

WILL THE FORTHCOMING SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE CHANGES MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE?

According to a 2013 TUC analysis of a BIS report into shared leave, just one in 172 fathers is taking advantage of Additional Paternity Leave ("APL"). With such a low uptake surely this begs the question.....

Will the forthcoming Shared Parental Leave changes make any difference?

Currently, mothers are entitled to take 52 weeks of maternity leave of which 39 weeks are paid, and fathers are entitled to 2 weeks' ordinary paternity leave. However, should the mother decide to return to work before exhausting her right to maternity leave, then the father can take up to 26 weeks leave as APL but this cannot be taken before the 20th week after the birth.



The new Shared Parental Leave ("SPL") regime (applicable for babies expected on or after 5 April 2015) abolishes APL and provides a far more flexible approach to parental leave. The government has proposed very detailed eligibility and notification requirements which must be complied with, but in essence parents can now apportion statutory leave and pay between them.

In future the mother must take the first 2 weeks post-birth as leave, but the remaining 50 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of pay can be shared by both parents. Parents will be able to take SPL (separately or at the same time) in up to 3 separate blocks (subject to the employer agreeing to the leave being taken in discontinuous blocks) at any time prior to the child's first birthday.

Employers will naturally be concerned about dealing with the challenges of implementing the new system, and the associated administrative burden. However, they may be excused for wondering why they are bothering to spend time and money on a scheme which according to government predictions will be used by only between 2% and 8% of those eligible to do so.

Nevertheless, employers should prepare for the impact of the forthcoming changes, and will need to be sufficiently familiar with the SPL regime in order to respond properly to requests for such leave. Employers should also be thinking about how they will respond to a request for discontinuous periods of leave.

Employers should also ensure that they respond to SPL requests appropriately to mitigate challenges from employees and to avoid the risk of potential sex discrimination claims from male employees who receive lower benefits whilst on SPL than female employees on maternity leave.

BIS PUBLISHES GUIDE ON FATHERS' RIGHT TO TIME OFF FOR ANTE-NATAL APPOINTMENTS

On a similar note, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) has published a guide for employers on the new right to time off to attend two antenatal appointments, which will come into effect on 1 October 2014, and is available to employees and qualifying agency workers (including the mother's husband / civil partner / partner / the father or parent of the child and intended parents under surrogacy arrangements). Please note, provision is also made for paid and unpaid time off work for adopters to attend meetings in advance of a child being placed with them for adoption and this right will come into force on 5 April 2015.

TAX FREE CHILDCARE



The government confirmed in the Queen's Speech that it plans to introduce tax free childcare support for working parents, including the self-employed. The existing employer-supported childcare voucher scheme will be closed to new participants in autumn 2015, but child tax credits will continue to be used.

The scheme will be available to children who are under the age of 5 from autumn 2015 and all working parents with children under 12 will be covered within the first year. Disabled children under the age of 17 will also be eligible.

In order to be eligible for tax free childcare, both parents must be working and earn at least £50 per week. Parents make contributions into an online childcare

account, which is topped up by the government by 20% up to an account total of £10,000. The money in the account must be used for qualifying childcare (which generally means OFSTED registered childminders and nurseries). If either parent is earning more than £150,000 a year, or is claiming tax credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers, they will not be eligible.

Full details of the scheme can be seen on the government's website:

www.gov.uk/government/policies/helping-people-to-find-and-stay-in-work

TOP 10 CYBERSECURITY TIPS



1. **Train employees** – establish security practices and policies for employees and create a culture which takes cybersecurity seriously.
2. **Protect your systems** – install latest software updates to protect against the latest online threats. Carry out inside-out and outside-in penetration testing.
3. **Provide firewall security** – ensure this is correctly configured. If employees work from home, ensure their home system(s) are also protected.
4. **Don't forget mobile devices** – make sure laptops, tablets and smartphones all have adequate safeguards and reporting procedures in place if lost or stolen.
5. **Backup** – check all critical data is regularly (preferably automatically) backed up to a secure off-site location.
6. **Control physical access** – secure building entry points, consider CCTV installation, ensure visitors

are properly managed and IT areas locked.

7. **Secure your Wi-Fi** – if you have a Wi-Fi network for your workplace, make sure it is secure and encrypted. Do not allow visitors to use – provide a secure, separate guest network if you want to offer this facility.
8. **Payment cards** – if you take card payments, make sure validation and anti-fraud schemes are in place and that you are fully PCI compliant. Don't use the same computer to process payments and surf the internet.
9. **Restrict employee rights** – staff should only be given access to systems they need for their jobs and should not be able to install new software without permission.
10. **Password policy** – require employees to use unique passwords which are changed at pre-set times. Consider implementing multi-level access authentication to highly sensitive systems.

BCIS UPDATE OF TENDER PRICES AND BUILDING COSTS

The BCIS All-in Tender Price Index has been revised upward, based on a larger sample, to 248 from 243, the figure used in the August 2014 BCIS Quarterly Briefing - Five Year Forecast of Building Costs and Tender Prices (BCIS QB). The sample size remains quite small for 1st quarter 2014; therefore the index may be subject to larger revisions as the sample size improves. Indications from projects currently not processed suggest that the index is more likely to be revised downward as the sample size improves. Tender prices rose by 3.3% in 1st quarter 2014 compared with the previous quarter

and by 6.0% compared with a year earlier.

With the tender price index for 1st quarter 2014 having been revised upwards to 248, this forms the base for the forecast going forward. In percentage terms, the forecast remains virtually the same as that published in the August 2014 BCIS QB. However, for the time being tender prices are forecast to remain unchanged between 1st and 2nd quarters of 2014 until the sample size grows for 1st quarter 2014.

Summary of Forecasts

	2Q2012	2Q2013	2Q2014	2Q2015	2Q2016	2Q2017	2Q2018
Annual % Change	to	to	to	to	to	to	to
	2Q2013	2Q2014	2Q2015	2Q2016	2Q2017	2Q2018	2Q2019
Tender Prices	+2.6%	+5.1%	+5.6%	+4.6%	+5.5%	+5.2%	+5.3%
Building Costs	+1.3%	+0.6%	+2.8%	+2.8%	+3.3%	+3.8%	+3.9%
Nationally Agreed Wage Awards	+1.0%	+2.1%	+2.6%	+3.1%	+3.7%	+3.9%	+3.9%
Material Prices	0	+0.4%	+2.7%	+3.0%	+2.9%	+3.5%	+4.1%
Retail Prices	+3.1%	+2.3%	+3.0%	+3.2%	+2.8%	+3.4%	+3.6%
Construction New Work Output*	-11.3%	+1.3%	+6.8%	+5.9%	+5.6%	+5.7%	+5.6%

* Year on Year (2Q2012 to 2Q2013 = 2012 to 2013)

Monthly Bulletin of Indices

YEAR	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
2003	631	632	632	635	635	632	664	667	667	667	667	667
2004	667	667	666	666	667	667	709	709	710	710	711	712
2005	711	713	713	713	713	714	769	769	769	768	769	770
2006	769	770	770	769	769	769	793	794	793	793	793	793
2007	793	795	795	795	795	795	824	825	825	825	826	826
2008	826	827	827	831	831	832	874	874	874	873	873	874
2009	874	875	874	874	875	875	875	875	875	876	876	876
2010	876	878	878	878	879	879	879	879	879	879	880	880
2011	880	885	885	885	888	889	898	898	909	908	908	911
2012	910	911	913	912	910	912	912	914	915	915	924	924
2013	939	940	943	942	941	938	937	937	938	937	937	937
2014	941	941	942	941	941	941	961	961*	961*	961*		

*Provisional