



News Story  
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## Details of new family friendly proposals announced

The Government has announced details of its proposals for a Work and Families Bill, due to be published very shortly. These include:

- Extending Statutory Maternity Pay and Maternity Allowance from six to nine months from April 2007, with the aim of increasing it to a year by the end of the Parliament, also including extending eligibility for additional maternity leave.
- Extending the right to request flexible working to carers of adults from April 2007. There will be consultation on the definition of 'carer' early next year.
- Permitting new fathers to take up to six months' paternity leave at Statutory Paternity pay rates during the child's first year, which can only be taken if the child's mother has agreed to forego an equivalent period of her maternity leave and returned to work. There will be further consultation on the details of the scheme but it would appear that the mother must re! turn to work after six months but before the end of her maternity leave period.
- Introducing measures to help employers manage the administration of maternity, adoption and paternity leave and pay.
- Introducing 'keep in touch' days so that where employers and employees agree, a woman on maternity leave can go into work for a few days, without losing her right to maternity leave or a week's Statutory Maternity Pay.
- Extending the period of notice for return from maternity leave to two months, enabling employers to more effectively plan for return to work.
- Making clear that employers can make reasonable contact with their employees on maternity leave to help employers plan and ease the mother's return to work.

Other measures, which will be subject to consultation in the Bill, are:

- A power to increase the maximum weekly amount payable for compensation payments in redundancy, unfair dismissal and insolvency.
- An enabling power to prevent bank holidays from being included in statutory minimum annual leave entitlement.

Consultation on the latter provision is bound to prove contentious for small businesses, many of which include the eight bank holidays in calculating their employees' four weeks statutory minimum holiday entitlement. If this provision is approved, it leaves many employers with having to fund an extra eight days of annual leave entitlement for each employee.

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