

## Employment Law Changes from April 2026 – What You Need to Know

From 6 April 2026, several important employment law changes will come into force. These updates affect sick pay, parental leave and HR processes. Businesses should prepare now to stay compliant and avoid last-minute disruption.

### Key Changes from April 2026

#### 1. Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) – Major Reform

SSP will change significantly:

- Starts from day one of sickness (no waiting days).
- No minimum earnings requirement – meaning more employees will qualify.
- Lower earners will receive 80% of weekly earnings, capped at the standard SSP rate.

**Impact** - Payroll systems must be updated and sickness procedures reviewed to manage earlier payments and wider eligibility.

#### 2. Paternity Leave – Becomes a Day-One Right

Employees will be able to take Paternity Leave from day one of employment (if they give the correct notice).

The day-one right will apply to newly eligible parents where:

- the baby's **Expected Week of Childbirth** is on/after **5 April 2026**, or
- the baby is **born on/after 6 April 2026**, or
- an adoption placement is on/after **6 April 2026**.

**Important:** Statutory Paternity Pay still requires 26 weeks' service.

#### 3. Unpaid Parental Leave – Day-One Eligibility

Employees will no longer need one year's service to take Unpaid Parental Leave, as it is expected to become a day one right.

But, Notice Requirement Rules will stay the same.

#### **4. Shared Parental Leave – More Flexibility**

Employees will no longer lose Paternity Leave rights if they take Shared Parental Leave first.

This is designed to increase flexibility and reduce the risk of employees losing paternity rights due to misunderstanding the rules.

#### **5. Bereavement Leave (Including Pregnancy Loss) – Expected 2027**

A new statutory entitlement for unpaid, day-one Bereavement Leave is planned for 2027 - including pregnancy loss.

Details will be confirmed in future regulations.

#### **What Businesses Should Do Now**

Update HR Policies

- Sickness Absence / Managing Attendance
- Sick Pay (contractual vs statutory)
- Paternity Leave
- Unpaid Parental Leave
- Shared Parental Leave guidance

#### **Prepare Payroll & Processes**

- Configure payroll for no SSP waiting days and 80% SSP for low earners.
- Review absence reporting, fit note processes and return-to-work procedures.
- Brief managers so they understand the new rules and apply them consistently.