

# Landmark Review of Parental Leave Launched

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Millions of families could benefit from a better start for their children as the [government](#) launches a major review of the parental leave and pay system – the first of its kind in Britain. The review – part of the Government’s Plan for Change – will look at the whole system, from maternity and paternity leave to shared parental leave, to see how it can work better for parents and employers.

Right now, the system is complicated and doesn’t always give families the support they need. One in three dads don’t take paternity leave because they can’t afford to, and take-up of shared parental leave remains very low.

This is a unique moment in family life – the arrival of a child is joyful, but also physically and emotionally demanding. It’s a time when new mothers need rest and recovery, and when both parents need space to bond with their baby and adjust to a new way of life.

That’s why it’s so important that fathers and partners are able to be present – not just to support their partner’s recovery, but to play an active role in caring for their child from day one.

Research shows that better parental leave can help close the gender pay gap and boost the economy by billions of pounds.

The review will gather views from parents, employers and experts across the country and will end with a roadmap for possible reforms.

This delivers on a key pledge in the Plan to Make Work Pay and supports two of the government’s core missions – growing the economy and breaking down barriers to opportunity.

Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner said “Those early years are the most special time for families, but too many struggle to balance their work and home lives.

“Supporting working parents isn’t just the right thing to do – it’s vital for our economy.

“Through our Plan to Make Work Pay, we’re already improving the parental leave system with new day 1 rights. This ambitious review will leave no stone unturned as we deliver for working families.”

Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said: “The arrival of a child, whether through birth or adoption, is a life-changing moment. We want to make sure parents get the support they need to balance work and family life.

“Campaigners have long called for change, and this Government has listened. This review is our chance to reset the system and build something that works for modern families and businesses.”

Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall said: “Every parent should have the chance to spend time with their children during those precious early years.

“This review delivers on our Plan for Change to support families and give children the best start in life.

“By listening to parents and employers across the country, we’ll build a system that works for today’s working families.”

Jane van Zyl, CEO at Working Families: “We’re pleased to see the Government take this important step forward and welcome the Terms of Reference set out in the parental leave review. It’s encouraging that several of the key asks in our open letter, signed by 22 leading organisations and 16 academics, have been taken on board, particularly the commitment to deliver a comprehensive review, which considers statutory pay levels and will consult the public.

“Backing up the Government’s findings, our own research shows the current system is falling short, with one in five fathers having no access to parental leave at all, and many others unable to take what they’re entitled to due to financial pressures. This review is a vital opportunity to build a parental leave system that supports the needs of families today.”

George Gabriel, co-founder of The Dad Shift: “The Government’s review of parental leave is the best chance in a generation to improve the system and make sure it actually works for working families.

“When the last Labour government introduced paternity leave it was groundbreaking. But that offer, unchanged since, is now the least generous in Europe. Our broken parental leave has been overlooked for years, and finally sorting it out would be good not only for parents and children but for businesses too. The tens of thousands of mums, dads and future parents that make up our campaign are delighted the Government is delivering its promised review, and ambitious for the change to come.”

Rachel Grocott, CEO of Pregnant then Screwed: “It is great to see this long overdue review of the parental leave system. It’s time for the voices of mums, dads, parents and carers everywhere to be heard.

“After 6 weeks mothers are forced to survive maternity leave on 44% less than the National Minimum Wage, and dads are forced to suck up the same benefits for their 2 weeks. Yet we know improving parental leave helps children get the best start in life, as well as being better for parents’ health and equality at home, and closing gender pay and participation gaps in the workplace too. Investing in parental leave will pay back above and beyond, to the bottom line and to society: it really is a no-brainer.”