If you are new to the Department of Zoology in Oxford and have children, or if you are thinking about starting a family, we hope this document will provide a useful signpost to sources of information and support.

1. PARENTAL LEAVE

Staff
The University policies on maternity, paternity and adoption and parental emergency leave can be found on the University Personnel Services website.
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family

The information given on this website applies to all University staff. It details what an employee has to do before the birth, during maternity leave and after maternity leave. This is a very detailed website, if you have any questions please contact your personnel officer.

If you are employed by a college, your entitlements may be different from university employees. Each college has its own set of policies with respect to parental leave that may differ significantly from one another so, it is advisable to contact your college as soon as possible.

Whether you are employed by the university or a college, you have statutory rights to maternity leave. At the time of writing, an employer is obliged to pay maternity leave if you have been in continuous employment with them for 26 weeks into the 15th week before the week your baby is due. You can find up-to-date information and further details on the government website www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Moneyandworkentitlements/WorkAndFamilies/Parentalleaveandflexibleworking

Academic Staff
Arrangements for family leave for academic staff are dealt with by Divisional Offices - Mathematical & Physical Sciences Division:
Ms Sutcliffe, 9 Parks Road, (Tel. 2-82588) email: sheila.sutcliffe@admin.ox.ac.uk

Students
Student maternity, paternity and adoption leave policy is currently under review and at present is set individually by each college. Contact your Senior Tutor for further advice.
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/gender/scheme/
www.ousu.org/welfare/student-parents-and-childcare

Short term contracts and maternity leave
If you become pregnant while on a short-term contract and before you've met the required 26 weeks continuous service test this can raise some questions regarding who is responsible for your maternity pay.

This document has been written as part of the action plan implemented as part of the Silver Athena Swan Award that we received in 2010 in recognition of our commitment to gender-equality for our staff and students: www.zoo.ox.ac.uk/athena_swans. It has been written by parents working in the Department of Zoology.
Did you know..?

1. Parking
   The department has assigned a number of parking spaces in the underground car park for parents in recognition of the fact that dropping children off at school can mean that parking spaces around the department are limited. To apply for a permit, contact department personnel.

2. Nursery Places
   The department has two priority places at the Jack Straw Lane nursery. To apply for a place, contact department personnel.

3. 4 o’clock seminars
   The 4 o’clock start of our departmental seminar is an innovation designed to make it easier for those of us that need to pick children up from school or nursery after work to attend our seminars. As part of our Athena Swan action plan, we have created a break before questions to allow people to leave if they need to get away promptly.

4. Snakes and Lobsters
   Children are welcome in the department and love the creatures in the tanks outside Darwins.

5. Child-friendly social events
   Every year the department organises a summer barbeque and a Christmas party to which children are welcome.

For example: If you are employed as a graduate student in the Department and then have a Royal Society fellowship you would be classified as having continuous employment with the University because your pay comes via the University payroll. Therefore the University would be responsible for your maternity pay. (A recent case in the Dept of Zoology set this precedent.)

BUT: If you are employed as a graduate student in the Department and then take a position with a college you would no longer be on the University payroll as your pay would now be coming from the college NOT the University. Therefore if you have not fulfilled the continuous service requirement, the decision on whether to pay you maternity pay would be taken by the college.

REMEMBER: If you are employed by a college (and receive your pay from them) you are not an employee of the University of Oxford. You are subject to the employment conditions of your college not the University.

If you are funded on a grant or a fellowship, take care to check whether your contract will be extended by the length of your maternity leave. Most research councils do so (although not always by the maximum length of 12 months), colleges vary...

Paternity leave
   Statutory paternity leave is two weeks and you must have been employed continuously for 26 weeks into the 15th week before the week your baby is due.
   If you are a dad and have a partner who has returned or is returning to work you may be entitled to 26 weeks additional unpaid paternity leave. If your partner has returned to work you can take this leave between 20 weeks and one year after your baby was born. This entitlement only applies to fathers of babies born on or after 3 April 2011: www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Moneyandworkentitlements/WorkAndFamilies/Paternityrightsintheworkplace
   The university follows government guidelines with respect to paternity leave: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/paternity

During maternity leave
   This website contains guidance on maternity pay and entitlements; www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/family/maternity. This site also gives information about Keeping in Touch (KIT) days. Feeling “out of touch” on returning to work after maternity leave is a common problem. KIT days are a way of enabling women to spend the odd day at work if they want to, while they are on maternity leave. You are allowed a maximum of 10 KIT days during maternity leave and you are entitled to be paid for the work that you do on these days.
   Most people prefer to drop in on an informal basis. This is particularly...
important for research staff whose jobs can’t be “covered” in the same way by someone else while they are on leave.

2. RETURNING TO WORK

Parental leave

If you have been an employee continuously for at least a year and have a child under 5 years of age (or 18 years if your child is disabled), you have a statutory right to up to 13 weeks a year unpaid leave. www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Moneyandworkentitlements/WorkAndFamilies/Parentalleaveandflexibleworking

Flexible working

Flexible working is encouraged at all levels within the Department of Zoology to fit around parental commitments. Indeed, the work of academic staff is often highly suited to flexible working. Flexible working arrangements are principally informal, to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. Academic staff are monitored on research output, not at what time of the day it was done!

If you need to make more formal arrangements, here are the rules: We all have a right to request flexible working (part-time, working from home) provided we have worked for our employer for 26 weeks continuously and have not made another application during the past 12 months. The government recommends that requests to work part-time are made as soon as possible to allow the employer time to consider any possible issues arising. Your employer is not obliged to concede to your request but is obliged to present an argument to support their decision. www.direct.gov.uk/en/Employment/Employees/Flexibleworking/DG_10029491

Another grey area for people on short-term contracts is the extent to which you lose time on your contract if you work part-time. This is very inconsistent across funding bodies and is something you should check if you are thinking about requesting part-time hours.

Staff

The University supports a number of flexible and home working initiatives. Guidance for staff and Departments can be found on the Personnel Services website. www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/during/flexible

Different kinds of research pose different kinds of challenges when starting a family - but most of them will have been encountered before by someone in the department!

"As a field biologist spending several months a year in remote tropical forests, I put off having children for years. Having finally taken the plunge, I realize the two activities are not entirely mutually exclusive. Children are flexible, adore being outside, and at least at first, spend much time asleep. In a recent field trip to Panama, I found I was able to work in the forest, collecting data, with my 8-month son, Leon, in tow (here pictured asleep). Getting back to the tropics during my maternity leave was fun, boosted my confidence, and gave me a glimpse of how much magic lies ahead as I share my love of nature with my boy...”

NAT AND LEON
Returning to research

There are special issues surrounding career breaks for scientists - we can’t simply arrange for someone to “cover” for us and we can quickly lose touch with rapidly changing fields. However, career breaks can also be an opportunity to pause for thought and maybe move your research in new directions. In our department, there is a wealth of experience in taking career breaks, and lots of people to turn to for advice or understanding.

The Daphne Jackson Trust is a charity dedicated to returning talented scientists to careers after a break of two years or more. They have a 96% success rate! www.daphnejackson.org

The Royal Society award Dorothy Hodgkin Research Fellowships to support excellent scientists at an early stage of their career. It is aimed specifically at researchers who require flexible working due to circumstances such as parental/caring issues. Female candidates are particularly encouraged to apply: royalsociety.org/Dorothy-Hodgkin-Fellowships

Students

After the period of parental leave, part-time study for a degree is normally only possible in some cases of disability. Student parents are encouraged to apply to the Childcare Services Team for support in finding childcare. The OUSU website includes information about childcare and funding: www.ousu.org

3. CHILDCARE

The university’s childcare services website can be found here: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/childcare/

Oxfordshire county council also has a website listing childcare services with a search facility: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/childcare

Tinies is a childcare agency that charges a fee for finding people but do all the checks and initial screenings interviews, match you needs, help with contracts and legal. They are also good at finding people very quickly if other childcare plans fall through at the last minute. www.tinies.com/about-tinies/branch/nanny-agency-oxfordshire-bicester-banbury/team.html

While the former was free to find, the latter charge a fee for finding people but they do all the checks and initial screenings interviews, match you needs, help with contracts and legal - so worth it, in my view. Tinies are also good at finding people very quickly if other childcare plans fall through at the last minute.

Nurseries

The University has four nurseries in Oxford and has subsidized places at five nurseries in and around Oxford. Our department has two priority places at the University nursery at Jack Straws Lane nursery. These are paid for annually by the Department. There is an application in process for locating a nursery in the Tinbergen building.

The waiting list for university nurseries is very long. Everyone advises getting on the waiting list as soon as you get pregnant. All applications are kept confidential; you can apply for a nursery place before you tell the Department of your pregnancy.

Full information about University nurseries can be found at: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/childcare/nurseryinformation/#d.en.31369

Also look at the frequently asked questions section:
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/childcare/nurseryinformation/nurseryfaq/

Flexible Working: Job Share

As well as working as a swan catching team, Heather and Lynne also worked as a team running the graduate office. Heather now shares the job of running the graduate office with Victoria.

“Doing a job-share allowed us to enjoy an interesting job and still have time with our children”

HEATHER AND LYNNE
**ADVICE** : Due to the very long waiting list for University nurseries we suggest that you have an alternative plan just in case you don’t get a University nursery place when you want to return to work.

College nurseries: Somerville, St Anne’s, Wolfson, Balliol and Christchurch colleges all have nurseries on site. College members have priority places and again, lengthy waiting lists are a feature.

Other childcare options: Oxfordshire Family Information has a wealth of information about different types of childcare available. Oxfordshire Family Information Service, County Hall, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1ND Tel: 08452 26 26 36 www.oxonfis.org.uk

Montessori nurseries: there are a number of private Montessori nurseries in and around Oxford.

Fieldhouse Nursery – Woodstock Road www.montessori-fieldhouse.co.uk/

Wolvercote, Ifley Village, Forest Farm www.oxfordmontessori.co.uk

**Paying for childcare**

Childcare can be expensive; the University offers two schemes which help parents save tax and national insurance on their childcare costs:

1. Salary Sacrifice Scheme: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/childcare/salarysacrificescheme/

2. Childcare Voucher Scheme which can be used to pay for nursery fees, holiday play schemes, child minders, nannies, even supermarkets and swimming. Children must be aged under 16: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/childcare/voucherscheme/

**Schools**

For information about applying for a place at a local school see Oxfordshire Family Information Service: www.oxonfis.org.uk. Information about standards at your local school can be found on the OFSTED website ofsted.gov.uk.

If you are interested in private schools you must contact them individually. There can be long waiting lists. A number of them have nurseries for children aged around three years.

**Outreach**

Being a parent often presents us with more opportunities (and motivation) to get involved with outreach activities with schools and nurseries. Our department has an excellent track record of taking expertise to classrooms in schools around Oxford and even taking children out of classrooms to enthuse them about some of the work we do. There are lots of opportunities to get involved...www.zoo.ox.ac.uk/outreach

The FAI farm at Wytham runs an Outdoor Classroom scheme where children learn about the workings of a farm as well as taking normal lessons in a different environment: www.outdoor-classroom.org.uk/index.html

**TOMAS SHELDON helps out with fieldwork in Wytham woods...**
STAYING IN TOUCH...

“I greatly appreciate the flexibility of an academic career and the family-friendly atmosphere in our department. My husband and I have two boys, Maurits and Hugo, and I took 6 months of maternity leave with each of them. I stayed in touch with my research during both maternity leaves and that meant regularly bringing our baby with me to the department and to meetings; in fact Hugo went nearly everywhere with me whilst on leave. Many people, made very positive comments whenever Hugo joined me. Some reminisced about having done the same when their children were young, others wished they had had the confidence to do so, and others praised the subtle point to be made by visibly including children in our working lives. It is possible – not easy, but possible – to be a scientist, lecturer and a mummy or daddy. We have to respect the needs and demands of our children of course, but it is important for them to understand that our careers are valuable to us too.”

ANGELA AND HUGO (and Melanie)

School holidays

The school holidays are long and no matter how much annual leave you are entitled to you’ll never cover them. There are a number of kids holiday clubs around Oxford that operate during the holidays and half terms:

- Oxford Active runs play schemes around Oxford / Oxfordshire. All University parents (staff and students) are offered a 15% discount. For information see: www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/childcare/playscheme/
- Super camps - www.supercamps.co.uk
- Camp Energy – based at Summerfield School in Summertown (behind Marks and Spencer) www.campenergy.com
- Create Holiday Club – which is based at the Montessori school on a farm at Elsfield- just outside Oxford (they have a bus which picks up around the city). www.oxfordmontessori.co.uk/create-holiday-club

Please treat as a rough guide that may contain errors rather than a formal document. We have tried to think of everything that you might like to know; if you have any suggestions for updates or improvements please contact one of the authors.

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