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Increased rights for parents and carers at work

Whilst we may be in a cost of living crisis on the brink of a recession, 2023 is turning out to be the year of the worker as three new workers' rights have been approved and are awaiting a date to come into force.

Previously, there was no legal obligation on employers to take into account caring responsibilities that some of their employees might have. However, that is all set to change and employers should be mindful of the upcoming changes to prepare ahead of these rights becoming law:

The following new protections will benefit parents and carers once in force:

1. Employed parents are to receive **up to 12 weeks paid neonatal care leave** when their children are admitted to neonatal care.

This gives parents more time with their baby at a stressful time, without worrying about losing income.

This neonatal care leave is in addition to other leave and pay entitlements for parents such as maternity and paternity leave and pay.

This will be a "day one right" meaning that employed parents will have a right to this leave from the first date of their employment.

2. Pregnant women and new parents will be given greater protection by **an extension of existing redundancy protections to cover pregnancy and a period of time after parents return to work.**

At present, parents are only protected from redundancy if on maternity leave, adoption leave or shared parental leave.

This law extends these protections further from the moment an employee informs their employer of their pregnancy to post maternity leave, until their baby is 18 months old.

3. Unpaid carers will now be entitled to **a week of flexible unpaid leave a year**, for employees with caring responsibilities for a dependant with a long-term care need.

This will allow carers to better balance their caring and work responsibilities.

Whilst the above protections are yet to officially become law, this shows a gradual increase in workers' rights and protections, following the record increase to National Minimum Wage in April 2023 and protective measures ensuring staff can keep their tips being approved, set to become law on a yet to be confirmed date in 2024.

To ensure your staff handbooks are up to date with the latest changes in the law, the employment lawyers at Hethertons will be here to help.

