

A quick reminder of the key employment law changes coming into effect next month.

1. Shared Parental Leave

The much heralded Shared Parental Leave (and Pay) provisions will take effect in April. The new rights apply to parents of babies due on or after **5 April 2015**. Similar rights apply to adoptive parents, as well as to parents of children born through a surrogacy arrangement.

See our [Alert](#) for further details of the new regime.

2. Adoption Leave

The rights of adopters are to be more closely aligned with those of mothers taking maternity leave.

For example, adoption leave will become a "Day 1" right for employed adopters, i.e. there will no longer be a 26-week qualifying period.

Furthermore, Statutory Adoption Pay will be enhanced to 90% of average earnings for the first 6 weeks for the "primary adopter", in line with Statutory Maternity Pay.

The Government is also introducing new rights to take leave and receive pay for approved adopters where a child is placed with them in a fostering-to-adopt capacity, as well as parents who have a child through a surrogacy arrangement.

From **5 April 2015** adopters will also gain new rights to time off for adoption appointments.

3. Unpaid Parental Leave

Employers should ensure they have updated their policies to reflect the forthcoming changes to parental leave.

The right to take up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave will be extended to parents of children under 18 – currently it only applies to parents of children under 5, unless the child is disabled.

This right will be available from **5 April 2015**.

4. Increased rates and limits for 2015/16

- From **6 April 2015** Statutory Sick Pay will increase from £87.55 to £88.45 per week.
- From **5 April 2015** Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay, Statutory Paternity Pay (Ordinary and Additional) and the newly introduced Statutory Shared Parental Pay will be £139.58 per week.
- The maximum compensatory award for unfair dismissal will be increased to £78,335 (or 52 weeks' pay, if lower). The maximum amount of a week's pay for the purposes of calculating statutory redundancy payments and the basic award in unfair dismissal claims will increase from £464 to £475. These new limits will apply to dismissals where the effective date of termination falls on or after **6 April 2015**.

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