

Family Leave:

Paternity, Shared Parental and Bereavement

The leave partners and parents can take, what's paid, and the April 2026 changes.

 Last reviewed: October 2026

 GOV.UK · Acas · nidirect · LRA

 England, Wales & Scotland, with Northern Ireland differences

ukworkrights.co.uk

GB: a day-one right from 6 April 2026

- Employees can take paternity leave from their first day of employment (before 6 April 2026 it needed 26 weeks).
- 1 or 2 weeks, taken together or as 2 separate blocks of 1 week.
- Tell your employer before the end of the qualifying week (the 15th week before the week the baby is due), and give the dates at least 28 days before each period of leave.
- Workers are not entitled to paternity leave, but might get statutory paternity pay.

Still needs 26 weeks

- Statutory paternity pay: £194.32 a week or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower (from 6 April 2026), for up to 2 weeks.
- Needs 26 weeks' continuous employment with the same employer by the qualifying week, average earnings of at least £129 a week, and still being employed at the birth.

▲ WATCH OUT

Paternity LEAVE is day one in GB, but paternity PAY still needs 26 weeks.

Sharing up to 50 weeks

- Parents can share up to 50 weeks of leave and up to 37 weeks of pay, by the day before the child's first birthday.
- The mother must first end her maternity leave and pay early (not in the first 2 weeks after the birth — 4 in a factory). Ended maternity pay cannot restart.
- You need 26 weeks with your employer by the end of the 15th week before the week the baby is due. Your partner needs 26 of the 66 weeks before, and to have earned enough (GB: at least £390 in total in 13 of those weeks; NI: at least £30 a week on average in 13 of those weeks).
- Shared Parental Pay: £194.32 a week or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower; you must earn at least £129 a week on average.
- Book with at least 8 weeks' notice, in up to 3 blocks (more if your employer agrees).

Parental and neonatal care leave

- GB: unpaid parental leave is a day-one right from 6 April 2026 (it used to need 1 year).
- GB: neonatal care leave applies from your first day. If your baby is admitted to neonatal care up to 28 days old, you might get up to 12 weeks, once the baby has been in neonatal care for at least 7 days in a row.
- Time off for dependants: reasonable unpaid time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant, with no minimum service.

Parental Bereavement Leave

- If your child dies under 18, or is stillborn after 24 weeks, you can take up to 2 weeks of Parental Bereavement Leave, from day one, within 56 weeks.
- Statutory Parental Bereavement Pay: £194.32 a week or 90% of average weekly earnings, whichever is lower. GB: needs 26 weeks with your employer and average earnings of at least £129 a week — otherwise the leave is unpaid.
- GB: if the mother or main adopter of your child dies in the first year (death on or after 6 April 2026), you may get up to 52 weeks of unpaid Bereaved Partner's Paternity Leave.
- GB: pregnancy loss before 24 weeks currently has no statutory maternity, paternity or bereavement leave; time off is treated as pregnancy-related sickness. A new right is planned (the government says April 2027) — not law yet.

Different service rules

- Paternity leave still needs 26 weeks' service by the end of the 15th week before the week the baby is due. 2 weeks must be taken together, not before the birth, and finished within 56 days. Tell your employer in writing at least 15 weeks before the week the baby is due.
- Unpaid parental leave needs 1 year's service: 18 weeks per child, up to the child's 18th birthday.
- From 6 April 2026, Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay also cover miscarriage before 24 weeks, and the pay is a day-one right (no 26 weeks needed) for a death, stillbirth or miscarriage on or after that date.
- Ask the LRA about notice rules and who counts.

Frequently asked questions

Q I started my job last month. Can I take paternity leave? (GB)

Yes, from 6 April 2026 the leave is a day-one right. The pay still needs 26 weeks.

Q My employer won't pay bereavement pay. Who decides?

Disputes about the pay go to the HMRC Statutory Payment Dispute Team, not a tribunal.

FREE RIGHTS GUIDANCE

Check your *family leave rights*

Get plain-English guidance on your rights and your employer's legal duties.

ACAS

0300 123 1100

acas.org.uk

LRA (NORTHERN IRELAND)

03300 555 300

Labour Relations Agency

HMRC STATUTORY PAYMENT DISPUTE TEAM

Pay disputes

Statutory pay decisions

CITIZENS ADVICE / ADVICE NI

Free advice

citizensadvice.org.uk

UK WORK RIGHTS — FREE GUIDE

**Employee Rights (England,
Wales and Scotland)**

ukworkrights.co.uk/guide-employee-rights-gb.html

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hello@ukworkrights.co.uk

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FREE GUIDE

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