented 52 weeks maternity on full pay and have demonstrated that implementation is both achievable and sustainable**.** If Cleveland were to introduce this it would send a clear and compelling message that CFB holds equality and the safety of its employees as its highest priorities and demonstrate CFB's commitment to being a modern, inclusive, family-friendly employer.

Appendix 1 – Financial

Corporate Costs – Green Book

Old calculation										
Green Book	**F Grade**		**1-6 wks 90%**	**7-18 wks 50%**	**19-39 wks**	**40-52 wks**				
Salary	£35,235.00	**CFA Pay**	0	£4,054.43	£0.00	£0.00	salary amount=	£4,054.43	total cost =	£13,880.35
Monthly	£2,936.25	**SMP**	£3,648.98	£2,246.16	£3,930.78	£0.00	smp amount=	£9,825.92	is 39 weeks	smp
Weekly	£675.74									
				SMP pw						
				£187.18						
New calculation										
			1-6 wks 100%	**7-26 wks 100%**	**27-39 wks**	**40-52 wks**	salary amount =	£10,273.23	total cost =	£20,099.16
		CFA Pay	£405.44	£9,867.79	£0.00	£0.00	smp amount =	£9,825.92		
		SMP	£3,648.98	£3,743.60	£2,433.34	£0.00				
New Calculation 2			**1-6 wks 100%**	**7-26 wks 100%**	**27-39 wks 100%**	**40-52 wks 100%**				
12 months		**CFA Pay**	£405.44	£9,867.79	£6,351.25	£8,784.59	salary amount=	£25,409.08	total cost =	£35,235.00
		SMP	£3,648.98	£3,743.60	£2,433.34	£0.00	smp amount=	£9,825.92		
New Calculation 2			**1-6 wks 100%**	**7-26 wks 100%**	**27-39 wks 100%**	**40-52 wks 100%**				
9 months		**CFA Pay**	£405.44	£9,867.79	£6,351.25	£0.00	salary amount=	£16,624.48	total cost =	£26,450.41
		SMP	£3,648.98	£3,743.60	£2,433.34	£0.00	smp amount=	£9,825.92		

Operational Costs – Grey Book

Old calculation										
Grey Book	**FF**		**1-6 wks 90%**	**7-18 wks 50%**	**19-39 wks**	**40-52 wks**				
Salary	£37,675.00	**CFA Pay**		£4,335.19	£0.00	£0.00	salary amount=	£4,335.19	total cost =	£14,413.81
Monthly	£3,139.58	**SMP**	£3,901.67	£2,246.16	£3,930.78	£0.00	smp amount=	£10,078.61		
Weekly	£722.53									
				SMP pw						
				£187.18						
New calculation			**1-6 wks 100%**	**7-26 wks 100%**	**27-39 wks**	**40-52 wks**				
		CFA Pay	£433.52	£10,810.37	£0.00	£0.00	salary amount =	£11,243.89	total cost =	£21,322.50
		SMP	£3,901.67	£3,743.60	£2,433.34	£0.00	smp amount =	£10,078.61		
New Calculation 2			**1-6 wks 100%**	**7-26 wks 100%**	**27-39 wks 100%**	**40-52 wks 100%**				
12 months		**CFA Pay**	£433.52	£10,810.37	£6,959.58	£9,392.92	salary amount=	£27,596.39	total cost =	£37,675.00
		SMP	£3,901.67	£3,743.60	£2,433.34	£0.00	smp amount=	£10,078.61		
New Calculation 2			**1-6 wks 100%**	**7-26 wks 100%**	**27-39 wks 100%**	**40-52 wks 100%**				
9 months		**CFA Pay**	£433.52	£10,810.37	£6,959.58	£0.00	salary amount=	£18,203.47	total cost =	£28,282.08
		SMP	£3,901.67	£3,743.60	£2,433.34	£0.00	smp amount=	£10,078.61		

		12 months	9 months	
Average maternity numbers over the last 3 years (22/23-24/25)				
Green Book	0.67	£13,318	£7,461	2 staff in 3 years
Grey Book	1.00	£21,494	£12,101	3 staff in 3 years
		£34,812	£19,562	Average additional cost to the Brigade per year

Appendix 2

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT – INITIAL SCREENING

EQIAs enable us to consider all the information about a service, policy, practice or activity from an equalities perspective and then put an action plan in place to achieve the best outcome for our employees and service users. EQIAs analyse how the work that we undertake can impact different groups. This will help us to make better decisions and evidence how we have reached these decisions.

Analysis Rating: please tick one box (the analysis rating is identified after the analysis has been completed – See EQIA procedure)	**RED**	**AMBER**	**GREEN**	**X**

SECTION 1 – INITIAL SCREENING

Directorate:	ELT
Department/Section:	ELT
Title of EQIA – Name of Service or Policy Conducted on:	Maternity / Paternity Pay
Date Of Assessment:	11/03/2026
Assessment carried out by:	Kristine Ward ACFO

Is this Policy/Service/Project: Existing New/Proposed Changing **X** Other

Applicable to: Our staff **X** Our Communities Other

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES	
What are the aims of the service / policy?	The proposal seeks to enhancing Cleveland Fire Brigade's maternity and paternity pay provisions by: • Increasing Occupational Maternity Pay to 12 months full pay (recommended). • Increasing Paternity Pay to 2 weeks full pay. .
Who is responsible for the service / policy? Who is responsible for the assessment?	Kristine Ward
Who implements the policy? Are external contractors involved?	As above
Are there any related policies or processes that will need to be changed associated to this one?	Yes, Maternity policy
To what extent does the service / policy have an impact on people? Who is affected by it and how?	The policy will increase maternity and paternity pay benefits for all employees Overall, the proposal is assessed as having a positive impact on equality, particularly for women, pregnant employees, new mothers, and primary carers. No adverse or discriminatory impacts have been identified. The enhancements support Cleveland Fire Brigade's organisational values, EDI commitments, and recruitment and retention aims.
What analysis has been done to identify if the service / policy is meeting the needs of all of these groups of people?	The proposal has been to both the womens network and the Culture and Wellbeing Board who were all in favour. .

ESTABLISHING RELEVANCE

In this section you should review the data and evidence above and consider the actual and potential impact of the policy, service, activity or practice on employees, residents, groups and other service users. Findings should be noted in the table below. You should also consider whether the decision will, or is likely to, influence CFB's ability to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act and other relevant legislation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups of people
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Using the information available, identity the impact of this service / policy in relation to people across the Protected Characteristics:

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	Negative Impact	Neutral Impact	Positive Impact	Explain your answer
Age		X		Employees across a broad age range take maternity and paternity leave; the proposal does not disproportionately disadvantage any age group. By improving parental benefits, the proposal may positively support younger employees entering the service who are more likely to be starting families.
Disability		X		Disabled employees who become parents may benefit from improved financial support during extended recovery or additional medical needs post-birth. No negative impacts identified.

Gender Reassignment		X		The proposal supports all parental pathways and therefore applies equally to transgender employees.
Pregnancy and Maternity			X	Enhanced financial support reduces pressure to return to work prematurely, which is especially important in operational firefighting given the physical demands and exposure risks. Supports employees who breastfeed, allowing them to avoid early operational return that may increase health risks. Provides greater stability, wellbeing and security for pregnant employees and new parents.
Race		X		No direct negative impact identified. Enhanced parental support may improve overall attraction and retention of employees from underrepresented ethnic groups by improving conditions for families.
Religion and Belief		X		No detrimental effects identified. Could indirectly support employees whose beliefs emphasise family or extended caregiving.
Biological Sex			X	Women are disproportionately impacted by maternity and pregnancy-related issues; therefore, enhanced maternity pay directly supports gender equality. Improved paternity pay contributes to greater gender balance in early caregiving, helping challenge stereotypes and supporting shared parental responsibility. Enhancements may improve recruitment and retention of women in firefighting roles, where underrepresentation remains significant.

Sexual Orientation		X		Proposal applies equally to all employees regardless of sexual orientation. May support same-sex parents through enhanced provisions where applicable.
Marriage and civil Partnerships		X		Entitlements apply regardless of marital status. No disproportionate impacts identified.
Is a full Equality Impact Assessment required? Yes or No **If not why?**	*If you have identified a negative potential impact for group, then you must complete a full Equality Impact Assessment. If you have identified a neutral or positive impact on any groups then no further action is required.* Overall, the proposal is assessed as having a **positive** impact on equality, particularly for women, pregnant employees, new mothers, and primary carers. No adverse or discriminatory impacts have been identified. The enhancements support Cleveland Fire Brigade's organisational values, EDI commitments, and recruitment and retention aims. In addition to the impact on the Protected Characteristic detailed above, the policy is also likely to lead to a positive impact on primary carers/single parents, on call/part time employees and new recruits/prospective applicants.			
HR comments regarding EqlA				

MONITORING AND REVIEW	
What procedures are in place to monitor the impacts outlined in the analysis?	This will be picked up when reviewing the maternity/paternity leave policy and then at policy reviews.
How often will this take place?	In line with policy review framework
Date of next planned review?	

Proceed to Full EQIA Yes	No **X**

SIGNATURE OF PERSON COMPLETING THIS SCREENING	
Name:	Kristine Ward
Job Title:	ACFO
Date:	11/03/2026

SIGNATURE OF LINE MANAGER – MINIMUM HEAD OF DEPARTMENT	
Name:	
Job Title:	
Date:	

SIGNATURE OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY OFFICER – HR DEPARTMENT	
Name:	
Date published to internet	
Date published to fish	