



An Roinn Gnóthaí Fostaíochta
agus Coimirce Sóisialaí
Department of Employment Affairs
and Social Protection



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
agus Comhionannais
Department of Justice
and Equality

Up to 60,000 Parents a Year to Gain as New Paid Parental Leave and Benefit available from this November

**Parents will have access to two weeks leave each – expected to rise to
seven weeks each over the next three years**

**Legislation will also enable male same-sex couples to receive adoptive
leave and benefit**

Tuesday, 23 April, 2019

The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, Regina Doherty TD, the Minister for Justice and Equality, Charlie Flanagan TD and the Minister of State with responsibility for Equality, Immigration and Integration, David Stanton TD, today announced that from this November all new parents in employment or self-employment will be able to avail of a new Parental Leave scheme offering two weeks leave and benefit to spend with their new babies during their first year. Ultimately, parents will be able to benefit from seven weeks leave each under the scheme as it develops incrementally over the next three years.

The Minister for Justice and Equality has secured the approval of Government for the priority drafting of the necessary legislation to introduce the leave entitlement. A General Scheme of the Bill is being published today. Arrangements are currently underway in the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection to ensure the necessary legislation is in place for the benefit and that the administrative and technical solutions are in place in advance of November for the operation of this scheme. It is estimated that up to 60,000 parents could benefit from the scheme in a full year.

Speaking on the importance of the scheme, Minister Doherty said:

“Parents, children and society in general will all benefit from the introduction of this scheme. Firstly, in that formative first year of life, children now have the opportunity to spend more time with both parents. Secondly, on top of the recently introduced Paternity Benefit, this extends the leave benefits available to fathers.

“Crucially this new benefit is non-transferable and is available on a ‘use it or lose it’ basis. This, I hope, will help to incentivise fathers to take more time off work to care for their children than has been the case up to now. The evidence shows that when fathers take a more significant and meaningful share in the parenting of their children the individual family benefits - and so does wider society, as by encouraging more fathers to take time off, we are in a position to challenge the existing culture regarding work and gender.”

Welcoming the scheme as a practical support for working parents, Minister Flanagan said:

“This is an important support for working parents in Ireland. The General Scheme of the Bill, which I am publishing today, provides for paid parental leave for each parent of a child under one, whether employed or self-employed. The leave will initially be set at two weeks, increasing on a phased basis over the next three years. This is in addition to existing maternity, paternity and adoptive leave entitlements. It will provide working parents with further opportunity to spend more time with their baby in its crucial first year of development.

With the introduction of this Bill, we are delivering on our commitment to increase paid parental leave in the first year of a child’s life. This is a practical measure to benefit parents and children. Helping working parents to have more flexibility and greater choice in how they balance their professional and family lives has positive benefits for families and for society as a whole.”

Under the scheme, both parents will have access to two weeks each (non-transferrable) benefit for babies born from this November, which will be paid at the same rate as Maternity Benefit and Paternity Benefit - €245 per week. It is intended to incrementally increase this to up to seven weeks parental leave over the next three years in line with Government announcement for Budget 2019.

Minister Stanton highlighted another important feature of the Bill:

“The Bill also proposes to take the final steps needed to enable male same-sex couples to receive adoptive leave and benefit. This is further progress towards ensuring equality for all families.

I look forward to introducing the legislation into the Houses of the Oireachtas, once drafted, and hope that colleagues on all sides of the Houses will work with me in ensuring that we can implement this important legislation at the earliest possible time.”

ENDS

Note for Editors

Parental Leave and Benefit Bill 2019:

- The Bill is part of the Government commitment to increase paid parental leave in the first year of a child’s life
- A draft General Scheme of the Bill was presented to Government on 16 April and approval was granted for the priority drafting of the Bill
- It is intended that the leave will be set initially at two weeks per parent. The leave can be taken within 52 weeks of the birth of the child or in the case of an adoption, from the date of placement of the child
- The Bill also proposes to address a lacuna in the law, which prevents a male same-sex couple from receiving adoptive leave and benefit. It provides for the repeal of Section 177 of the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. It further provides for the modification and reintroduction of Section 177 of that Act or an amendment of Section 2 of the Adoptive Leave Act 1995
- The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will make the payment of the benefit. It will be up to individual employers to decide if they will provide a ‘top-up’ payment to the salary level of employees earning more than this
- The Government commitment is to increase the leave by 2021 to 7 weeks paid parental leave per parent.