

Press release: New 'Share the joy' campaign promotes shared parental leave rights for parents

- new campaign shows parents that they can both share childcare in their baby's first year, and maintain their careers, with Shared Parental Leave
- around 285,000 couples every year qualify for Shared Parental Leave, but take up could be as low as 2%
- the campaign is part of the government's commitment to raise awareness of employment rights, in a drive to boost job satisfaction and productivity as part of the modern Industrial Strategy and Good Work plan

More parents are today encouraged to take up the offer of Shared Parental Leave in their baby's first year, as the government launches a new advertising campaign to raise awareness of the opportunity.

The workplace right for eligible parents allows them to share up to 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of pay after having a baby. They can take time off separately or they can be at home together for up to 6 months. Around 285,000 couples every year are eligible but take up could be as low as 2% and around half of the general public are unaware that the option exists for parents.

The campaign encourages parents to 'Share the joy' and will aim to reach them through digital website advertising, social media, adverts in train stations and on commuter routes. A new website will provide detailed information and guidance.

It launches days after the government set out its [Good Work Plan](#) to deliver the pledge to not just protect but build on workers' rights. This is a vital part of the government's [Industrial Strategy](#) – a long-term plan to build a Britain fit for the future by helping businesses create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK.

Business Minister Andrew Griffiths said:

Shared Parental Leave gives choice to families. Dads and partners don't have to miss out on their baby's first step, word or giggle – they can share the childcare, and share the joy.

Employers can reap the benefits too. We know that flexibility in work is proven to create happier, more loyal and more productive workforces.

Providing truly flexible employment options is a key part of the Industrial Strategy, the government's long-term plan to build a

Britain fit for the future by helping businesses create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK.

Shared Parental Leave was introduced in 2015 to offer choice to eligible parents when it comes to childcare, and allow mothers to return to work sooner if they wish to. The policy benefits employers who can retain talent in their workforce and can contribute to closing their gender pay gap.

Minister for Women Victoria Atkins, said:

Providing parents with choice and flexibility in how they balance childcare responsibilities is a key step towards achieving equality in the workplace and beyond.

Shared parental leave is good for parents, children and employers. I am very pleased that this campaign will raise awareness of its benefits and, as a result, give more parents the chance to make informed decisions about what's best for their families.

This government is determined to tackle and ultimately close the gender pay gap. To do this, we need to support women to fulfil their potential in the workplace – and giving women the choice to share childcare with their partners is crucial to that effort.

Employment rights have been placed firmly at the centre of government policy, with Greg Clark, Business Secretary, taking responsibility for promoting the delivery of better quality jobs as part of a drive to boost productivity in the modern Industrial Strategy.

As part of the campaign, parents who have taken Shared Parental Leave have shared their experience of how the policy has benefitted their families.

Leila Reyburn and Tom Markwell work for charities Mind and St Mungo's in London. They had a baby girl, Pearl, in 2016 and decided to take Shared Parental Leave with Leila taking the first 10 months, and Tom taking the final 2 months.

Leila said:

Shared Parental Leave meant that I could say yes when the opportunity came for me to take a promotion at work. I could go back to work early to cover for my line manager while he was on secondment.

But it was also nice that I didn't have to put Pearl in nursery at the same time and know that she was bonding with her dad. It means she now has a strong connection with us both and is equally attached to us both.

Key facts

- the government is spending £1.5 million on a campaign to make sure parents know they can take leave to share the special moments with their child in their baby's first year
- 285,000 couples are eligible to take shared parental leave every year
- according to BEIS research around 49% have heard of shared parental leave, but only 8% claim to know a lot about the policy
- government estimated that between 2% and 8% of eligible parents would take shared parental leave in its first few years and take up is estimated to be in line with those initial expectations
- parents can share up to 50 weeks of leave, taking it in up to three separate blocks, or sharing the time to have up to six months off together
- parents can also share up to 37 weeks of Statutory Shared Parental Pay, this is paid at £140.98 per week – the same as the last 33 weeks of Statutory Maternity Pay
- as well as Shared Parental Leave which was introduced in 2015, the government introduced a right to request flexible working (2014) which applies to around 20 million people
- parents can benefit from up to £2,000-a-year of tax-free childcare per year

Notes to editors

1. The government introduced Shared Parental Leave in 2015 to give greater childcare flexibility for parents in the first year after their baby is born.
2. To take Shared Parental Leave you must be an employee who has worked continuously for the same employer for around 40 weeks (ie from around the time you or your partner became pregnant).
3. Shared Parental Pay is paid at the rate of £140.98 a week or 90% of your average weekly earnings, whichever is lower.
4. The Good Work Plan was published on 7 February 2018 in response to [Matthew Taylor's independent review of modern working practices](#).
5. The reforms are a vital part of the Industrial Strategy, the government's long-term plan to build a Britain fit for the future by helping businesses create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the UK.

6. According to BEIS research around 49% have heard of shared parental leave, but only 8% claim to know a lot about the policy.

7. Shared parental leave campaign is jointly funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Government Equalities Office.