

Government to Review Parental Leave and Pay for New Parents

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The UK government has announced a comprehensive review of parental leave and pay policies in an effort to better support new parents and promote a more balanced approach to family life. The move comes amid growing calls from parents, employers, and advocacy groups for reforms that reflect the evolving needs of modern families and improve gender equality in the workplace.

Currently, statutory maternity leave in the UK allows up to 52 weeks off, with varying levels of pay depending on the duration, while paternity leave is limited to just two weeks. Shared parental leave, introduced in 2015 to allow parents to split time off more flexibly, has seen low uptake, often due to financial constraints and a lack of awareness. Many fathers report being discouraged from taking time off beyond the basic entitlement, citing cultural stigma and workplace pressures.

The government's review will look closely at these issues, assessing how well current systems are working for families across different income levels and industries. Officials are expected to consider options for expanding paternity leave, increasing statutory pay, and improving access to shared parental leave. The aim is to ensure policies not only support child development and parental well-being but also address long-standing imbalances in caregiving responsibilities.

Campaigners have welcomed the review as a long-overdue step toward fairness and flexibility. Many argue that more inclusive and supportive parental leave policies can lead to stronger family bonds, better mental health for new parents, and higher retention rates for employers. Employers, too, have shown growing interest in more generous leave packages, especially as workplace cultures shift to embrace more family-friendly values.

Ministers say they are committed to listening to a wide range of voices, including working parents, businesses, and equality organizations. While no formal changes have been confirmed, the review signals a potential shift in how the UK approaches early family life and employment rights.

As the government undertakes this review, many hope it will lead to meaningful reforms that reflect the realities of modern parenting, offering all parents the time, support, and financial stability they need to care for their children during the most critical early months.