

Parental Rights and Flexible Working Practices

This factsheet aims to provide information on practices that should be used to support the changing workforce in terms of parental and caring arrangements.

Parental Rights

- Maternity leave, pay and benefits are required to be given by employers for 26 weeks if the employee has served 26 weeks. In addition, employers must ensure an employee's health and safety throughout the pregnancy of the employee and for 26 weeks after childbirth. For further information go to: www.maternityalliance.org.uk
- Paternity leave and pay are required to be given by employers for 2 weeks if the employee has served 26 weeks.
- Adoption leave and pay are required to be given by employers for 26 weeks if the employee has served 26 weeks.
- Employees are entitled to 13 weeks of unpaid parental leave if the employee has served one year and if they give the required 21 days notice.

The Maternity and Parental Leave etc. and the Paternity and Adoption Leave (Amendment) Regulations 2006 will come into force on 1 October 2006. The regulations extend entitlement to one year's maternity leave to all pregnant employees; extend notice periods for returning to work later or earlier than agreed from 28 days to eight weeks; and introduce 'keeping in touch days', so that employees can do up to 10 days work during maternity leave by agreement with their employer. The new regulations apply in respect of births and adoptions expected from 1 April 2007 onwards.

For further information on the regulations go to:

www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2006/draft/20064772.htm

Time off for dependents

- All employees have a legal right to take a reasonable period of time off of work to deal with an emergency concerning dependants. Employees have a right not to be dismissed or victimised for exercising their right to time off.

Right to request flexible working

- Parents of children have the right to request flexible working arrangements to care for children. Flexible working includes flexitime, working from home, term-time only working, or job sharing.
- Train managers to understand the organisation's obligations and their own responsibilities in supporting their staff.
- Employers can demonstrate flexible working practices by offering job sharing, career breaks, voluntary reduced time, term-time working, and support with childcare.
- If you offer more generous terms, make sure you offer them to all employees equally, to avoid possible discrimination.

- Incentives for employers to institute enhanced parental rights and flexible working practices include:
 - Greater applicant pools
 - Retention of employees
 - Less costs spent on recruitment
 - Increased productivity
 - Satisfied employees
 - Reduced absenteeism
- Publicise benefits so that employees know what is available to them and build a culture of trust so that employees have confidence in raising any problems with responsibilities.

This information is taken from the publication 'The Good Employment Guide.'
 Find out more at www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/publications

To find out more on the minimum requirements on leave or flexible working arrangements, please visit the following websites:

- 1) **Acas: Provides information relevant to all new and existing employers.**
www.acas.org.uk
- 2) **askNCVO: NCVO provides free information, signposting and services for trustees, staff and volunteers.**
www.askncvo.org.uk
- 3) **Department of Trade and Industry (Dti): For various employment matters.**
www.dti.gov.uk
- 4) **Health and Safety Executive (HSE): For information around health and safety and the law.**
www.hse.gov.uk
- 5) **HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC): Provides information for employers on issues including tax credits and child benefits.**
www.hmrc.gov.uk
- 6) **Working Families: Provide information for employers on flexible working practices and case studies**
www.workingfamilies.org.uk