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Alongside the introduction of the new statutory flexible working provisions 6 April 2024, also saw three other new pieces of legislation, which ensure additional employment rights and further protect workers, carers and their families.

Redundancy Protection for Pregnant Women and New Parents.

In 2016, the Equality and Human Rights commission published its research, (based on interviews with 3254 mothers and 3034 employers) into pregnancy and maternity discrimination. One of its findings was that around one in nine mothers (11%) reported that they were either dismissed, made compulsorily redundant, where others in their workplace were not; or treated so poorly they felt they had to leave their job. If this were scaled up to the general population this could mean as many as 54,000 mothers a year.

The government has now introduced increased protection for these workers. Employees taking certain types of parental leave (Maternity, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave), now have protection from redundancy for at least eighteen months. This protection means that if their role is made redundant their employer must give them first refusal of any vacancies; however, they can still be made redundant if no appropriate vacancy is available. Before this change, employees only had this protection during their period of maternity, adoption or shared parental leave.

Protection now begins on the day the employer is first notified of the employee's pregnancy and ends eighteen months after the date of the child's birth. These protections also now extend to eighteen months after the date of adoption for parents taking adoption leave or 18 months after the child's birth in cases where a parent is taking six weeks of shared parental leave.

Carers Leave

Employees are now entitled to take one week of unpaid leave a year if they have caring responsibilities. This entitlement starts from their first day of employment and has no qualifying period. This means that workers can take carers leave to give or arrange care for a dependant who needs long-term care. An employees dependants can include:

- their husband, wife, civil partner or partner
- their child
- their parent
- a person who lives in their household (not tenants, lodgers or employees)
- a person who relies on them for care, such as an elderly neighbour



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A dependant has a long term care need if they have any of the following:

- a disability as defined under the Equality Act 2010
- an illness or injury that is likely to need care for at least 3 months
- a care need related to old age

Employees can take up to one week of carer's leave every 12 months. If they have more than one dependent with care needs, they can still only take the one week. But they can use the week of leave for more than one dependent. If the employee is a parent, they can take up to 18 weeks parental leave to look after their child. This is instead of or in addition to the carer's leave.

Changes to Paternity Leave

New changes to paternity leave have now been introduced which give greater flexibility in how and when the leave can be taken. Employees can now split their two weeks entitlement into two separate one-week blocks, rather than having to take them both together. They can also now take their two weeks at any time within the first year after their child's birth, rather than withing only the first eight weeks after both as was previously required.

Workers now have to give twenty-eight days' notice for each week of paternity leave, down from the fifteen weeks previously, before taken it. However, they still need to give notice of their upcoming entitlement 15 weeks before the expected date of birth.