

Child and family policy in Finland

Financial support and family leave

The aim of Finland's family policy is to create a safe environment for children to grow up in and to provide parents with the material and psychological means to have and raise children.

In Finland, support for families consists of three elements: financial support, services and various types of family leave. The most important forms of support for families are child benefit, day care services, and maternity and child health clinics.

Financial assistance for families

Maternity grant

Every expectant mother who is a permanent resident in Finland is entitled to a maternity grant when her pregnancy has lasted at least 154 days, provided that she had a health examination before the end of the fourth month of pregnancy. Maternity grants are also available to adoptive parents.

Expectant mothers can choose to receive their maternity grant either as a lump sum in cash or in the form of a maternity package. The maternity pack-

age contains clothes and child care items needed for a new-born child. Most families consequently opt for this "baby box" rather than the cash benefit.

Child benefit

Child benefit is paid from government funds for the support of every child under the age of 17 residing in Finland. Child benefit is tax-free income. Eligibility is not affected by the family's financial situation. The amount depends on the number of children in the family.

Family leave system

Parental leave and childcare leave give both parents an equal opportunity to spend time caring for the child. Parents are entitled to maternity leave, paternity leave and parental leave based on pregnancy, birth and childcare. Maternity allowance, paternity allowance and parental allowance are determined on the basis of previous income and paid for the duration of the leave. Persons with no previous income receive the minimum allowance.

FAMILY LEAVES AND PAYMENTS

