



News Story  
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## Civil Partnership Act 2004 in force from 5 December 2005

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 will come into force on 5 December 2005. It has implications for employers who have employees who are part of a same-sex couple. Once in force, the Act enables same-sex couples to form a civil partnership by formally registering as civil partners. The Act also makes provision for civil partners to be treated in the same way as married spouses in relation to certain benefits and obligations, including some related to employment.

Same-sex couples that have entered into a civil partnership are given the following rights:

- Extension of the entitlement to paternity and adoption leave and statutory paternity and statutory adoption pay.
- Extension of the statutory right to request flexible working arrangements.

In addition, a civil partner who is treated less favourably than a married ! partner will be able to bring a claim for discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation. It is not possible to justify less favourable treatment of a civil partner as compared to a married partner unless the employer can show that being heterosexual is a genuine occupational requirement.

Employers should now carry out an audit of their formal and informal policies and procedures to ensure that benefits offered to married partners are also made available to civil partners. This might include items such as private health insurance, life assurance, time off for weddings, the provision of a wedding gift, etc.

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