

A quick reminder of the employment law changes coming into force today:

### Time Off to Accompany a Pregnant Woman to Ante-Natal Appointments

A new right now available to employees and qualifying agency workers. It applies to the pregnant woman's husband, civil partner or partner (including same-sex partner), the father or parent of a pregnant woman's child, and intended parents in a surrogacy situation who meet specified conditions.

The entitlement is to unpaid leave for up to two appointments, capped at 6.5 hours per appointment. Employees will have the right to bring claims in the Employment Tribunal if their employer unreasonably refuses to let them take time off for this purpose.

Employers can offer provision more generous than the statutory entitlement and also decide to make the leave paid if they wish to do so.

The Government has issued [guidance](#) for employers on the new right. See also our comments on it [here](#).

A similar right for adopters will come into force in April 2015.

#### Action Point:

If you have not already done so, update existing family-friendly policies in relation to time off for ante-natal appointments.

Also, the new right precedes the introduction of shared parental leave and pay in April 2015. Although that may sound a long way off, the majority of the underlying legislation will come into force on **1 December** and employers will be starting to receive enquiries about the new regime shortly. You should therefore take the following steps now:

- think about your company's approach to the new shared parental leave and pay regime, particularly if you currently offer enhanced maternity benefits;
- make sure that you have the right systems in place to process and manage requests to take shared parental leave and pay;
- consider how you are going to handle requests for discontinuous leave (i.e. separate periods of leave to be taken at different times);
- put in place a shared parental leave and pay policy, as well as updating existing family friendly policies where appropriate; and
- train HR teams and line managers on the new rights and associated policies and procedures.

If you would like to discuss the implications of the new shared parental leave regime for your organisation or arrange some training, please get in touch with one of the contacts below or your usual contact in the Labour & Employment team.

### National Minimum Wage

The National Minimum Wage rates applying from 1 October:

- The adult rate for workers aged 21 and over is now **£6.50** per hour.
- The hourly rate for workers aged 18-20 is **£5.13**.
- The rate for workers aged 16-17 is **£3.79** per hour.
- The hourly rate for apprentices is **£2.73**.

#### Action Point:

Ensure that payroll systems are updated with the new rates.

### Tribunals Have Power to Order Equal Pay Audits

Employment Tribunals are now able to order employers to carry out equal pay audits where there has been an equal pay breach. Employers should note that the legislation includes a requirement that they publish the results of the audit on their website (unless they can show that doing so would result in a breach of a legal obligation) for a period of at least 3 years.

#### Action Point:

Review existing pay rates/levels to ensure there are no latent or potential equal pay issues.

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