



## Improving daddy's rights at work

The Liberal Democrats recently announced a manifesto pledge to give fathers six weeks' paternity leave. Currently, fathers are entitled to two weeks' paternity leave, but the Liberal Democrats wish to extend this by a further four weeks.

The coalition is already introducing shared parental leave in April 2015, so what would this additional pledge add? Clearly, this would be a stand-alone right to shared parental leave, so would not be reliant on sharing a year's leave with your partner, unlike the shared parental leave coming into force next year. Although this may encourage new dads to spend more time with their child in their early weeks of life, it will depend on how it is paid. News reports suggest that it will be paid at the same rate as statutory maternity pay, but will this be at the initial higher rate of 90% of actual pay (the current statutory minimum for the first six weeks' maternity leave), or will it be at the much lower, flat rate paid out to mothers after the first six weeks, up until the mother has had 9 months off work? As we reported in our [June newsletter](#) article "Who will be left holding the baby?", recent research by the Institute of Leadership & Management found that a quarter of new fathers took no paternity leave at all, and fewer than one in ten took more than their two weeks' ordinary paternity leave, because an expectation remains within many workplaces that women rather than men will be the ones taking extended periods away from the workplace. Also, only 9% surveyed received more than two weeks on full pay. So, whilst the Liberal Democrats' announcement would give fathers additional, stand-alone rights to take the leave, anecdotal evidence suggests that many fathers will not take that leave unless employers offer to pay that leave at the rate of full pay, and they feel more able to take that time off work within the working culture of their organisation.

As we approach the end of the current term of government, this is no doubt the first of several family-friendly manifesto announcements to come out of the political parties as they gear up to try to win votes next spring.