

Millions of workers get new access to sick pay and parental leave

7.4.2026 - | Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs

Landmark employment rights reforms kick into force.

- Millions of employees to benefit from reforms to Statutory Sick Pay, ensuring they can take time off when sick without worrying about going without pay.
- New rights to paternity leave from the first day in a new job, helping families balance work and home life.
- Changes are part of the Employment Rights Act, which will benefit over 18 million workers across the UK and make work pay for everyone.

The world of work has today [6th April] been upgraded for the 21st century, as landmark employment rights reforms kick into force.

From today, employees will receive Statutory Sick Pay from their first day of sickness absence – rather than having to wait until the fourth day, regardless of how much they're getting paid. This will benefit millions of people across the United Kingdom, who will get around 400 million a year extra in sick pay.

By ensuring people can rest and recover without fear of losing income, the reforms are expected to help reduce the duration of sickness absences, boost productivity, and limit the spread of illnesses.

32,000 new fathers and partners have also gained the right to paternity leave from the first day in a new job – rather than having to wait six months to be eligible. New day one rights to unpaid parental leave have also begun, which will benefit 1.5 million working parents across the UK who will no longer have to wait a year before qualifying.

Business Secretary, Peter Kyle said:

“Day one rights mean exactly that: rights that are there for you from the moment you start a job, and from the moment you get sick.

“Whether you're a low-paid employee who's been forced to work while unwell, or a new parent who wants to be there for their family, these changes are for you. We're delivering the most significant upgrade to workers' rights in a generation”

From today, parents will also be granted a new right to time off following the death of a child's mother or primary adopter, through new Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave – hard fought for by campaigners including Aaron Horsey and the charity Gingerbread.

The Fair Work Agency will also be launching on 7th April, bringing together three separate agencies to ensure employment rights can be enforced more effectively and efficiently.

Employment Rights Minister, Kate Dearden said:

“No one should have to drag themselves into work when they’re unwell because they can’t afford not to — and no new parent should miss out on time with their child because they haven’t been in their job long enough.

“These reforms put that right. This is what it means to make work pay for everyone.”

Minister for Employment, Dame Diana Johnson said:

“No one should ever have to choose between their health and earning a living.

“For too long, sick employees have had to make the impossible decision between losing out on a day’s pay or returning to work while ill.

“Today’s landmark changes will support employees to recover while providing businesses with the peace of mind that their workforce can return to work healthier and more productive.”

Notes to editors

- Journalists seeking employer case studies on SSP to support their reporting can contact the MS Society: pressoffice@mssociety.org.uk
- Journalists seeking employer and business case studies to support their reporting on SSP can contact The Centre for Progressive Change to request examples: andy.may@centreforprogressivechange.org
- The Dad Shift can be contacted for case studies of fathers who have faced barriers to paternity leave, at press@dadshift.org.uk and 07917824009.
- Working Families can also be contacted for case studies of fathers who have missed out on paternity leave, at sarah.murray@WorkingFamilies.org.uk and 07812 462 394
- Employment Rights Act reforms in force for employees from 6 April 2026 include: strengthened Statutory Sick Pay; day one rights to Statutory Paternity Leave and Unpaid Parental Leave; strengthened Collective Redundancy protections; a simplified trade union recognition process; and strengthened whistleblowing protections.
- Statutory Sick Pay will be paid to employees in the UK at the lower of 123.25 or 80% of average weekly earnings per week, uprated annually in line with CPI.
- From 6 April 2026, Bereaved Partner’s Paternity Leave also comes into force.
- The Fair Work Agency will be launching on 7th April. From 7 April 2026, please access services on the Government website for the Fair Work Agency which will be <https://www.gov.uk/fair-work-agency>.
- From early April, employers with 250 or more employees will have the option to publish a voluntary action plan alongside their gender pay gap data on the government reporting service. This will outline the steps they’re taking to address their gap, and support employees experiencing menopause.

For further details, visit [New employment rights: Guidance for businesses and workers](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/millions-of-workers-get-new-access-to-sick-pay-and-parental-leave>