

**Debate Pack**

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By Andy Powell,  
Fintan Codd  
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## Parental leave and pay

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### **Summary**

This briefing contains background information, parliamentary and press material, as well as suggested further reading which Members may find useful when preparing for this debate.

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# 1 Background

## 1.1 Parental leave

The right to parental leave is provided in Part 8 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and Part 3 of the Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999 (SI 1999/3312).

An employee with one year's continuous service may be eligible for unpaid parental leave if s/he has parental responsibility for a child.<sup>1</sup> The employee will be entitled to up to eighteen weeks' leave in respect of any individual child up to the child's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>2</sup> The leave may be taken in one week blocks, up to a maximum of four weeks per year.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2 Other types of family-related leave

Parental leave is separate from maternity/paternity leave. A mother can take up to 52 weeks of maternity leave (39 of which are paid). A father or partner can take up to 2 weeks of paid paternity leave. If a mother curtails her maternity leave she can share the remainder with the father or partner as shared parental leave.<sup>4</sup>

### Maternity leave and pay

The right to maternity leave is set out in Part 8 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and Part 2 of the Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999 (SI 1999/3312).

Maternity leave is a 'day one' right in that all eligible employees are entitled to it irrespective of how long they have worked for their employer.

In order to qualify for statutory maternity pay (SMP) the worker must:

- have worked for the same employer for 26 weeks as at the 15<sup>th</sup> week before the expected week of childbirth,

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<sup>1</sup> *Maternity and Parental Leave etc. Regulations 1999 (SI 1999/3312)*, regulation 13

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, regulations 14-15

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Schedule 2, paras 7-8

<sup>4</sup> Part 8, [Employment Rights Act 1996](#)

- earn £120 per week (or an average of £120 per week if the hours vary from week to week),
- notify her employer at least 28 days before she wants the payments to start, and
- have given her employer proof that she is pregnant.

SMP is paid for up to 39 weeks:

- for the first six weeks it is paid at a weekly rate of 90 per cent of average weekly earnings (the “enhanced rate”); and
- for the next 33 weeks it is 90 per cent of average weekly earnings or £151.97, whichever is lower (the “flat rate”).

Maternity Allowance is available to individuals that do not qualify for SMP (e.g. the self-employed). Maternity Allowance is paid for up to 39 weeks at the flat rate, although the amount an individual will receive depends on their [eligibility](#).<sup>5</sup>

## Adoption leave and pay

The right to adoption leave is set out in Part 8 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and Part 3 of the Paternity and Adoption Leave Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2788).<sup>6</sup>

Adoptive parents (or parents in a surrogacy arrangement) may nominate one parent to be the ‘primary adopter’, who may be entitled to adoption leave. The other parent may be entitled to paternity leave.

The operation of adoption leave and pay is now in line with maternity leave and pay, as set out above.

The right to adoption leave and pay is available to parents of a newly placed child, but not those adopting a child they are already fostering (e.g. through an adoption order).<sup>7</sup> This is because the leave (as with maternity and paternity leave) is provided to allow parents to bond with a new child.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Maternity Allowance, Gov.uk

<sup>6</sup> [Employment Rights Act 1996](#), Section 8 and [The Paternity and Adoption Leave Regulations 2002](#), Part 3

<sup>7</sup> See: *Paternity and Adoption Leave Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2788)*, regulations 15 and 17

<sup>8</sup> See: DTI, [Work and Parents: Competitiveness and Choice, a framework for adoption leave](#), May 2001, para 22

## Paternity leave and pay

The right to paternity leave is set out in Part 8 of the Employment Rights Act 1996 and Part 2 of the Paternity and Adoption Leave Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2788).<sup>9</sup>

Paternity leave lasts for one or two weeks, at the parent's choice, which must be taken in one go within the first 56 days of the child's arrival.

To qualify for paternity leave an individual must have been employed with the same employer for not less than 26 weeks as at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> week before the expected week of the child's birth.<sup>10</sup>

Paternity leave is available to both males and females, provided the individual in question is parenting a child and is the partner of the mother or adopter. The rights to paternity leave apply to the member of an adopting couple who is not eligible for adoption leave and pay (i.e. not the "primary" adopter).

Paternity pay is paid at the flat rate of £151.97 or 90 per cent of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower. In order to qualify for paternity pay the individual must earn at least £120 per week before tax.<sup>11</sup>

## Shared Parental Leave and Pay

The Children and Families Act 2014 amended Part 8 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, creating rights to Shared Parental Leave (SPL) and Shared Parental Pay (SPP).<sup>12</sup> A substantial body of regulations made under the Act implement the scheme.<sup>13</sup>

SPL and SPP become accessible once the mother or primary adopter curtails her maternity or adoption leave and pay (excluding the period of compulsory maternity leave, which cannot be curtailed). The unused balance of 52 weeks' leave and 39 weeks' pay can then be shared in blocks between the parents. The parents can take the blocks of leave at different times or concurrently, although must provide their employers with eight weeks' notice before beginning a block.

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<sup>9</sup> [Employment Rights Act 1996](#), Section 8 and [The Paternity and Adoption Leave Regulations 2002](#), Part 2

<sup>10</sup> Paternity and Adoption Leave Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2788), [regulation 4](#)

<sup>11</sup> See Statutory Paternity Pay and Statutory Adoption Pay (General) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2822); Statutory Paternity Pay and Statutory Adoption Pay (Weekly Rates) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2818)

<sup>12</sup> Employment Rights Act 1996, ss.75E-75K

<sup>13</sup> Principally, the following regulations: *Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/3050)*; *Statutory Shared Parental Pay (General) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/3051)*; *Maternity and Adoption Leave (Curtailed of Statutory Rights to Leave) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/3052)*; *Maternity Allowance (Curtailed) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/3053)*; *Statutory Maternity Pay and Statutory Adoption Pay (Curtailed) Regulations 2014 (SI 2014/3054)*.

## 1.3

# Government proposals

## Good Work Plan consultation

In July 2019, the Government published three Good Work Plan consultations, one of which concerned proposals to support families. Despite being labelled a Good Work Plan consultation, it does not actually relate to any commitments made in the [Good Work Plan](#).<sup>14</sup>

The 2019 consultation sought views on three broad issues:

- 1 High level options for reforming family-related leave and pay;
- 2 Introducing a right to neonatal leave and pay for parents with premature or sick babies; and
- 3 Proposals to encourage transparency about flexible working and parental leave policies.

As of March 2022, the Government has not published a response to the full consultation, but it has published a response to the proposals on Neonatal leave and pay.

## Reforming family-related leave and pay

First, the Government sought views on options for reforming various types of family-related leave and pay.<sup>15</sup> It asked whether paternity leave or pay should be increased and to which priority should be given. It also asked whether a father or partner should be able to take enhanced leave at any time or whether it should only be available once the mother has returned to work. The Government sought views on whether shared parental pay should be enhanced, whether the availability of the right should continue to be dependent on the mother curtailing her maternity rights or whether each parent should be given a pot of leave and pay. It also asked how these reforms could impact on maternity entitlements. Finally, the Government asked whether there should be some level of pay for parental leave in order to incentivise take-up.

The Government also sought views on a more “radical” reforms of family-related leave and pay, including creating a single family entitlement, rather than individual entitlements. The Government asked for views on the various objectives that underpin its family-related leave policies.

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<sup>14</sup> BEIS, [Good Work Plan: Proposals to support families](#), 23 September 2021

<sup>15</sup> HM Government, [Good Work Plan: Proposals to support families](#), July 2019, pp. 22-28.

## Neonatal leave and pay

Second, following the internal BEIS review, the Government sought views on a proposal to create a right to neonatal leave and pay.<sup>16</sup> The Government has proposed that neonatal leave would be available as a day one right, while neonatal pay would be subject to the same requirement of continuous service as maternity or shared parental pay. Parents whose baby spends two weeks or more in neonatal care would each be entitled to a week of leave per week the baby is in care, subject to a potential cap. Neonatal pay would be paid at the statutory rate. For administrative convenience, the Government proposes that neonatal leave and pay would be added at the end of a period of maternity, paternity leave. The Government acknowledged that it would have to consider how this would apply for those on shared parental leave.

Following the consultation, the Government has committed to introduce both leave and statutory pay for parents of babies in neonatal care. This will be introduced “once parliamentary time allows”.<sup>17</sup>

## Requirements of employers

Finally, the Government sought views on requiring employers to be transparent about flexible working and family-related leave policies.<sup>18</sup> The Government sought views on a proposal to require employers with more than 250 employees to publish their flexible working and family-related leave and pay policies on their website. It also sought views on requiring employers to specify in a job advert whether the role could be undertaken flexibly.

## Employment Bill

In the December 2019 Queen’s Speech the Johnson Government announced an Employment Bill. The [background notes to the Queen’s Speech](#) stated that one of the purposes of the Bill will be to “offer greater protections for workers by prioritising fairness in the workplace, and introducing better support for working families.” However, the only specific commitment was to introduce neonatal leave and pay.

## Other reports and reviews

There have been other reports and reviews on family related leave and pay. In March 2018, the Women and Equalities Select Committee (WESC) published a [report on fathers and the workplace](#). It recommended that paternity leave be made a day one right and that statutory paternity pay be increased to 90% of the recipient’s salary. It also recommended that the Government consider replacing shared parental leave with a right to 12 weeks paternal leave paid

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-44.

<sup>17</sup> HoC debate, [Neonatal Leave and Pay](#), 9 February 2022, C1060

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 46-51.

for four weeks at 90% of salary and for the remaining eight weeks at the statutory rate.

In November 2018, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) also conducted an internal review of provision for parents of sick or premature babies.<sup>19</sup>

## 1.4

### International comparisons

The International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research, a network of experts, publish an annual report on family-related leave, including individual country profiles. Their [2021 report](#) provides an overview of 47 countries, including many in Europe. Chapter 4 of the report includes a cross-country comparison with a [table](#) providing information on all the countries that were surveyed in section 3.<sup>20</sup>

The report provides the following summary on the availability of parental leave across different countries:

Broadly, countries divide into those where the total length of Parental leave available is less than 15 months; and those where continuous leave is available for up to three years or more. The former includes Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and the UK. The latter ('long leave' countries) includes the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Russia, Slovakia, and Spain. Sweden falls in between the two: paid leave is expressed in days (to emphasise that it can be taken very flexibly), roughly equivalent to 18 months if taken continuously, while each parent is also entitled to take unpaid leave until a child is 18 months of age – this is similar in Latvia. So, too, is this the case in Australia, Austria, Korea, and Romania, with leave lasting potentially until a child's second birthday. Greece is also exceptional, with four months per parent in the private sector and 60 months per parent in the public sector. Note, too, that some countries supplement Parental leave with childcare leave, so extending the period available (see below).

Parental leaves (benefits) are a family entitlement in nine countries, to be divided between parents as they choose (Austria, Canada - Québec, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Slovakia); an individual entitlement in 20 countries (Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom); a mixed entitlement (part family, part individual) in seven countries (Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Romania, and Sweden); while in Malta it is a family entitlement for workers in the public sector and an individual entitlement for private sector workers. In most cases, individual

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<sup>19</sup> [HC Deb 13 November 2018 vol 649 c81WH](#).

<sup>20</sup> International Network on Leave Policies & Research, [Leave Policies & Research](#) (accessed 21 March 2022)

entitlements are non-transferable, so if not used by a parent, these are foregone (following the ‘use it or lose it’ principle); but in the case of Croatia, Czech Republic, New Zealand, Slovenia, and Sweden, some amount of unused entitlements can be transferred to a partner. In this column of the table, only entitlement to leave is taken into consideration, and not entitlement to any payments. For example, in Latvia, there is an independent entitlement to leave for both parents, but not to the accompanying payment, which is a family entitlement.

A majority of countries in the review (30) provide some element of payment; only Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Malta, Netherlands, Spain, and the UK make no payment. Payment policy varies considerably and can include a ceiling on benefit payments.<sup>21</sup>

The right to parental leave exists in EU law. The [Parental Leave Directive \(2010/18/EU\)](#) provides a right to four months of parental leave. It is currently for Member States to decide whether it should be paid. They can also choose to make it transferable.<sup>22</sup>

In August 2022, the Parental Leave Directive (2010/18/EU) will be replaced by a new [Work-Life Balance Directive \(EU 2019/1158\)](#). This will amend the right to parental leave so that at least two months are paid and non-transferable. As the UK is no longer bound by EU law, it is under no obligation to implement this directive.<sup>23</sup>

In EU law, as in UK law, parental leave is separate from maternity and paternity leave. However, not all EU Member States have a clear distinction between maternity/paternity leave and parental leave.

Parental leave models can vary significantly across the EU. In 2018, the European Commission published an [overview of paternity and parental leave provision in the EU](#).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> International Network on Leave Policies & Research, 17th International Review of Leave Policies and Related Research 2021, August 2021, pp

<sup>22</sup> EUR-Lex, [Council Directive 2010/18/EU](#), 8 March 2010

<sup>23</sup> EUR-Lex, [Directive \(EU\) 2019/1158](#), 20 June 2019

<sup>24</sup> European Commission, [Paternity and parental leave policies across the European Union Assessment of current provision](#), 6 August 2018

## 2

## Press articles

[Workplace Divide For Child-carers and Adult-carers in UK](#)

HR News

9 March 2022

[Rewriting the post-Covid contract for dual-career couples](#)

FT.com

8 March 2022

[Women work for free for almost two months a year, damning research finds](#)

Independent

25 February 2022

[Use of shared parental leave dropped 17 per cent during Covid, study finds](#)

People Management

1 November 2021

[Paternity leave: The hidden barriers keeping men at work](#)

BBC News

13 July 2021

## 3

## Press notices

### [Government's response to Impact of Covid-19 on new parents report demonstrates a "continued lack of action", say MPs](#)

House of Commons Petitions Select Committee

7 March 2022

The Petitions Committee has today published the Government's response to the Committee's report on the ongoing impact of covid-19 on new parents.

- [Read the Government's response to the Committee's report \[HTML\]](#)
- [Read the Government's response to the Committee's report \[PDF\]](#)
- [Read a summary of the Committee's report](#)

The report, "[Impact of covid-19 on new parents: one year on](#)", was published in October 2021, and followed the Committee's [inquiry](#) and first report in 2020 into the impact of covid-19 on new parents. That inquiry was launched after an e-petition created at the start of the pandemic - '[Extend maternity leave by 3 months with pay in light of COVID-19](#)' - received 238,884 signatures.

In July 2021, a year on from the publication of its first report, the Committee [took further evidence](#) from campaigners and experts to assess progress against the recommendations made in the report. The Committee also conducted a [survey and online engagement](#), which received over 8,700 responses from new parents and childcare providers. Among its key findings, 77% of new parents said that "the cost of childcare has prevented me from getting the kind of childcare I need", and 93% disagreed that they had been able to access crucial baby and toddler groups over the previous 12 months.

The Committee's 2021 report recommended that the Government publish a dedicated covid-19 recovery strategy for new parents, bringing together all Government actions to support this group, with a clear delivery plan.

The Government's [response](#) points to the £500 million investment announced in the 2021 Autumn Spending Review for family and early years services. This goes some way to addressing the 'baby blind spot' in covid-19 recovery spending identified in the Committee's report. However, the response contains no new commitments in response to the concerns raised and recommendations made in the report.

The response also:

- Fails to commit dedicated catch-up funding to deal with the backlog in parental mental health and health visiting services highlighted in the Committee's report.

- Repeats the Government’s commitment, originally given in its response to the Committee’s first report on this issue, to strengthening redundancy protections for new and expectant mothers, but again fails to set a timetable for doing so.
- Rejects the call, backed by [more than 113,000 petitioners](#), for an independent review into the funding and affordability of childcare.

The response also rejects the Committee’s recommendation that entitlements to employment leave and financial support for new parents be extended to groups that currently don’t have access to these, including self-employed adoptive parents. The Committee has scheduled a debate on support for new adoptive parents, which was prompted by the e-petition, ‘[Make self-employed people eligible for statutory adoption pay](#)’, in Westminster Hall on 14 March.

#### Chair of the Petitions Committee comments

Catherine McKinnell MP said:

“Although most restrictions have now been lifted, the pandemic’s impact will continue to be felt for years to come – especially by new parents, for whom help was cut off when they most needed it.

“The investment in family services in last Autumn’s Spending Review was welcome. But the Government’s failure to provide new catch-up funding for health visiting and parental mental health leaves new parents facing an accumulation of adversity without the support they deserve.

“The Government’s failure to make progress on stronger employment protections for new mothers, which it promised in its response to our previous report, is particularly troubling. Its continued refusal to extend parental leave and pay entitlements to all new parents and guardians is equally concerning.

“This response is all the more disappointing as it is the second time the Government has turned a blind eye to the impacts we have highlighted. This continued lack of action means new parents’ needs will continue to go unrecognised and unmet, with long-term consequences for their wellbeing and their babies’ health and development.”

#### Background

The Committee’s latest report on the impact of covid-19 on new parents found that little progress had been made on the vast majority of the recommendations made by the Committee in its first report on this issue, published in July 2020.

- [Read the full report \(HTML\)](#)
- [Read the full report \(PDF\)](#)

- [Read the report summary](#)
- [Read the report's conclusions and recommendations](#)
- [Find all publications related to this inquiry, including oral and written evidence](#)

In addition to calling for additional mental health support funding, which the Government has since announced, the Committee requested that the Government publish a dedicated covid-19 recovery strategy for new parents. Other key recommendations included:

- Provide additional funding and resources to allow catch-up mental health support for new parents impacted by covid-19 and accelerate planned capacity-building in perinatal mental health services
- Fund local authorities to arrange in-person visits to new parents by the appropriate local authority, voluntary organisation, or health visiting staff by the end of the year
- Review monitoring and enforcement activity relating to employers' health and safety obligations to pregnant women
- Legislate as soon as possible to introduce the planned extension of redundancy protections for new and expectant mothers
- Commission a review into the funding and affordability of childcare which will consider how to provide greater financial security to the sector following the pandemic and ensure childcare provision meets the needs of new parents seeking to return to work

### [New research from Vodafone reveals the cost to businesses of having poor parental leave](#)

TechUK

21 January 2022

Employers who do not offer sufficient parental leave risk losing top talent. Vodafone urges Government and employers to review parental leave policies and ensure they meet the expectations of younger workers.

#### Key findings:

- More than a third (37%) of people, and more than half (55%) of 18–34-year-olds, would be **more likely to apply for a job** if they knew the employer had good parental leave policies.

- More than one-in-10 people (12%), and one-in-four 18–34-year-olds (25%), have **decided not to apply for a job** because they thought the employer’s parental leave policies were inadequate.
- More than half (52%) of people, including two-thirds (64%) of those aged 18-34, agree that parental leave policies **are a useful indication of whether an organisation is a good employer**, even if they are not planning to have a baby themselves.
- Around one-in-10 people (9%) have **turned down a job offer** because they thought the employer’s parental leave policies were inadequate. This doubles to more than one-in-five (21%) 18–34 year-olds.

These findings clearly demonstrate the value of employers offering enhanced parental leave policies, and the positive impact this could have on attracting and retaining young talent and creating a better working environment for all employees.

The report makes recommendations for both the Government and employers on how to provide greater support for new parents and caregivers in the workplace. This includes advice on flexible working practices where possible, reviewing the effectiveness of shared parental leave, considering whether the statutory right to take up to two weeks of paternity leave is still fit for purpose and providing the digital tools for employers to support flexible working.

Vodafone’s [Global Parental Leave Policy](#) offers 16 weeks of fully paid leave to all non-birthing parents, regardless of gender, sexual orientation or length of service, allowing for more equitable caring responsibilities and minimising the impact on the careers of new parents.

The findings are part of [a study](#) – ‘Lost Connections: Supporting parents and caregivers in the workplace’ – commissioned by Vodafone, which argues that employers should be transparent about the benefits they offer to new and expectant parents and caregivers to ensure they attract and retain the top talent. [Find out more.](#)

### [New online tool to help working families make the most of shared parental leave](#)

**DBEIS**

**17 Jun 2021 18:27**

The new tool will help expectant parents share time off in the early stages of their baby’s life, allowing them to check eligibility and pay entitlement with the Shared Parental Leave and Pay scheme.

- New online tool will make it easier for expectant parents to access and understand Shared Parental Leave and Pay

- working families can check their eligibility for the scheme in 5 minutes, check what pay they'd be entitled to, and notify their employer using the tool
- scheme supports mums aiming to return to work and dads and partners who want to be more involved in the early stages of their child's life

A new online tool will help expectant parents share time off in the key, early stages of their baby's life.

Launched yesterday, the new tool will make it easier for expectant parents to access and understand Shared Parental Leave and Pay. Parents will be able to [check their eligibility](#) for the scheme, [calculate their pay entitlement](#), as well as downloading all the documents they need to secure leave from their employer.

Shared Parental Leave and Pay allows working parents across Great Britain to share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay in the first year of their child's life (or within a year of placement if the child is adopted).

Government research has found that nearly all parents who used Shared Parental Leave would recommend it – and the new tool will ensure more families can make the most of the scheme to spend time with their new-borns.

Labour Markets Minister Paul Scully yesterday said:

Nothing is more special than seeing your child hit those major milestones like smiling for the first time or starting to crawl – and both parents should get to share in that joy.

Shared Parental Leave gives working parents the power to balance and share childcare and work, and this new tool will mean it's quicker and easier to get that precious time with your baby.

Shared leave and pay gives working families much more choice and flexibility about who cares for their child in the first year, and when. The scheme helps working women exercise more choice about when to go back to work, while also encouraging and supporting dads and partners to take a greater role in their child's care if they wish.

By supporting parents who want to share childcare responsibilities, shared leave will help the UK build back fairer, with a more flexible working environment that helps everyone access workplace opportunities.

Jane Gratton, Head of People Policy at the BCC, yesterday said:

Shared parental leave supports parents to balance family and career priorities and helps employers retain skills. This tool is a welcome initiative

that will hopefully simplify the SPL process, improve access and take-up, and encourage diversity in the workplace.

Jennifer Liston-Smith, Head of Thought Leadership at Bright Horizons, yesterday said:

We know that the most successful businesses are those which recognise the family and care responsibilities of their staff. Bright Horizons is privileged and proud to partner with many employers of choice in the matter of the work and family support they provide to their people. Parenting is what parents do, right from birth or adoption and regardless of gender or family structure. Parental Leave should mirror this and supporting parents to share that first year of leave is an important step. Bright Horizons has actively supported Shared Parental Leave since its inception.

Simon Kelleher, Head of Policy at Working Families, yesterday said:

When introduced in 2015, Shared Parental Leave represented an important step forward by providing parents greater choice and flexibility around how they manage work and caring arrangements in the first year of a new-born's life. The option to share periods of leave, or alternate between blocks of leave and work, helps support the aspirations of mothers, fathers and partners, and allows them to balance their responsibilities according to their circumstances.

We know from enquiries to our advice service that many parents and employers can find the system confusing at times, so we welcome the launch of this new tool which will enable more families to benefit from planning their parental leave in a way that suits them.

#### Notes to Editors

Parents are able to agree a pattern of leave that works for them and their employer, and can take leave and pay in up to 3 blocks (more if their employer agrees), returning to work between periods of leave, if they wish:

- eligible parents can spend up to 6 months off work together or alternatively stagger their leave and pay so that one of them is always at home with their child in the first year

Parents also have access to up to 20 Shared Parental Leave in Touch Days (SPLiT days) each. Parents can use one or more of their SPLiT Days to work during a week that they are on Shared Parental Leave:

- this enables both parents to trial part-time working whilst they are on Shared Parental Leave, for example the father and/or the mother could use his SPLiT days to trial working a 2, 3, or 4 day week

## 4

# Parliamentary material

[Parliamentary material on parental leave \(2019-\)](#)

## 5

## Further reading

[Your paternity leave, pay and other rights – ACAS](#)

[Who Cares? Business in the Community & Ipsos research reveals the great workplace divide](#) , IPSOS/Business in the Community, March 2022

[Making flexible working the default](#), DBEIS, 2021

[International comparative information on parental leave](#), International Network on Leave, 2021

[Parliamentary material on parental leave \(2019-\)](#)

[Parental and paternity leave – uptake by fathers](#), Eurofound, 2019

[Paternity and parental leave policies across the European Union](#), European Commission, 2018

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