

Government launches 18-month long review of the UK's parental leave and pay framework

On 1 July 2025, the Government launched a wholesale review of the UK's parental leave framework, covering all existing leave and pay rights. Although the review is expected to run until December 2026, the Call for Evidence from stakeholders closes in August 2025.

Aims of the review

The Government recognises that the existing system of parental leave and pay entitlements have grown incrementally over time. The end result is a complex legislative framework of leave and pay entitlements that were never designed to operate as a single system. This piecemeal approach also means that an overarching set of objectives for the system has not been articulated before. The review is said to be an opportunity to reset the approach.

The Government's [Terms of Reference](#) for the review states that its aims are to:

- articulate the objectives for the parental leave and pay system;

- expand the existing evidence base and understanding of the current system;
- consider the options and principles for a system of parental leave and pay that better supports the Government's objectives; and
- develop a roadmap for how to move to a system that better supports those objectives.

In turn, the objectives against which the Government will assess the parental leave system are prioritising maternal health, supporting economic growth through labour market participation (thereby reducing the gender pay gap and the "motherhood penalty"), ensuring children have the best start in life and supporting parents to make balanced childcare choices, including co-parenting.

All current and upcoming parental leave and pay entitlements will be in the scope of the review, including maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental, parental bereavement and neonatal care leave and pay. It will also cover unpaid parental leave, maternity allowance and the forthcoming right to bereaved partner's paternity leave. The review will also consider the needs of those who do not qualify for existing leave and pay entitlements, such as "kinship" carers and the self-employed.

The Call for Evidence

To inform the work of the review, the Government has published a [Call for Evidence](#) to receive information and evidence from a variety of stakeholders including businesses and parents. Specifically, the Call for Evidence is seeking views on the Government's objectives (as outlined in the Terms of Reference) and whether the existing parental leave framework meets these objectives. It also asks whether further objectives should be added, and which objectives are the most important.

There is a particular focus on receiving new information and evidence which has not previously been shared with the Government. To this end, a [summary of existing evidence](#) has also been published alongside the Call for Evidence. Amongst other things, this reveals that 83% of mothers took maternity leave, with the average length of leave being 44 weeks. 70% of mothers received statutory maternity pay and just 13% received enhanced maternity pay from their employer. In contrast, 59% of fathers took paternity leave, with the average length of leave being 1.7 weeks. Over half of those who took paternity leave received full pay from their employer (which is perhaps unsurprising given its short length). A further 4% of fathers took shared parental leave for an average of 14 weeks. Financial constraints were reported as the biggest barrier to taking leave.

Although the review is open for 18 months, the Call for Evidence itself is only open for just under two months, closing on 26 August 2025.

Next steps?

The review is expected to run for 18 months until 31 December

2026. The Government then plans to release a set of findings, together with a roadmap of future reforms. Accordingly, the earliest that we can expect to see any changes to the current system would be mid to late 2027.

Employers (and other stakeholders) are encouraged to participate in the review. It is said that “*Government convened round tables*” will be held, providing the opportunity to contribute views and expertise. Employers may also submit written responses to the Call for Evidence – this can be done online or by email before 26 August 2025.

[Parental leave and pay review – 1 July 2025](#)

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