

# Fathers to be offered six months leave [GB] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

The government is to announce that fathers should have the right to six months' unpaid paternity leave independent of the decision of the female partner to take leave.

Ministers regard the move as central to making fathers feel more responsible for the upbringing of their children. They believe it also reflects the importance of parents being present in the crucial first stages of their child's life.

Previously the government had been proposing that the mother and father should be entitled to share the leave but the plan, common in Scandinavia, is now deemed unworkable in Britain.

Critics will claim the new rights will rarely be taken up since no additional state or company financial support will be provided.

At present fathers are entitled to two weeks' paid paternity leave set at a minimum government support of £106 a week. A father taking the full six months off would be entitled to take their company to an industrial tribunal if the firm refused to give them back their original job.

Previously trailed maternity rights will also be confirmed this week allowing mothers to enjoy nine months paid maternity leave from April 2007, and a year from 2009.

Some of the proposals were immediately attacked by the CBI and other employers groups as deeply worrying. Separate rights for carers are also being planned.

Business will be seeking exemptions for small firms and requiring lengthy continuous employment record before the rights kick in. The CBI's deputy director general John Cridland said: "The new right for fathers is very different from shared maternity leave which was a better option for business".

But the plan is intended to go beyond bringing a better work life balance to families, and seems to be part of a fundamental rethink in Labour about the role of the family.

- reprinted from the Guardian

**Region:** Europe <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** gender <sup>[3]</sup>

maternity and parental leave <sup>[4]</sup>

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