

Millions of Low-paid Women Set to Benefit from Stronger Sick Pay as New Rights Come into Force

3 months ago



The TUC has hailed the Employment Rights Act as “an important step forward” for working women as new analysis shows women will disproportionately benefit from new workers’ rights measures rolled out from next month.

The analysis came as its annual Women’s Conference wraps up – and on International Women’s Day yesterday (8th March).

Around 4.7 million women are set to benefit from stronger sick pay from April 6.

This includes more than 830,000 women who will benefit from Statutory Sick Pay for the first time. These are the lowest paid women, who are currently not eligible to receive any form of sick pay at all because they earn below the threshold of £125 a week known as the “lower earnings limit”.

Women are twice as likely than men to be earning under this threshold for Statutory Sick Pay.

The analysis also reveals that around 3.9 million working women who are reliant on Statutory Sick Pay will get sick pay from the first day of illness from April – instead of having to wait four days.

The TUC says for too long low paid workers – especially women – have missed out on any form of sick pay. This has meant workers have been left with no choice but to go into work when they are ill, with the risk of spreading and prolonging their illness.

Independent analysis undertaken [for the TUC has shown](#) that as a result the benefits of day one sick pay for the economy will be worth five times the costs.

Parental leave

As well as stronger sick pay, from April this year, dads and partners will have a day one right to paternity leave and all parents will gain the day one right to unpaid parental leave.

The TUC says this is a boost for mums and an important first step but says much more needs to be done to ensure families have access to adequate support.

The union body is calling for the government to ensure the parental leave review delivers increased access to paid parental leave so that mums and dads can better share care.

Zero-hours contracts

The analysis published today also shows over half (54 per cent) of workers on zero-hours contracts are women.

The TUC says the government's plan to introduce a right to guaranteed hours for zero-hours workers could benefit more than 650,000 women, while more than 550,000 men will benefit.

The TUC says zero-hours contracts give employers complete control over workers' hours - and therefore pay - meaning workers don't know how much they will earn each week.

The union body argues that this makes it hard for workers to plan their lives, budget and look after their children.

And it makes it harder for workers to challenge unacceptable behaviour by bosses because of concerns about whether they will be penalised by not being allocated hours in future.

The union body says these figures underline the importance of delivering the ban on exploitative zero hours contracts quickly and in full.

The "Great Steal"

The TUC has said Reform UK wants to turn the clock back for women at work.

Reform UK says it will rip up the Employment Rights Act, the Renters' Rights Act and separately vowed to legalise discrimination by ripping up the Equality Act.

The TUC has dubbed Reform's proposed Great Repeal Bill, which plans to rip up key workers' rights and renter protections, the "The Great Steal Bill".

TUC General Secretary Paul Nowak said: "For too long women have borne the brunt of a sick pay system that is not fit for purpose, and a culture of exploitative, insecure work.

"Women are more likely to be concentrated in sectors that rely on zero-hours contracts, which has a devastating impact on their pay packets and security at work.

“That’s why the Employment Rights Act is an important step forward for women at work. Putting an end to exploitative zero hours contracts will benefit hundreds of thousands of working women next year, while millions will benefit from stronger sick pay next month.

“But let’s be clear – there is still lots more work to do. From the start of their working lives to retirement, women bear the brunt of a labour market which is still rife with discrimination and pay inequality. That’s why the government needs to turbo-charge its efforts to make work fairer for women.”

On Reform’s plan for women including the “Great Steal Bill” Paul added: “Reform UK wants to turn the clock back for women at work.

“Whether it’s ripping up hard won workers’ rights that disproportionately benefit women or legalising discrimination at the workplace – it’s clear Reform wants to drag us back to the dark ages.”