



The Smallest Things Charity

Promoting the Good Health of Premature Babies and Their Families

Welcome

Welcome to your **Smallest Things Best Employer Guidance pack**,

This pack will help you to understand the unique needs of employees following the premature birth of a baby and will outline the ways in which you can support mums and dads return to work following the traumatic of neonatal intensive care.

We hope you will be inspired to sign up to our **Smallest Things Best Employer Charter**, becoming an **Employer with Heart** supporting the needs of premature babies and their families.

Your Smallest Things Best Employers pack includes...

- The Smallest Things - background
- The Smallest Things in Numbers - Facts & Figures
- Reasons to offer extended maternity leave
- The Smallest Things Best Employer Charter
- How to sign up to The Smallest Things Best Employer Charter

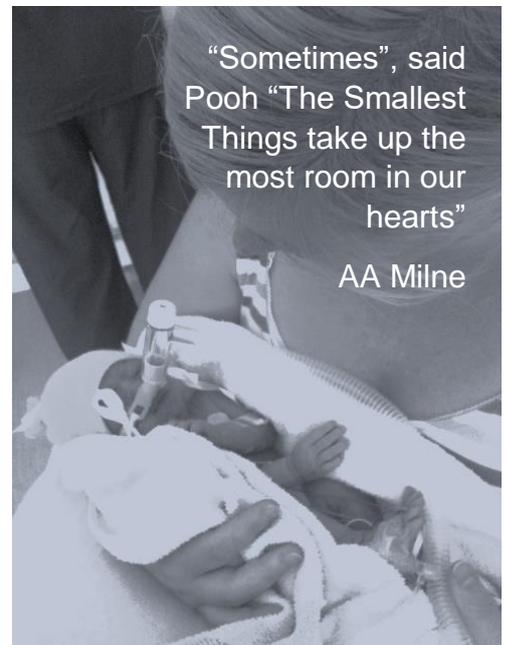
The Smallest Things

Registered charity 1171631

t. @_smallestthings

e. smallestthings@yahoo.com

w. www.thesmallestthings.org



The Smallest Things

Background

A registered charity, The Smallest Things was founded in 2014 by mother of two small boys, Catriona Ogilvy, following their premature birth.

The Smallest Things recognises the significant impact a premature birth has upon a family, both financially and emotionally, and understands that the neonatal journey does not end when you leave hospital.

The Smallest Things aims to:

- Raise awareness and understanding around premature birth
- Improve follow-up care for parents following their NICU stay
- Campaign to extend maternity leave and statutory maternity pay for parents of premature babies

In February 2018, The Smallest Things launched the **Employer with Heart campaign** and introduced the **Best Employer Charter Mark** for employers who support premature babies and their families.



“While NCT groups up and down the country are meeting for coffee and talking about pooing and breastfeeding, NICU mums gather in expressing rooms to discuss breathing support, surgery and methods of tube feeding. It’s like an alternative reality where life-or-death moments are discussed in the same way as nap routines.”

Sarah – mum to twins born at 28 weeks

The Smallest Things

In Numbers

- Every year **37,000** babies in the UK are born premature (prior to 37 weeks' gestation) and make up 46 per cent of babies requiring admission to specialist Neonatal Intensive Care Units ⁽¹⁾. This is around **7% of births**. ⁽²⁾
- **The World Health Organisation** categorises pre-term birth as;
 - Extremely preterm (less than 28 weeks' gestation)
 - Very preterm (28 to 32 weeks' gestation)
 - Moderate to late preterm (32 to 37 weeks' gestation)As might be expected those born earliest require the greatest level of support, have a greater risk of co-morbidities and spend longer periods of time in hospital before coming home.
- In the UK just **5% of preterm births are 'extremely premature'**, **11%** make up **'very preterm'** births and **85%** of premature births are considered **'moderate to late preterm'** (32-37 weeks). ⁽²⁾
- **Cost** - an average stay in neonatal care will cost a family in excess of **£2,000** through travel costs, meals out, parking charges, unpaid leave from work and childcare costs for siblings. ⁽³⁾
- Nearly half (**49%**) say that having a premature baby affected their **financial circumstances**. ⁽⁴⁾
- We know that the journey does not end when parents leave neonatal care.
- **Maternal Mental Health** - **40%** of mothers develop **Post Natal Depression** following premature birth (compared to 5-10% of mothers delivering at full term). ⁽⁵⁾
- More than **50%** of mothers suffer from anxiety and display signs of **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** following NICU. ⁽⁴⁾⁽⁵⁾
- **60%** of mothers say that their **maternity leave** and time with their premature baby was **too short**.
- **48%** of premature babies were **re-admitted to hospital** following discharge home from neonatal care. ⁽⁴⁾
- **185,000+** people have signed our petition to extend parental leave for parents of babies born too soon.
- **One person can make a difference** - thank you for your support!

Why Should We Extend Maternity Leave for Mothers of Premature Babies?

- As a compassionate employer you recognise the unique, yet significant needs of employees following the premature birth of a child.
- The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has called on employers to support hard working parents following premature birth.
- Giving mothers extended leave to recover from the physical and mental trauma of premature birth ensures that they are fit and able to return to work. This reduces the significant risk of mothers taking long-term sick leave once they return to work.
- Won't it cost us a lot of money to do this? The number of families affected by premature birth is small. Just 7% of births end in pre-term labour, with the majority (85%) of premature births happening between 32-37 weeks, therefore requiring less additional leave. We believe that the small costs involved will be outweighed by the successful return of mothers to the workplace.

“Working parents deserve support at work, and those who have premature babies should expect nothing less than total backing from their employers at what can be an exceptionally difficult and worrying time.”

Business Minister Margot James MP 2017

“It's a small thing we can do that will make a huge difference for families. I don't understand why more employers don't do this.”

Cllr Loakes, Deputy Leader Waltham Forest Council, who provide extended leave for council employees who become parents to premature babies.

Supporting Premature Babies and Their Families

Best Employer Charter

The Smallest Things Best Employer Charter outlines the additional support and extended leave we believe parents of premature babies require.

Employers who sign up to the Charter will receive The Smallest Things **Best Employer Charter Mark** and will be included in our online **Employer with Heart** Hall of Fame.



Why should additional leave be calculated according to a baby's due date and how early they were born?

- When a baby is born premature parents are told that they are likely to remain in hospital until their **due date**.
- Although we know that babies often come home prior to this date, they have **ongoing needs**:
 - They are small and vulnerable, having still not reached their due date.
 - They may still require support with feeding and breathing.
 - Mothers can become isolated, having to remain at home due to risk of infection to the developing baby.
 - Babies born premature are at risk of readmission to hospital with nearly half of all babies being readmitted.
 - Premature babies have ongoing medical appointments and following discharge regular check-ups.
- Premature babies develop according to their due date - this is called their **corrected age**. Extending leave by a babies due date rather than length of hospital stay ensures that they have reached **developmental milestones** ready for a childcare setting.
- **Extending leave by the number of days a baby was born prior to their due date** gives mothers the time required to recover from the trauma of neonatal intensive care, time to bond with their baby and time for their baby to grow and develop so that they can return to work.

Sign up to the Best Employer Charter NOW!

The Smallest Things Best Employer Charter - Supporting Parents of Premature Babies

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



We agree to:

1. Extend maternity leave for mothers who give birth prematurely (before 37 weeks gestation) by the number of days a baby was born prior to their due date. We will pay extended leave at full pay and this may be classed as compassionate leave.

2. Give dads the time they need to be with their baby in hospital, receiving at least two weeks' paid compassionate leave on the birth of their premature baby. Fathers may wish to save or split their paternity leave, being there when their baby comes home from hospital. We understand that plans may change depending upon the baby's medical needs, that additional compassionate leave may be required and that the date a baby will come home from hospital is rarely set in stone.

3. Support parents returning to work following the birth of a premature baby.

We understand that returning to work can be a difficult time for parents of premature babies and that babies born too soon can have ongoing medical needs, requiring regular hospital appointments and check-ups. We therefore follow the ACAS best practice guidance, considering formal and informal flexible working patterns and offering additional paid or unpaid leave.

Employers Name -

SIGNED HR Director -

Date -

What Next?

Send a signed copy of the Best Employer Charter, along with relevant amended parental leave policies to Catriona Ogilvy, Smallest Things Founder at smallestthings@yahoo.com

You will then added to our Online 'Employers with Heart' hall of fame and receive or Best Employer Charter Mark.

Tweet us at @_smallestthings so that we can share how you are helping to support premature babies and their families.

Don't stop there – ask any contractors you work with to sign up to the charter too!

References:

1. IDAU. (2016) Neonatal Data Analysis Unit 2015 Report
2. Office for National Statistics. (2013) Pregnancy and ethnic factors influencing births and infant mortality.
3. Bliss. (2014) It's not a game: the very real costs of having a premature or sick baby
4. The Smallest Things. (2017) Life After Neonatal Care Report
5. SN Vigod, L Villegas, C-L Dennis, LE Ross. (2010) Prevalence and risk factors for postpartum depression among women with preterm and low-birth-weight infants: a systematic review