

# Mothers 'to get one year's leave' [GB] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

New mothers would be entitled to a year's paid leave after the birth of their baby under proposals set out yesterday by Margaret Hodge, the Children's Minister.

In a speech on families and child care, Ms Hodge said that paid maternity leave should be doubled from six months, but emphasised that part of the time should be reserved for fathers.

Ministers are eager to help fathers to play a more central role in bringing up their children, but are concerned that the numbers who make use of existing rights to time off and flexible work have been low.

Research in Sweden has suggested that even when paternity leave is paid at a much higher rate than the Pounds 100 a week on offer in Britain, take-up is still only 35 per cent.

Ms Hodge said that if part of a year of paid leave is restricted to fathers, it may encourage more families to use it. "We should not naturally assume that this role falls on the mother alone. Parents themselves, not government, are best placed to decide who should stay at home and care for their own child," she said in a lecture to the Social Market Foundation.

If paid maternity leave is extended to a year, up to a month could be set aside for fathers, currently entitled to two weeks of paid leave.

Labour plans to make the family a key theme of its general election campaign, seeing it as a key dividing line with the Tories, who are yet to come forward with their policies on working parents.

- reprinted from The Times, London

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

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

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

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