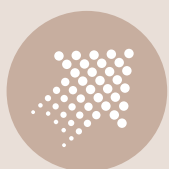


# Supporting Employees From Pregnancy Announcement to Parental Leave

Line Manager Guide



**BeyondEAP**

Specialist employee support  
when life gets complex

by Sandie Dennis

# Introduction

When an employee shares that they are expecting a child - whether through pregnancy, surrogacy, adoption, or another pathway - it is often a significant moment. For some, it is joyful and exciting. For others, it may feel overwhelming, vulnerable, complex, or deeply personal.

The way this conversation is handled matters.

The response from a **line manager** in that moment can shape:

- How psychologically safe the employee feels
- How supported they feel at work
- Their confidence through pregnancy and parental leave
- Their likelihood to return, stay, and perform

More than anything, this is about helping the employee feel **like a person, not a process.**



# Our Approach

At Beyond EAP, our guidance is simple:

- Be human before anything else
- Be supportive, not intrusive
- Be thoughtful, not assumptive
- Allow things to unfold at the employee's pace

This approach supports not only the individual, but also strengthens:

- Employee experience
- Retention
- Return-to-work outcomes
- Line manager capability



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## Start with the Person, Not the Policy

The first response matters.

Before discussing leave, timelines or process, start with the human side of the moment.

This helps the employee feel seen, heard, and supported - not managed.

**You might say:**

- “Congratulations, this is lovely news.”
- “Thank you for sharing this with me - how are you feeling about everything?”
- “Is there anything you need from me right now, even just in the short term?”
- “Would you like to talk things through, or keep things practical for now?”

This moment sets the tone for everything that follows.

2

## Respect That Every Journey Is Different

No two journeys into parenthood are the same.

For some employees, this may have been straightforward.

For others, it may involve IVF, loss, surrogacy, adoption, or ongoing uncertainty.

A thoughtful, open approach is key.

**You might ask:**

- “Who would you like to know at this stage, and how would you like that handled?”
- “Are there any preferences or boundaries you’d like me to be aware of?”
- “Would regular check-ins feel helpful, or would you prefer to come to me when needed?”

- ✓ Builds trust
- ✓ Creates psychological safety
- ✓ Supports inclusive workplaces

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### Keep Early Conversations Light and Supportive

It can be tempting to move quickly into planning - but too much too soon can feel overwhelming.

In the early stages, focus on what the employee needs right now.

#### You might ask:

- “Is there anything in your workload that feels difficult at the moment?”
- “Do you have appointments coming up we should be mindful of?”
- “Would a little flexibility help right now?”

This helps reduce pressure and supports wellbeing early.

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### Offer Support Naturally

Support should feel available - not imposed.

#### You might say:

- “We do have support available if it would be helpful - I’m happy to talk you through it when the time feels right.”
- “We offer specialist coaching support through Beyond EAP - just let me know if you’d like to hear more.”

This helps:

- ✓ Normalise support
- ✓ Encourage early engagement
- ✓ Reduce escalation later

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### Move at Their Pace

These conversations don’t need to cover everything at once. Often, reassurance comes from knowing there is time.

#### You might say:

- “There’s no rush to work everything out now.”
- “When it feels right, we can look at next steps together.”
- “Would it help to set a time to catch up again in a few weeks?”

This balances care with structure.

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### Use Inclusive Language and Avoid Assumptions

Language plays a powerful role in creating inclusive workplaces.

Avoid assumptions about:

- Gender roles
- Caregiving responsibilities
- Return-to-work plans

#### Instead, try:

- “your plans” (vs “maternity plans”)
- “your leave” (vs assumptions about time off)

#### Ask:

- “Is there anything specific you’d like me to be aware of?”
- “Are there any important dates or processes we should plan around?”

### A Simple, Supportive Close

Sometimes the simplest words matter most:

**“I’m really glad you told me - we’ll take this at your pace, and I’m here to support you throughout.”**

You may also ask:

- “Would you like me to inform HR, or would you prefer to do that yourself?”

## Supporting Fathers, Partners & Non-Birthing Parents

These conversations matter just as much.

Line managers play a key role in ensuring all parents feel supported.

### You might say:

- “Congratulations - how are you feeling about everything?”
- “What do you think your leave might look like at this stage?”
- “Is there anything you need from me right now?”

As plans progress:

- “Have you thought about how you’d like to structure your leave?”
- “What would help you feel comfortable stepping away from work?”
- “Are there any priorities we should plan around?”

This supports **inclusion, engagement and retention** across all parents.



## Supporting Employees Through to Leave



### Regular Check-ins

- “How are things feeling at the moment - both in and outside of work?”
- “Has your energy or capacity changed at all?”
- “Is there anything that would make work easier right now?”



### Workload & Adjustments

- “Would it help to review your workload together?”
- “Are any parts of your role becoming more difficult?”
- “Would flexibility around hours or location help?”



### Planning for Leave

- “Have you started thinking about when you’d like to begin your leave?”
- “What would a smooth transition look like for you?”
- “Are there any pieces of work you’d like to complete before stepping away?”



### Handover Conversations

- “What would help you feel confident everything is in place before you go?”
- “Is there anything you’re concerned about handing over?”
- “How much contact, if any, would you like during leave?”



### Emotional Support & Confidence

- “How are you feeling about stepping away from work?”
- “Is there anything about this transition that feels difficult?”
- “What would help you feel more confident going into this next phase?”



### Keep Them Included

Small gestures matter:

- “We’ve got a team event coming up - you’d be very welcome if you felt like coming.”

This helps maintain connection and belonging.

# Final Thoughts for Line Managers

You don't need to have all the answers.

What matters most is that you:

- Stay present
- Stay thoughtful
- Keep communication open
- Respond with warmth and consistency

The best conversations are not perfect - they are the ones where the employee feels **supported, respected, and understood.**

## Want to Support Your Line Managers Further?

At Beyond EAP, we support organisations through:

- Line Manager Training
- Specialist Parental Coaching
- Support for complex life events at work

If you'd like to explore how we can support your organisation:


**Get in touch:** [sandie@beyondeap.co.uk](mailto:sandie@beyondeap.co.uk)


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