Number 34 of 1994

MATERNITY PROTECTION ACT 1994
REVISED
Updated to 3 July 2023

This Revised Act is an administrative consolidation of the Maternity Protection Act 1994. It is prepared by the Law Reform Commission in accordance with its function under the Law Reform Commission Act 1975 (3/1975) to keep the law under review and to undertake revision and consolidation of statute law.

All Acts up to and including the Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2023 (18/2023), enacted 5 July 2023, and all statutory instruments up to and including the Maternity Protection (Protection of Mothers who are Breastfeeding) (Amendment) Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 342 of 2023), made 29 June 2023, were considered in the preparation of this Revised Act.

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Introduction
This Revised Act presents the text of the Act as it has been amended since enactment, and preserves the format in which it was passed.

Related legislation
Maternity Protection Acts 1994 to 2022: this Act is one of a group of Acts included in this collective citation to be construed together as one (Local Government (Maternity Protection and Other Measures for Members of Local Authorities) Act 2022, s. 3(2)). The Acts in the group are:

• Maternity Protection Act 1994 (34/1994)
• Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004 (28/2004)
• Local Government (Maternity Protection and Other Measures for Members of Local Authorities) Act 2022 (52/2022), s. 1

Annotations
This Revised Act is not annotated and only shows textual amendments. An annotated version of this revision is also available which shows textual and non-textual amendments and their sources. It also shows editorial notes including statutory instruments made pursuant to the Act and previous affecting provisions.

Material not updated in this revision
Where other legislation is amended by this Act, those amendments may have been superseded by other amendments in other legislation, or the amended legislation may have been repealed or revoked. This information is not represented in this revision but will be reflected in a revision of the amended legislation if one is available. A list of legislative changes to any Act, and to statutory instruments from 1972, may be found linked from the page of the Act or statutory instrument at www.irishstatutebook.ie.
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Short title and commencement.  
1.—(1) This Act may be cited as the Maternity Protection Act, 1994.

(2) This Act shall come into operation on such day as may be fixed by order made by the Minister, and different days may be so fixed for different provisions and for different purposes.

Interpretation.  
2.—(1) In this Act—

“the 1977 Act” means the Unfair Dismissals Act, 1977;

“the 1981 Act” means the Maternity Protection of Employees Act, 1981;

“the 1989 Act” means the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989;


F1[“Act of 2001” means the Local Government Act 2001;]

F2[“Act of 2015” means the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015;]
“additional maternity leave” has the meaning assigned by section 14;

“associated employer” has the meaning assigned by section 27 (3);

“the Authority” means the National Authority for Occupational Safety and Health;

“confinement” and “the date of confinement” have the meanings respectively assigned to them by section 41 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 1993;

“contract of employment” means, subject to subsection (2)—

(a) a contract of service or apprenticeship, or

(b) any other contract whereby an individual agrees with a person who is carrying on the business of an employment agency, within the meaning of the Employment Agency Act, 1971, and is acting in the course of that business, to do or perform personally any work or service for another person (whether or not that other person is a party to the contract),

whether the contract is express or implied and if express, whether it is oral or in writing;

“employee”, subject to subsection (2), means a person who has entered into or works under (or, where the employment has ceased, entered into or worked under) a contract of employment;

“employee who has recently given birth” means at any time an employee whose date of confinement was not more than 14 weeks earlier and who has informed her employer of her condition;

“employee who is breastfeeding” means at any time an employee whose date of confinement was not more than one hundred and four weeks earlier, who is breastfeeding and who has informed her employer of her condition;

“employer”, subject to subsection (2), means, in relation to an employee, the person with whom the employee has entered into or for whom the employee works under (or, where the employment has ceased, entered into or worked under) a contract of employment;

“expectant father” shall be construed in accordance with subsection (1A) (inserted by section 176 of the Act of 2015);

“job” has the meaning assigned by section 26 (3);

“local authority” has the meaning assigned to it by the Act of 2001;

“maternity leave” has the meaning assigned by section 8;

“the Minister” means the Minister for Equality and Law Reform;

“other parent” means a person (other than the mother) who is, under section 5 of the Act of 2015, a parent of a child;

“parent’s leave” has the same meaning as it has in the Parent’s Leave and Benefit Act 2019;

“paternity leave” and “transferred paternity leave” have the same meanings as they have in the Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016;

“pregnant employee” means an employee who is pregnant and who has informed her employer of her condition;

“premature birth period” has the meaning assigned to it by the Social Welfare Consolidation Act 2005;

“successor” has the meaning assigned by section 26 (1);
“the Tribunal” means the Employment Appeals Tribunal.

F2[(1A) In this Act, a reference to an expectant father includes a person who has given his or her consent in accordance with section 11 of the Act of 2015 to a DAHR procedure (within the meaning of section 4 of that Act) where that procedure results in a pregnancy.]

(2) For the purposes of this Act—

(a) a person holding office under, or in the service of, the State (including a member of the Garda Síochána or the Defence Forces) or otherwise as a civil servant, within the meaning of the Civil Service Regulation Act, 1956, shall be deemed to be an employee employed by the State or Government, as the case may be, under a contract of service;

(b) an officer or servant of a local authority for the purposes of the Local Government Act, 1941, a harbour authority, a health board or F7[a member of staff of an education and training board] shall be deemed to be an employee employed by the authority F7[or board], as the case may be, under a contract of F8[service];

(c) in relation to an employee whose contract of employment falls (or, where the employment has ceased, fell) within paragraph (b) of the definition of “contract of employment” in subsection (1), the person who is liable to pay the employee’s wages shall be deemed to be F8[the employer; and]

F1[(d) a member of a local authority shall be deemed to be an employee of the local authority employed under a contract of service for a fixed term.]

(3) Subject to subsections (1) and (2), expressions used in this Act have the same meaning as in the 1992 Directive.

(4) In this Act a reference to a Part or section is to a Part or section of this Act, unless it is indicated that reference to some other enactment is intended.

(5) In this Act a reference to a subsection or paragraph is to the subsection or paragraph of the provision in which the reference occurs, unless it is indicated that reference to some other provision is intended.

(6) In this Act a reference to an enactment includes a reference to that enactment as amended by any other enactment, including this Act.

Orders and regulations.

3.—(1) The Minister may, in relation to any provision of this Act relating to notification (or confirmation of notification), by order vary any such provision.

(2) An order under this Act may contain such consequential, supplementary and ancillary provisions, including any provisions modifying any provision of this Act, as the Minister considers necessary or expedient.

(3) Any power under this Act to make an order includes power to amend or revoke an order made in the exercise of that power.

(4) Where an order is proposed to be made under this Act, other than an order under section 1, a draft of the order shall be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas, and the order shall not be made until a resolution approving the draft has been passed by each such House.

(5) Every regulation made under this Act shall be laid before each House of the Oireachtas as soon as practicable after it is made and, if a resolution annulling the regulation is passed by either such House within the next twenty-one days on which the House has sat after the regulation is laid before it, the regulation shall be annulled accordingly, but without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under the regulation.
4.—(1) A provision in any agreement shall be void in so far as it purports to exclude or limit the application of any provision of this Act or is inconsistent with any provision of this Act.

(2) A provision in any agreement which is or becomes less favourable in relation to an employee than a similar or corresponding entitlement conferred on the employee by this Act shall be deemed to be so modified as to be not less favourable.

(3) Nothing in this Act shall be construed as prohibiting any agreement from containing any provision more favourable to an employee than any provision in Parts II to VI.

(4) References in this section to an agreement are to any agreement, whether a contract of employment or not, and whether made before or after the commencement of this Act.

5.—Any expenses incurred by the Minister or the Minister for Enterprise and Employment in the administration of this Act shall, to such extent as may be sanctioned by the Minister for Finance, be paid out of moneys provided by the Oireachtas.

6.—(1) The Maternity Protection of Employees Acts, 1981 and 1991 (which are replaced by the provisions of this Act) are hereby repealed.

(2) The repeal by this Act of the Maternity Protection of Employees Acts, 1981 and 1991 does not affect the construction of any reference in any other Act which defines “employee” or “employer” or any other expression by reference to those Acts (or the 1981 Act alone).

(3) In section 37 (4) (a) of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 1993 for “the Maternity Protection of Employees Act, 1981” there shall be substituted “the Maternity Protection Act, 1994”.

(4) In so far as any order or regulation made, notification given or other thing done under an enactment repealed by this Act could have been made, given or done under a corresponding provision of this Act, it shall have effect as if so made, given or done.

(5) Where a period of time specified in any enactment repealed by this Act is current at the commencement of this Act, this Act shall have effect as if the corresponding provision thereof had been in force when that period began to run.

PART II

MATERNITY LEAVE

7.—(1) In this Part “the minimum period of maternity leave” has the meaning assigned by section 8.

(2) F9[...]

(3) References in this Part to a pregnant employee include, as respects any time before the expiry of her maternity leave, an employee who was pregnant immediately before that leave began.

8.—(1) Subject to this Part, a pregnant employee shall be entitled to leave, to be known (and referred to in this Act) as “maternity leave”, from her employment for a period (in this Part referred to as “the minimum period of maternity leave” of not less than—

(a) F11[26 consecutive weeks], or
(b) F12[26 weeks] part of which is postponed in accordance with section 14B, as may be appropriate.

F13[(1A) Subject to this Part, a pregnant employee referred to in subsection (1) shall be entitled to a further period of maternity leave that is in addition to the minimum period of maternity leave referred to in paragraphs (a) or (b) of subsection (1), if, on or after 1 October 2017 the date of confinement occurs more than 2 weeks before the expected week of confinement.]

(1B) The duration of the further period of maternity leave referred to in subsection (1A) shall be equal to the duration of the premature birth period.]

(2) The Minister may by order, made with the consent of the Minister for Social and Family Affairs and the consent of the Minister for Finance, amend subsection (1) and section 13(2) so as to extend the period mentioned in each of those subsections.]

F14[Supplemental provisions relating to premature birth period]

8A. The further period of maternity leave referred to in section 8(1A) shall be without prejudice to sections 12, 14, 14A and 14B.]

Notification to employer.

9.—(1) F15[Subject to subsection (3), entitlement] to the minimum period of maternity leave shall be subject to a pregnant employee—

(a) having, as soon as reasonably practicable but not later than four weeks before the commencement of maternity leave, notified in writing her employer (or caused her employer to be so notified) of her intention to take maternity leave; and

(b) having, at the time of the notification, given to her employer or produced for her employer’s inspection a medical or other appropriate certificate confirming the pregnancy and specifying the expected week of confinement.

(2) A notification under this section may be revoked by a further notification in writing by the employee concerned to her employer.

F15[(3) A notification under this section required to be effected by a member of a local authority to the local authority shall be effected by giving the notification to the meetings administrator, referred to in section 46 of the Act of 2001, of the local authority.]

Allocation of minimum period of maternity leave.

10.—(1) Subject to subsection (2) and sections 11 to 13, the minimum period of maternity leave shall commence on such day as the employee selects, being F16[not later than two weeks before the end of the expected week of confinement], and shall end on such day as she selects, being not earlier than four weeks after the end of the expected week of confinement.

(2) Where an employee is employed under a contract for a fixed term and that term expires before the day which, apart from this subsection, would be the last day of her maternity leave, then—

(a) notwithstanding any other provision in this Part, the last day of her maternity leave shall be the day on which the term expires; and

(b) nothing in this Part shall affect the termination of the employee’s contract of employment on that day.
11.—(1) Where it is certified by a registered medical practitioner or otherwise to the satisfaction of the Minister and the Minister for Social Welfare that, for an employee specified in the certificate, the minimum period of maternity leave should for a medical reason so specified commence on a date so specified, and the certificate is produced for inspection by the employer concerned within such period as may be prescribed by regulations made by the Minister under this section, the minimum period of maternity leave for that employee shall commence on the date so specified.

(2) Where a certificate under this section is issued and the requirement in subsection (1) relating to the production of the certificate for the employer’s inspection is complied with, the employee specified in the certificate—

(a) shall be taken to have informed her employer of her pregnancy (if she had not previously done so); and

(b) shall be deemed to have complied also with section 9 (1) (a).

12.—(1) Where the date of confinement of a pregnant employee occurs in a week after the expected week of confinement, the minimum period of maternity leave shall be extended by such number of consecutive weeks (subject to a maximum of four consecutive weeks) after the week in which the date of confinement occurs as ensures compliance with section 10.

(2) Where the minimum period of maternity leave is proposed to be extended under this section, the employee concerned shall—

(a) as soon as practicable after the proposal for such extension, notify in writing her employer (or cause her employer to be so notified) of the proposed extension; and

(b) as soon as practicable after the date of confinement, confirm in writing to her employer the notification under paragraph (a) and specify the duration of the extension.

13.—(1) Where, in relation to a pregnant employee, the date of confinement occurs in a week that is four weeks or more before the expected week of confinement, the employee shall, where the circumstances so require, be deemed to have complied with section 9 (1) (a) if the notification required by that section is given in the period of 14 days commencing on the date of confinement.

(2) Notwithstanding section 10(1), but subject to regulations under section 11, the minimum period of maternity leave for an employee referred to in subsection (1) shall be a period of not less than—

(a) F1826 consecutive weeks F19and a further period of maternity leave in respect of a date of confinement that occurred on or after 1 October 2017, the duration of which is equal to the duration of the premature birth period, or

(b) F1826 weeks F19and a further period of maternity leave in respect of a date of confinement that occurred on or after 1 October 2017, the duration of which is equal to the duration of the premature birth period] part of which is postponed in accordance with section 14B, as may be appropriate, commencing on whichever of the following is the earlier—

(i) the first day of maternity leave taken in accordance with section 10, or

(ii) the date of confinement.]
13A. Where, on or after 1 October 2017, the date of confinement of a pregnant employee occurs more than 2 weeks before the expected week of confinement but less than 4 weeks before that expected week, notwithstanding section 10(1), the minimum period of maternity leave for a pregnant employee other than a pregnant employee referred to in section 13(1) or 13(2), shall be a period of not less than—

(a) 26 consecutive weeks and a further period of maternity leave the duration of which is equal to the duration of the premature birth period, or

(b) 26 weeks and a further period of maternity leave the duration of which is equal to the duration of the premature birth period part of which is postponed in accordance with section 14B,

and which commences on the date of confinement.

Entitlement to additional maternity leave.

14.—F21[(1) An employee who has taken maternity leave shall, if she so wishes, be entitled in accordance with this section to further leave from her employment, to be known (and referred to in this Act) as “additional maternity leave”, for a maximum period of—

(a) F22[16 consecutive weeks] commencing immediately after the end of her maternity leave F23[and, where applicable, any period of transferred paternity leave taken by her], or

(b) F22[16 weeks], all or part of which is postponed in accordance with section 14B, commencing either in accordance with that section or immediately after the end of her maternity leave F23[and, where applicable, any period of transferred paternity leave taken by her],

as may be appropriate.]

(2) An employee shall be entitled to additional maternity leave, whether or not the minimum period of maternity leave has been extended under section 12.

(3) F21[Subject to section 14B, entitlement to additional maternity leave] shall be subject to an employee having notified in writing her employer (or caused her employer to be so notified) in accordance with subsection (4) of her intention to take such leave.

F24[(4) Notification under subsection (3) shall be given either at the same time as the relevant notification under section 9 or not later than four weeks before—

(a) the date which would have been the employee’s expected date of return to work under Part IV if she had not taken the additional maternity leave, or

(b) where the employee takes transferred paternity leave, the date on which the additional maternity leave is, under subsection (1), to commence.]

(5) A notification under this section may be revoked by a further notification in writing given by or on behalf of the employee concerned to her employer not later than four weeks before the date which would have been her expected date of return to work under Part IV if she had not taken the additional maternity leave.

F21[(6) The Minister may by order amend subsection (1) so as to extend the period mentioned in that subsection.]

F25[(7) Where pursuant to section 8, a pregnant employee is entitled to a further period of leave referred to in subsection (1A) of that section, nothing in section 8, 13 or 13A shall operate to prevent the entitlement of the pregnant employee to additional maternity leave under this section.]
14A.—(1) If, at any time—

(a) during the last 4 weeks of maternity leave whether or not part of such leave is postponed under section 14B and where, in accordance with section 14(4), an employee has, or is deemed under section 14B(3) to have, notified her employer, or caused her employer to be notified, of her intention to take additional maternity leave, or

(b) during the additional maternity leave whether or not such leave or part of it is postponed under section 14B,

an employee who is sick wishes to terminate the additional maternity leave, she may request in writing (or cause a written request to be submitted to) her employer to terminate the additional maternity leave.

(2) An employer who receives a request under subsection (1) may agree to terminate the additional maternity leave of the employee concerned and, if the employer does so, the additional maternity leave shall terminate on a date agreed by the employee and the employer that is not earlier than the date of the commencement of the employee’s sickness and not later than the date on which the additional maternity leave would have ended in accordance with the notification given by the employee to the employer under section 14(4) or 14B(8), as the case may be.

(3) An employer who receives a request under subsection (1) shall notify the employee concerned in writing of the employer’s decision in relation to the request as soon as reasonably practicable following the receipt of it.

(4) Where the additional maternity leave of an employee is terminated under this section—

(a) the absence from work of the employee due to sickness following such termination shall be treated in the same manner as any absence from work of the employee due to sickness, and

(b) the employee shall not be entitled to the additional maternity leave or the part of it not taken by her at the date of such termination.

(5) A reference in subsection (1) to the last 4 weeks of maternity leave shall, in the case of an employee who takes transferred paternity leave, be construed as a reference to the last 2 weeks of maternity leave and the period of that transferred paternity leave.

14B.—(1) Subject to subsection (2), an employee who is on maternity leave or is entitled to, or is on, additional maternity leave may, if the child in connection with whose birth she is on, or is entitled to, that leave (in this section referred to as “the child”) is hospitalised, request in writing (or cause a written request to be submitted to) her employer to postpone—

(a) part of the maternity leave,

(b) part of the maternity leave and the additional maternity leave, or

(c) the additional maternity leave or part of it.

as may be appropriate, in accordance with this section.

(2) An employee may make a request under paragraph (a) or (b) of subsection (1) to postpone part of her maternity leave with effect from a date she selects only if the period of maternity leave taken by her on that date is not less than 14 weeks and not less than 4 of those weeks are after the end of the week of confinement.

(3) Notwithstanding the fact that an employee who is on maternity leave has not in accordance with section 14(4) notified her employer in writing (or caused her employer to be so notified) of her intention to take additional maternity leave, she
shall be deemed, for the purposes of making a request under paragraph (b) or (c) of subsection (1), to have complied with section 14(4).

(4) An employer who receives a request under subsection (1) may agree to postpone the leave concerned and, if the employer does so—

(a) the employee concerned shall return to work on a date agreed by her and the employer that is not later than the date on which the leave concerned is due to end in accordance with the notification given, or deemed under subsection (3) to have been given, by the employee to the employer under section 9 or 14, as the case may be,

(b) the leave concerned shall be postponed with effect from the date agreed under paragraph (a), and

(c) the employee concerned shall be entitled to—

(i) the part of the maternity leave,

(ii) the part of the maternity leave and the additional maternity leave, or

(iii) the additional maternity leave or the part of it,

as the case may be, not taken by her by reason of the postponement (in this section referred to as "resumed leave") in accordance with regulations made under this section by the Minister to be taken in one continuous period commencing not later than 7 days after the discharge of the child from hospital.

(5) An employer who receives a request under subsection (1) shall notify the employee concerned in writing of the employer’s decision in relation to the request as soon as reasonably practicable following the receipt of it.

(6) Where, following the postponement of leave under this section, an employee returns to work in accordance with subsection (4)(a) and during the period of the postponement she is absent from work due to sickness, the employee shall be deemed to commence resumed leave on the first day of such absence unless she notifies her employer in writing (or causes her employer to be so notified) as soon as reasonably practicable that she does not wish to commence such leave and, following such notification—

(a) the absence from work of the employee due to sickness shall be treated in the same manner as any absence from work of the employee due to sickness, and

(b) the employee shall not be entitled to the resumed leave.

(7) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (4), regulations under this section may make provision in relation to either or both of the following matters:

(a) the maximum period of postponement of leave under this section, and

(b) the evidence to be furnished by an employee to her employer of the hospitalisation, and the discharge from hospital, of the child.

(8) Entitlement to resumed leave shall, subject to subsection (10), be subject to an employee having notified her employer in writing (or caused her employer to be so notified) as soon as reasonably practicable but not later than the day on which the leave begins of her intention to commence such leave.

(9) A notification under subsection (8) may be revoked by a further notification in writing given by or on behalf of the employee concerned to her employer within the period specified in that subsection for the giving of the notification concerned.
(10) An employer may, at the discretion of the employer, waive the right to receive a notification in accordance with subsection (8).

(11) Where an employee’s leave is postponed under this section—

(a) subject to paragraphs (b) and (c), the employee shall comply with subsection (1A), in lieu of subsection (1), of section 28,

(b) the employee shall not, in relation to returning to work under subsection (4)(a), be required to comply with section 28, and

(c) the employee shall, if deemed under subsection (6) to be on resumed leave, comply with subsection (1B), in lieu of subsection (1) or (1A), of section 28.

15.——(1) For the purpose of receiving ante-natal or post-natal care or both, an employee shall be entitled to time off from her work, without loss of pay, in accordance with regulations made under this section by the Minister.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), regulations under this section may make provision in relation to all or any of the following matters—

(a) the amount of time off to which an employee shall be entitled under this section;

(b) the terms or conditions relating to such time off;

(c) the notice to be given in advance by an employee so entitled to her employer (including any circumstances in which such notice need not be given);

(d) the evidence to be furnished by an employee so entitled to her employer of any appropriate medical or related appointment.

15A.——(1) Subject to subsection (3), a pregnant employee shall be entitled to time off from her work, without loss of pay, in accordance with regulations made under this section by the Minister, for the purpose of attending one set of ante-natal classes (other than the last 3 classes in such a set) and those classes may be attended by her during one or more pregnancies.

(2) Subject to subsection (3), an expectant father of a child (if he is employed under a contract of employment) shall be entitled once only to time off from his work, without loss of pay, in accordance with regulations made under this section by the Minister, for the purpose of attending the last 2 ante-natal classes in a set of such classes attended by the expectant mother of their child before the birth of the child.

(3) Subsection (1) or (2) shall not apply—

(a) to a member of the Defence Forces who is—

(i) on active service within the meaning of section 5 of the Defence Act 1954 or deemed to be on active service within the meaning of section 4(1) of the Defence (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1960,

(ii) engaged in operational duties at sea,

(iii) engaged in operations in aid of the civil power,

(iv) engaged in training that is directly associated with any of the activities referred to in subparagraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) of this paragraph, or

(v) engaged in any other duty outside the State,

(b) if the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces in exceptional circumstances so directs, to a member of the Defence Forces who is required to perform a
duty which is, in the opinion of the Chief of Staff of the Defence Forces, of a special or urgent nature for so long as the member is performing the duty,

(c) to a member of the Garda Síochána who is on the direction, or with the consent, of the Commissioner of the Garda Síochána serving outside the State performing duties of a police character or advising others on, or monitoring them in, the performance of such duties or any related duties for so long as the member is so serving, and

(d) if the Commissioner of the Garda Síochána in exceptional circumstances so directs, to a member of the Garda Síochána who is required to perform a duty which is, in the opinion of the Commissioner of the Garda Síochána, of a special or urgent nature for so long as the member is performing the duty.

(4) Without prejudice to the generality of subsections (1) and (2), regulations under this section may make provision in relation to all or any of the following matters:

(a) the amount of time off to be allowed for attendance at ante-natal classes;

(b) the terms or conditions relating to such time off;

(c) the notice to be given in advance by a pregnant employee or an expectant father entitled to time off under this section to her or his employer;

(d) the evidence to be furnished by a pregnant employee or an expectant father so entitled to her or his employer of ante-natal classes that she or he is to attend.

15B.—(1) An employee who is breastfeeding shall be entitled, without loss of pay, at the option of her employer to either—

(a) time off from her work for the purpose of breastfeeding in the workplace in accordance with regulations made under this section by the Minister where facilities for breastfeeding are provided in the workplace by her employer, or

(b) a reduction of her working hours in accordance with regulations made under this section by the Minister for the purpose of breastfeeding otherwise than in the workplace.

(2) An employer shall not be required to provide facilities for breastfeeding in the workplace if the provision of such facilities would give rise to a cost, other than a nominal cost, to the employer.

(3) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1), regulations under this section may make provision in relation to all or any of the following matters:

(a) the amount of time off and the number and frequency of breastfeeding breaks to which an employee is entitled under paragraph (a) of that subsection;

(b) the reduction of working hours to which an employee is entitled under paragraph (b) of that subsection;

(c) the terms or conditions relating to time off under paragraph (a), or to a reduction of working hours under paragraph (b), of that subsection;

(d) the notice to be given in advance by an employee to her employer in relation to the proposed exercise by her of her entitlement under this section:

(e) the evidence to be furnished by such an employee to her employer in relation to the date of confinement.
(4) If an employee who has exercised her entitlement under subsection (1) ceases to breastfeed, she shall, at the earliest practical time, notify her employer in writing that she has so ceased.

(5) In this section “breastfeeding” means breastfeeding a child or expressing breast milk and feeding it to a child immediately or storing it for the purpose of feeding it to the child at a later time.

16.—F32[(1) If a F33[woman or other person] who has been delivered of a living child (in this section referred to as “the mother”) dies at any time before the expiry of the F34[fortieth week] following the week of her confinement, the F31[father or other parent, as the case may be,] of the child (if he is employed under a contract of employment) shall be entitled in accordance with this section to leave from his employment for a period ending as follows—

(a) if the mother dies before the expiry of the F34[twenty-fourth week] following the week of her confinement, the period ends, subject to section 16B, at the end of that F34[twenty-fourth week], and

(b) if the mother dies at any time after the expiry of that F34[twenty-fourth week], the period ends, subject to sections 16A and 16B, at the end of the F34[fortieth week] following the week of her confinement.]

F35[(1A) Where—

(a) on or after 1 October 2017, the date of confinement of a mother occurred more than 2 weeks before the expected week of confinement, and

(b) the mother dies at any time on or before the expiry of the combined period, the father of the child (if he is employed under a contract of employment) shall be entitled in accordance with this section, and subject to F36[subsections (10) and (10A)], to leave from his employment for a period, if the mother dies on or before the expiry of the combined period, ending at the end of the unexpired portion of that combined period.]

(2) Entitlement to leave under subsection (1) shall be subject to the F31[father or other parent, as the case may be,]—

(a) notifying his employer in writing (or causing his employer to be so notified) not later than the day on which his leave begins of the death of the mother, of his intention to take leave under subsection (1) F37[or (1A)] and of the length of the leave to which he believes he is so entitled; and

(b) if requested by his employer, causing his employer to be supplied, as soon as is reasonably practicable, with a copy of the death certificate made in respect of the mother and of the birth certificate in respect of the child.

F32[(3) F38[Subject to F36[subsections (10) and (10A)] and section 16B], the period of leave under subsection (1) F37[or (1A)] shall commence within 7 days of the mother’s death; and in this section and sections 16A and 16B—

(a) a period of leave which ends as mentioned in paragraph (a) of subsection (1) is referred to as “subsection (1)(a) leave”, and

F37[(aa) a period of leave which ends as mentioned in subsection (1A) is referred to as “subsection (1A) leave”,]

(b) a period of leave which ends as mentioned in paragraph (b) of that subsection is referred to as “subsection (1)(b) leave”.

(4) A F31[father or other parent, as the case may be,] who has taken subsection (1)(a) leave shall, if he so wishes, be entitled to further leave from his employment for a maximum period of—
(a) F34[16 consecutive weeks] commencing immediately after the end of his subsection (1)(a) leave F39[or, where applicable, paternity leave under section 13(1) of the Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016], or

(b) F34[16 weeks], all or part of which is postponed in accordance with section 16B, commencing either in accordance with that section or immediately after the end of his subsection (1)(a) leave F39[or, where applicable, paternity leave under section 13(1) of the Paternity Leave and Benefit Act 2016], as may be appropriate.

(5) F32[Subject to section 16B, entitlement to further leave under subsection (4)] shall be subject to the F31[father or other parent, as the case may be,] having notified in writing his employer (or caused his employer to be so notified) in accordance with subsection (6) of his intention to take such leave.

(6) Notification under subsection (5) shall be given either at the same time as the notification under subsection (2)(a) or (if it is later) not later than four weeks before the date which would have been the F31[the father’s or the other parent’s] expected date of return to work under Part IV if he had not taken the further leave under subsection (4).

(7) A notification under this section may be revoked by a further notification in writing given by or on behalf of the F31[father or other parent, as the case may be,] to his employer—

(a) if it relates to subsection (1)(a) leave or subsection (1)(b) leave, not later than the day on which the leave is due to begin; and

(b) if it relates to leave under subsection (4), not later than the latest date on which, under subsection (6), the notification which is to be revoked could have been given.

(8) The Minister may by order, made with the consent of the Minister for Social Welfare and with the consent of the Minister for Finance, amend subsections (1) and (4) F39[and paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (10)] so as to extend the periods mentioned in F38[those subsections or paragraphs].

(9) Any reference in this section to the week of the mother’s confinement is a reference to the week in which fell the date of her confinement.

F39[(10) Where, on the date on which a person becomes entitled under subsection (1) to leave under that subsection F37[or, as the case may be, under subsection (1A) to leave under that subsection], the person is on paternity leave, this section and sections 16A and 16B shall apply to the person subject to the following modifications and any other necessary modifications:

(a) where the person is entitled to subsection (1)(a) leave, the leave shall commence immediately after the end of the paternity leave and, subject to section 16B, end at the end of the twenty-fourth week following the end of the paternity leave;]

F37[(aa) where the person is entitled to subsection (1A) leave, the leave shall commence immediately after the end of the paternity leave and, subject to section 16B, end at the end of the combined period following the end of the paternity leave;]

(b) where the person is entitled to subsection (1)(b) leave, the leave shall commence immediately after the end of the paternity leave and, subject to sections 16A and 16B, end at the end of the fortieth week following the end of the paternity leave;

(c) a reference in this section and sections 16A and 16B to—
(i) subsection (1)(a) leave shall be deemed to include a reference to a period of leave \( \text{paragraph (a) applies.} \)

(ii) subsection (1)(b) leave shall be deemed to include a reference to a period of leave to which \( \text{paragraph (b) applies.} \)

Where, on the date on which a person becomes entitled under subsection (1) to leave under that subsection or, as the case may be, under subsection (1A) to leave under that subsection, the person is on parent's leave, this section and sections 16A and 16B shall apply to the person subject to the following modifications and any other necessary modifications:

(a) where the person is entitled to subsection (1)(a) leave, the leave shall commence immediately after the end of the parent’s leave and, subject to section 16B, end at the end of the twenty-fourth week following the end of the parent’s leave;

(b) where the person is entitled to subsection (1A) leave, the leave shall commence immediately after the end of the parent’s leave and, subject to section 16B, end at the end of the twenty-fourth week following the end of the parent’s leave;

(c) where the person is entitled to subsection (1)(b) leave, the leave shall commence immediately after the end of the parent’s leave and, subject to sections 16A and 16B, end at the end of the fortieth week following the end of the parent’s leave;

(d) a reference in this section and sections 16A and 16B to—

(i) subsection (1)(a) leave shall be deemed to include a reference to a period of leave to which \( \text{paragraph (a) applies.} \)

(ii) subsection (1A) leave shall be deemed to include a reference to a period of leave to which \( \text{paragraph (b) applies.} \)

(iii) subsection (1)(b) leave shall be deemed to include a reference to a period of leave to which \( \text{paragraph (c) applies.} \)

In this section "combined period" means a period comprising—

(a) 42 weeks following the week of confinement, and

(b) the duration of the premature birth period.

16A.—(1) If, at any time—

(a) during the last 4 weeks of subsection (1)(a) leave, whether or not such leave or part of it is postponed under section 16B and where, in accordance with section 16(6), a father or other parent has, or is deemed under section 16B(2) to have, notified his employer, or caused his employer to be notified, of his intention to take further leave under section 16(4), or

(b) during subsection (1)(b) leave or a period of further leave under section 16(4), whether or not such leave or a part of it is postponed under section 16B, a father or other parent who is sick wishes to terminate his subsection (1)(b) leave or a period of further leave under section 16(4), as the case may be, he may request in writing (or cause a written request to be submitted to) his employer to terminate that leave.
(2) An employer who receives a request under **subsection (1)** may agree to terminate the leave concerned of the F43[father or other parent] concerned and, if the employer does so, the leave concerned shall terminate on a date agreed by the F43[father or other parent] and the employer that is not earlier than the date of the commencement of F43[the father’s sickness or the other parent’s sickness] and not later than the date on which the leave concerned would have ended in accordance with the notification given by the F43[father or other parent] to the employer under **subsection (2)(a) or (6)** of **section 16** or **section 16B(7)**, as the case may be.

(3) An employer who receives a request under **subsection (1)** shall notify the F43[father or other parent] concerned in writing of the employer’s decision in relation to the request as soon as reasonably practicable following the receipt of it.

(4) Where the leave of a F43[father or other parent] is terminated under this section—

(a) the absence from work of the F43[father or other parent] due to sickness following such termination shall be treated in the same manner as any absence from work of the F43[father or other parent] due to sickness, and

(b) the F43[father or other parent] shall not be entitled to the **subsection (1)(b)** leave or further leave under **section 16(4)**, as the case may be, or the part of such leave not taken by him at the date of such termination.]

**F44** [Postponement of leave under section 16 in event of hospitalisation of child.]

**16B.**—(1) A F45[father or other parent] who is entitled to, or is on, leave under **section 16** may, if the child in connection with whose birth he is entitled to, or is on, that leave (in this section referred to as “the child”) is hospitalised, request in writing (or cause a written request to be submitted to) his employer to postpone—

(a) his **subsection (1)(a)** leave or part of such leave F46[or his **subsection (1A)** leave or part of such leave],

(b) his **subsection (1)(a)** leave or part of such leave and a period of further leave under **section 16(4)**,

F46[(bb) his **subsection (1A)** leave or part of such leave,]

(c) his **subsection (1)(b)** leave or a period of further leave under **section 16(4)**, as the case may be, or part of such leave, as may be appropriate, in accordance with this section.

(2) Notwithstanding the fact that a F45[father or other parent] who is on **subsection (1)(a)** leave has not in accordance with **section 16(6)** notified his employer in writing (or caused his employer to be so notified) of his intention to take further leave under **section 16(4)**, he shall be deemed, for the purposes of making a request under paragraph (b) or (c) of **subsection (1)**, to have complied with **section 16(6)**.

(3) An employer who receives a request under **subsection (1)** may agree to postpone the leave concerned and, if the employer does so—

(a) the F45[father or other parent] concerned shall continue to work, or return to work on a date agreed by him and the employer that is not later than the date on which the leave concerned is due to end in accordance with the notification given, or deemed under **subsection (2)** to have been given, by the F45[father or other parent] to the employer under **section 16**, as may be appropriate,

(b) the leave concerned shall be postponed or postponed with effect from the date agreed under paragraph (a), as may be appropriate, and

(c) the F45[father or other parent] concerned shall be entitled to—
(i) the sub-section (1)(a) leave or the part of such leave or, as the case may be, sub-section (1A) leave or the part of such leave;

(ii) the sub-section (1)(a) leave or the part of such leave and the period of further leave under section 16(4).

(iii) the sub-section (1)(b) leave or the period of further leave under section 16(4), as the case may be, or the part of such leave, as the case may be, not taken by him by reason of the postponement (in this section referred to as “resumed leave”) in accordance with regulations made under this section by the Minister to be taken in one continuous period commencing not later than 7 days after the discharge of the child from hospital.

(5) Where, following the postponement of leave under this section, a father or other parent returns to work in accordance with sub-section (3)(a) and during the period of the postponement he is absent from work due to sickness, the father or other parent shall be deemed to commence resumed leave on the first day of such absence unless he notifies his employer in writing (or causes his employer to be so notified) as soon as reasonably practicable that he does not wish to commence such leave and, following such notification—

(a) the absence from work of the father or other parent due to sickness shall be treated in the same manner as any absence from work of the father or other parent due to sickness, and

(b) the father or other parent shall not be entitled to the resumed leave.

(6) Without prejudice to the generality of sub-section (3), regulations under this section may make provision in relation to either or both of the following matters:

(a) the maximum period of postponement of leave under this section, and

(b) the evidence to be furnished by a father or other parent to his employer of the hospitalisation, and the discharge from hospital, of the child.

(7) Entitlement to resumed leave shall, subject to sub-section (9), be subject to a father or other parent having notified his employer in writing (or causing his employer to be so notified) as soon as reasonably practicable but not later than the day on which the leave begins of his intention to commence such leave.

(8) A notification under sub-section (7) may be revoked by a further notification in writing given by or on behalf of the father or other parent concerned to his employer within the period specified in that sub-section for the giving of the notification concerned.

(9) An employer may, at the discretion of the employer, waive the right to receive a notification in accordance with sub-section (7).

(10) Where a the father’s leave or the other parent’s leave is postponed under this section—

(a) subject to paragraphs (b) and (c), the father or other parent shall comply with sub-section (1A), in lieu of sub-section (1), of section 28,

(b) the father or other parent shall not, in relation to returning to work under sub-section (3)(a), be required to comply with section 28, and

(c) the father or other parent shall, if deemed under sub-section (5) to be on resumed leave, comply with sub-section (1B), in lieu of sub-section (1) or (1A), of section 28.]
PART III

LEAVE TO PROTECT HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PREGNANT EMPLOYEES, ETC.

17.—This Part applies to—

(a) pregnant employees;

(b) employees who have recently given birth; and

(c) employees who are breastfeeding.

18.—(1) If, by regulations under the 1989 Act implementing the 1992 Directive, an employer is required to move an employee to whom this Part applies to other work (whether as a result of a risk assessment or because the employee cannot be required to perform night work), but—

(a) it is not technically or objectively feasible for the employer to move the employee as required by the regulations, or

(b) such a move cannot reasonably be required on duly substantiated grounds, or

(c) the other work to which the employer proposes to move the employee is not suitable for her,

the employee shall be granted leave from her employment under this section.

(2) Where an employee is granted leave under this section, she shall be entitled to receive, on request to her employer, a certificate, in such form as may be determined by regulations—

(a) stating that she has been granted leave for whichever of the reasons in paragraphs (a) to (c) of subsection (1) is appropriate in the circumstances and containing such supplementary information as the regulations may require; and

(b) specifying the date on which the leave began and its expected duration.

(3) For the purposes of subsection (1) (c), other work is suitable for an employee if it is—

(a) of a kind which is suitable in relation to the employee concerned, as an employee to whom this Part applies; and

(b) appropriate for the employee to do in all the circumstances.

(4) For the first 21 days of leave granted to an employee by an employer under this section in any relevant period, the employee shall be entitled to receive from the employer remuneration of an amount determined in accordance with regulations.

(5) Regulations under subsection (2) or subsection (4) shall be made by the Minister after consultation with—

(a) the Minister for Finance;

(b) the Minister for Social Welfare; and

(c) the Minister for Enterprise and Employment.

(6) In subsection (4) “relevant period”, in relation to an employee, means the period beginning with her pregnancy and continuing beyond any confinement resulting from that pregnancy until she ceases to be an employee who has recently given birth or, as the case may be, an employee who is breastfeeding.
(7) Regulations under subsection (4) may provide that such day or days as may be determined under the regulations shall be left out of account in calculating the 21 days referred to in that subsection.

19.—(1) Subject to subsection (2) and section 20, leave granted to an employee under section 18 shall end—

(a) in the case of leave granted to a pregnant employee, immediately before her maternity leave begins; and

(b) in any other case, on the date on which she ceases to be an employee to whom this Part applies.

(2) Where an employee to whom leave is granted under section 18 is employed under a contract for a fixed term and that term expires before the day which, apart from this subsection, would be the day on which that leave would end, then—

(a) the last day of the leave so granted to her shall be the day on which the term expires; and

(b) nothing in this Part shall affect the termination of the employee’s contract of employment on that day.

20.—(1) If an employee to whom leave has been granted under section 18 as being an employee who is breastfeeding ceases breastfeeding, she shall, at the earliest practical time, notify her employer in writing that she has so ceased.

(2) Without prejudice to subsection (1), if, during a period of leave granted to an employee under section 18, the employee becomes aware that her condition is no longer such that she is vulnerable to the risk by virtue of which she was granted the leave, she shall at the earliest practical time notify her employer in writing that she is no longer at risk.

(3) Where an employer receives notification from an employee under subsection (1) or subsection (2), and has no reason to believe that, if the employee returned to work, she would be vulnerable to risk as an employee to whom this Part applies—

(a) the employer shall take all reasonable measures to enable the employee to return to work in the job which she held immediately before the start of her leave and shall then notify her in writing that she can resume work in that job; and

(b) the leave granted to the employee under section 18 shall end seven days after the notification under paragraph (a) is received by her or, if it is earlier, on the day she returns to work.

(4) If, during a period of leave granted to an employee under section 18, her employer—

(a) either takes whatever measures are necessary to ensure that she will no longer be exposed to any risk by virtue of which she was granted the leave or becomes able to move the employee as mentioned in section 18 (1), and

(b) notifies the employee in writing that she can return to work without exposure to that risk or, as the case may be, that other work is available to her which is suitable for her as mentioned in section 18 (3),

the leave granted to the employee under section 18 shall end seven days after the notification under paragraph (b) is received by her or, if it is earlier, on the day she returns to work or, as the case may be, takes up the other work.
21.—(1) In this Part—

“natal care absence”, in relation to an employee, means a period of absence from her work to which the employee is entitled in accordance with regulations under section 15; and

“protective leave” means—

(a) maternity leave;

(b) additional maternity leave;

(c) leave to which a father or other parent is entitled under subsection (1) or subsection (4) of section 16; or

(d) leave granted under section 18.

(2) Where protective leave of one description is immediately followed by protective leave of another description, the time on leave shall be treated for the purposes of this Part as one continuous period of protective leave.

F48(3) Where—

(a) maternity leave,

(b) additional maternity leave, or

(c) leave to which a father or other parent is entitled under subsection (1) or (4) of section 16,

or part of such leave is postponed in accordance with section 14B or 16B, as may be appropriate, the time (if any) on leave before such postponement and the time on leave after such postponement shall be treated for the purposes of this Part as separate periods of protective leave.

Disapplic ation of sections 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 to member of local authority

21A. Sections 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 do not apply to a member of a local authority in the member’s capacity as such.

Preservation or suspension of certain rights, etc. while on protective leave, etc.

22.—(1) During a period of absence from work by an employee while on—

(a) maternity leave,

(b) subsection (1) (a) leave, as defined in section 16 (3), or

(c) leave granted under section 18,

and during a period of natal care absence, the employee shall be deemed to have been in the employment of the employer and, accordingly, while so absent the employee shall, subject to subsection (6) and section 24, be treated as if she or he had not been so absent; and such absence shall not affect any right (other than, except in the case of natal care absence, the employee’s right to remuneration during such absence), whether conferred by statute, contract or otherwise, and related to the employee’s employment.

F50(2) In respect of a period of absence from work by an employee while on—
(a) additional maternity leave,

(b) subsection (1)(b) leave within the meaning of section 16, or

(c) further leave under section 16(4),

the employee shall be deemed to have been in the employment of the employer and accordingly, while so absent the employee shall, subject to section 24, be treated as if she or he had not been so absent; and such absence shall not affect any right or obligation (other than the employee’s right to remuneration or superannuation benefits or any obligation to pay contributions in or in respect of the employment during such absence), whether conferred or imposed by statute, contract or otherwise, and related to the employee’s employment.

(2A) In respect of a period of absence from work by an employee while—

(a) attending ante-natal classes in accordance with section 15A, or

(b) breastfeeding in accordance with section 15B,

the employee shall be deemed to have been in the employment of the employer and accordingly, while so absent the employee shall, subject to section 24, be treated as if she or he had not been so absent; and such absence shall not affect any right, whether conferred by statute, contract or otherwise, and related to the employee’s employment.

(3) Nothing in this section affects—

(a) an employee’s right to be offered suitable alternative employment under section 27; or

(b) an employee’s right to remuneration in accordance with section 18 (4).

(4) A period of absence from work while on protective leave shall not be treated as part of any other leave (including sick leave or annual leave) to which the employee concerned is entitled.

(5) An employee shall be deemed not to be an employed contributor for the purposes of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 1993, for any contribution week (within the meaning of that Act) in a period of absence from work on protective leave if the employee does not receive any reckonable earnings (within the meaning of that Act) in respect of that week.

(6) Where subsection (1) applies during a period of absence by an employee while she is on leave granted under section 18, nothing in this section shall entitle her to benefits under section 4 of the Holidays (Employees) Act, 1973 in respect of a public holiday (within the meaning of that Act) falling during that period of absence.

23.—Each of the following shall be void:

(a) any purported termination of an employee’s employment while the employee is absent from work on protective leave;

(b) any purported termination of an employee’s employment during a period of natal care absence;

(6) F51[(bb) any purported termination of an employee’s employment during a period of absence from work to attend ante-natal classes in accordance with section 15A;]

(6) (bb) any purported termination of an employee’s employment during a period of absence from work for breastfeeding in accordance with section 15B.]
(c) any notice of termination of an employee's employment given while the employee is absent from work on protective leave and expiring subsequent to such a period of absence;

(d) any notice of termination of an employee's employment given during a period of natal care absence and expiring subsequent to such a period;

F51[(dd) any notice of termination of an employee's employment given during a period of absence from work to attend ante-natal classes in accordance with section 15A and expiring subsequent to such a period;]

(ddd) any notice of termination of an employee's employment given during a period of absence from work for breastfeeding in accordance with section 15B and expiring subsequent to such a period;]

F52[(e) any purported suspension from an employee's employment imposed while the employee is absent from work on protective leave, during a period of natal care absence or during a period of absence from work to attend ante-natal classes in accordance with section 15A or for breastfeeding in accordance with section 15B.]

24.—Any notice of termination of employment given in respect of an employee or any suspension from employment imposed on an employee—

(a) before the receipt by the employee's employer of a notification under F53[section 9, 12, 14, 14B, 15, 15A, 15B, 16 or 16B] (or, where appropriate, under section 28), or

(b) before the production for the employer's inspection of a certificate under section 11,

F54[and due to expire during the employee's absence from work on protective leave, during a period of natal care absence or during a period of absence from work to attend ante-natal classes in accordance with section 15A or for breastfeeding in accordance with section 15B shall be extended by the period of such absence.]

25.—(1) During an employee's absence from work while on protective leave, being an employee who, starting with the commencement of her or his employment with the employer—

(a) is on probation in that employment, or

(b) is undergoing training in relation to that employment, or

(c) is employed under a contract of apprenticeship,

the probation, training or apprenticeship shall stand suspended during such absence and shall be completed by the employee on his or her return to work after such absence.

(2) The Minister may by regulations prescribe a period or periods of training in relation to which subsection (1) shall not apply.

26.—(1) Subject to this Part, on the expiry of a period during which an employee was absent from work while on protective leave, the employee shall be entitled to return to work—

(a) with the employer with whom she or he was working immediately before the start of that period or, where during the employee's absence from work there was a change of ownership of the undertaking in which she or he was employed immediately before her or his absence], with the owner (in this
Act referred to as “the successor”) of the undertaking at the expiry of the period of absence,

(b) in the job which the employee held immediately before the start of that period, and

(c) under the contract of employment under which the employee was employed immediately before the start of that period, or, where a change of ownership such as is referred to in paragraph (a) has occurred, under a contract of employment with the successor which is identical to the contract under which the employee was employed immediately before the start of that period, F57[and (in either case) under terms or conditions —

(i) not less favourable than those that would have been applicable to the employee, and

(ii) that incorporate any improvement to the terms or conditions of employment to which the employee would have been entitled, if she or he had not been so absent from work.]

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) (b), where the job held by an employee immediately before the start of the period of F56[her or his absence on protective leave] was not the employee’s normal or usual job, the employee shall be entitled to return to work, either in F56[her or his normal or usual job] or in that job as soon as is practicable without contravention by the employee or the employer of any provision of a statute or instrument made under statute.

(3) In this section “job”, in relation to an employee, means the nature of F56[the work which she or he is employed to do in accordance with her or his contract of employment and the capacity and place in which she or he is so employed].

27.—(1) Where an employee is entitled to return to work in accordance with section 26 but it is not reasonably practicable for the employer or the successor to permit the employee to return to work in accordance with that section, the employee shall, subject to this Part, be entitled to be offered by the employer, the successor or an associated employer suitable alternative work under a new contract of employment.

(2) Work under a new contract of employment constitutes suitable alternative work for the purposes of this Act if—

(a) the work required to be done under the contract is of a kind which is suitable in relation to the employee concerned and appropriate for the employee to do in the circumstances; and

F58[(b) the terms or conditions of the contract—

(i) relating to the place where the work under it is required to be done, the capacity in which the employee concerned is to be employed and any other terms or conditions of employment are not less favourable to the employee than those of her or his contract of employment immediately before the start of the period of absence from work while on protective leave, and

(ii) incorporate any improvement to the terms or conditions of employment to which the employee would have been entitled if she or he had not been so absent from work during that period.]]

(3) For the purposes of this Act one employer shall be taken to be associated with another—

(a) if one is a body corporate of which the other (whether directly or indirectly) has control; or
(b) if both are bodies corporate of which a third person (whether directly or indirectly) has control.

28.—(1) Subject to sections 14B(11) and 16B(10), entitlement to return to work in accordance with section 26 or to be offered suitable alternative work under section 27 shall be subject to an employee who has been absent from work while on protective leave in accordance with this Act having, not later than four weeks before the date on which she or he expects to return to work, notified in writing (or caused to be so notified) the employer or, where the employee is aware of a change of ownership of the undertaking concerned, the successor, of her or his intention to return to work and of the date on which she or he expects to return to work.

F59[(1A) Entitlement to return to work in accordance with section 26 or to be offered suitable alternative work under section 27 shall be subject to an employee who has been absent from work on resumed leave within the meaning of section 14B or 16B, as the case may be, having notified in writing (or caused to be so notified) the employer or, where the employee is aware of a change of ownership of the undertaking concerned, the successor, of her or his intention to return to work and of the date on which she or he expects to return to work—

(a) if the period of resumed leave concerned is 4 weeks or less—

(i) at the same time as the relevant notification is given by the employee under section 14B(8) or 16B(7), as the case may be, or

(ii) if the employer waives the right to receive such notification, not later than the day on which the employee expects to return to work,

or

(b) if the period of resumed leave concerned is more than 4 weeks, not later than 4 weeks before the date on which the employee expects to return to work.]

(1B) Entitlement to return to work in accordance with section 26 or to be offered suitable alternative work under section 27 shall be subject to an employee who has been absent from work and been deemed under subsection (6) of section 14B or subsection (5) of section 16B, as the case may be, to be on resumed leave within the meaning of whichever of those sections is appropriate having, not later than the date on which she or he expects to return to work, notified in writing (or caused to be so notified) the employer or, where the employee is aware of a change of ownership of the undertaking concerned, the successor, of her or his intention to return to work and of the date on which she or he expects to return to work.]

(2) Where, in the opinion of a rights commissioner or the Tribunal, there are reasonable grounds—

F59[(a) for an employee’s failure to give notification under subsection (1), (1A) or (1B), as may be appropriate, or]

(b) for an employee giving such notification otherwise than within the specified time limits,

the rights commissioner or the Tribunal, as the case may be, shall extend the time for giving the notification.

(3) In the absence of reasonable grounds—

F59[(a) failure to give notification under subsection (1), (1A) or (1B), as may be appropriate, or]

(b) the giving of such notification otherwise than within the specified time limits,

are matters that may be taken into account by a rights commissioner, the Tribunal or the Circuit Court in determining the employee’s rights under the 1977 Act, this Act
or any other relevant enactment, so far as the remedies of re-instatement, re-engagement or compensation are concerned.

29.—Where, because of an interruption or cessation of work at an employee’s place of employment, existing on the date specified in a notification under section 28 given by the employee, it is unreasonable to expect the employee to return to work on the date specified in the notification, the employee may return to work instead when work resumes at the place of employment after the interruption or cessation, or as soon as reasonably practicable after such resumption.

PART V
RESOLUTION OF DISPUTES

Reference of disputes to which Part V applies.

30.—(1) This Part does not apply to a dispute relating to—
(a) the dismissal of an employee, or
(b) a matter that is within the competence of the Authority under the 1989 Act.

(2) This Part does not apply where the employee is in employment as a member of the Defence Forces and, accordingly, in the following provisions of this Part, “employee” does not include an employee in such employment.

(3) In this Part “the relevant employer”, in relation to an employee, means the employee’s employer or, where appropriate, the successor or an associated employer.

(4)...

(5) The Minister may make regulations for the purposes of this Part, and in this Part “prescribed” means prescribed by such regulations.

(6) In subsection (1) (a) “dismissal” has the same meaning as in the 1977 Act except that, in applying that definition for the purposes of subsection (1) (a), the expressions “employer” and “contract of employment”, where used in that definition, shall be given the same meanings as in this Act.

30A. This Part does not apply to a member of a local authority in the member’s capacity as such.

Procedure for referral of disputes to rights commissioner.

31.—...

32. (1) A decision of an adjudication officer under section 41 of the Workplace Relations Act 2015 in relation to a dispute between an employee and the relevant employer relating to any entitlement of the employee under Part II, III or IV (or any matter arising out of or related to such entitlement) may include such directions to the parties to the dispute as the adjudication officer considers necessary or expedient for the resolution of the dispute, and if the decision is in favour of the employee then, without prejudice to the power to give such directions, the adjudication officer may order—
(a) the grant of leave to the employee for such period as may be so specified,
(b) an award of compensation (in favour of the employee to be paid by the relevant employer) of such amount, not exceeding 20 weeks’ remuneration in respect of the employee’s employment calculated in such manner as may be
prescribed, as the adjudication officer considers just and equitable having regard to all of the circumstances, or

(c) both such grant and such award.

(2) A decision of the Labour Court under section 44 of the Workplace Relations Act 2015 on appeal from a decision referred to in subsection (1) may include such directions to the parties to the appeal as the Labour Court considers necessary or expedient for the resolution of the matter, and if the decision is in favour of the employee then, without prejudice to the power to give such directions, the Labour Court may order—

(a) the grant of leave for such period as may be so specified,

(b) an award of compensation (in favour of the employee to be paid by the relevant employer) of such amount, not exceeding 20 weeks' remuneration in respect of the employee's employment calculated in such manner as may be prescribed, as the Labour Court considers just and equitable having regard to all of the circumstances, or

(c) both such grant and such award.

(3) In this section "remuneration" includes allowances in the nature of pay and benefits in lieu of or in addition to pay.

Appeal from decision of rights commissioner.

33. — F66 [...]
(i) a F68[adjudication officer] dealing with a dispute referred to the F68[adjudication officer] by an employee, or

(ii) the F68[Labour Court],

or

(b) any proceedings under the 1977 Act before a F68[adjudication officer], the F68[Labour Court] F69[…], in which a claim is made by an employee for redress under that Act for unfair dismissal on the grounds that the dismissal resulted wholly or mainly from—

(i) the employee’s pregnancy, attendance at ante-natal classes, giving birth or breastfeeding or any matters connected therewith, or

(ii) the exercise or proposed exercise by the employee of the right under this Act to any form of protective leave or natal care absence, within the meaning of Part IV, or to time off from work to attend ante-natal classes in accordance with section 15A (inserted by section 8 of the Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004), or to time off from work or a reduction of working hours for breastfeeding in accordance with section 15B (inserted by section 9 of the Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004),

and includes any subsequent proceedings, including proceedings on appeal, arising from the claim.

(2) Where in any proceedings facts are established by an employee from which it may be presumed that there has been discrimination or indirect discrimination in relation to him or her, it shall be for the respondent to prove the contrary.

(3) This section is without prejudice to section 6(6) of the 1977 Act or any other enactment or rule of law in relation to the burden of proof in proceedings which may be more favourable to such an employee.

(4) Nothing in this section shall operate to reduce the existing level of protection for employees in relation to the burden of proof in proceedings.

(5) The European Communities (Burden of Proof in Gender Discrimination Cases) Regulations 2001 (S.I. No. 337 of 2001) are revoked insofar as they apply to proceedings (within the meaning of this section).]
of this Act otherwise provides", and in paragraph (a) of that subsection the words from “and whose” shall be omitted.

(2) In section 2 (2) of the 1977 Act (which specifies dismissals in relation to which that Act does not apply) for paragraph (c) (inserted by the 1981 Act) there shall be substituted—

“(c) dismissal where the employee’s employer at the commencement of the employment informs the employee in writing that the employment will terminate on the return to work with that employer of another employee who is absent from work while on protective leave or natal care absence, within the meaning of Part IV of the Maternity Protection Act, 1994, and the dismissal of the first-mentioned employee duly occurs for the purpose of facilitating the return to work of that other employee.”.

(3) At the beginning of each of sections 3 and 4 of the 1977 Act (which relate to dismissal during probation, training or apprenticeship) there shall be inserted “Except in so far as any provision of this Act otherwise provides”.

(4) In section 6 (2) of the 1977 Act (which specifies the matters which cause a dismissal resulting from any of those matters to be deemed to be an unfair dismissal) for paragraphs (f) and (g) (the latter inserted by the 1981 Act) there shall be substituted—

“(f) the employee’s pregnancy, giving birth or breastfeeding or any matters connected therewith,

(g) the exercise or proposed exercise by the employee of a right under the Maternity Protection Act, 1994, to any form of protective leave or natal care absence, within the meaning of Part IV of that Act.”.

(5) After section 6 (2) of the 1977 Act there shall be inserted—

“(2A) Sections 3 and 4 do not apply to a case falling within paragraph (f) or (g) of subsection (2) and, for the purposes of those paragraphs, “employee” includes a person who would otherwise be excluded from this Act by paragraph (a), (c), (f) or (g) of section 2 (1).”.

Amendment of Schedule 3 to Redundancy Payments Act, 1967.

39.—In Schedule 3 to the Redundancy Payments Act, 1967, in paragraph 5 (which specifies periods which do not breach continuity of employment) for subparagraph (1) (d) (inserted by the 1981 Act) there shall be substituted—

“(d) a period during which an employee was absent from work while on protective leave or natal care absence, within the meaning of Part IV of the Maternity Protection Act, 1994.”.

Provisions applying where employee not permitted to return to work.

40.—(1) This section applies to an employee who, having duly complied with section 28, is entitled under Part IV to return to work but is not permitted to do so by the relevant employer, as defined in section 30 (3), and in this section, in relation to such an employee, “the expected date of return” means the date notified under subsection (1), (1A) or (1B), as may be appropriate, of section 28 as the date on which the employee expected to return to work.

(2) For the purposes of the Redundancy Payments Acts, 1967 to 1991, an employee to whom this section applies who is also an employee to whom those Acts apply shall be deemed to have been dismissed by reason of redundancy, the date of dismissal being deemed to be the expected date of return.

(3) For the purposes of the Minimum Notice and Terms of Employment Act, 1973, the contract of employment of an employee to whom this section applies who is also an employee to whom that Act applies shall be deemed to have been terminated on the expected date of return.
(4) For the purposes of the 1977 Act—

(a) an employee to whom this section applies who is also an employee to whom that Act applies shall be deemed to have been dismissed on the expected date of return; and

(b) the dismissal shall be deemed to be an unfair dismissal unless, having regard to all the circumstances, there were substantial grounds justifying the dismissal.

41.—(1) In the Protection of Employees (Employers’ Insolvency) Act, 1984, section 6 (which provides for certain amounts to be paid out of the Redundancy and Employees’ Insolvency Fund) shall be amended in accordance with this section.

(2) In subsection (2) (a), for subparagraph (v) there shall be substituted—

“(v) any amount which an employer is required to pay by virtue of—

(I) a determination under section 8 (1) or 9 (1) or an order under section 10 (2) of the 1977 Act, or

(II) a decision, determination or order under Part V of the Maternity Protection Act, 1994,

and made, in any case, not earlier than the commencement of the relevant period,“.

(3) In subsection (4) (c), after subparagraph (iii) there shall be inserted—

“(iv) A payment shall not be made under this section in respect of an amount to which a decision under Part V of the Maternity Protection Act, 1994, relates unless—

(I) in case an appeal from the decision to the Tribunal is brought under the Part in question, the appeal is withdrawn, or

(II) in case there is no such appeal, the time for bringing such an appeal has expired.

(v) A payment shall not be made under this section in respect of an amount to which a determination under Part V of the Maternity Protection Act, 1994, relates unless—

(I) in case an appeal from the determination is brought to the High Court under the Part in question, the appeal is withdrawn, or

(II) in case there is no appeal, the time for bringing such an appeal has expired.”.
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