Dear [MP]

I’m writing to ask for your support to improve the statutory paternity offer for Britain’s fathers, so they can better care for their partners after the birth and share the caregiving during the baby’s first year.

*Add your own statement, explaining why this issue matters to you, for example:*

* *I wasn’t able to take paternity leave…*
* *I would have loved to take a month off work with my baby but couldn’t afford to…*
* *I had no choice but to go part-time after maternity leave, because my partner couldn’t take time off to look after the baby*
* *I strongly support gender equality and know that until fathers are able to take on more caregiving (as in Scandinavia) gender equality will never be achieved in the UK*
* *Children benefit from close care by both their parents*
* *When fathers do more caregiving, separation and divorce are less likely …*

I’m supporting a campaign led by the [Fatherhood Institute](https://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/), calling for the UK to introduce 6 weeks’ well-paid paternity and parental leave for new fathers.

The **6 weeks for dads** model would give mothers and fathers equal access to well-paid leave – allowing fathers to support their partner directly after the birth and share (or lead) the caregiving for a month of their choosing during their baby’s first year: reducing the ‘motherhood penalty’, lowering families’ dependence on paid childcare, and awarding substantial ‘time with dad’ to Britain’s children.

**Why we need a better deal for new fathers**

* The UK’s statutory paternity leave and pay policy is the least generous in Europe, and only three countries in the OECD Family Database offer men a worse deal when they become fathers. Eligible fathers in the UK are currently entitled to just two weeks’ paternity leave, paid at less than half the minimum wage.
* A 2023 TUC survey found that more than half (53%) of families struggle financially when fathers/second parents do take paternity leave. More than a third (35%) of fathers/second parents on low incomes don’t take the leave, and two-thirds of self-employed fathers take no time off when their baby is born. An average-earning, full-time employed father whose employer offers only statutory paternity pay stands to lose £1,021.04 if he takes two weeks’ leave.
* A fifth of UK fathers aren’t eligible for paternity leave, because they’re self-employed, haven’t worked for their employer for long enough, or aren’t an ‘employee’. Only 1% of eligible mothers and 5% of eligible fathers take shared parental leave, which is unavailable and/or unaffordable to almost all fathers.
* Countries that give fathers fair leave and pay entitlements tend to have smaller gender gaps in workforce participation and pay – because mothers whose partner gets to take time away from work to bond with and look after their children (especially *solo*) are empowered to return to work and share the earning as well as the caregiving with their children’s father.
* Research by Pregnant Then Screwed, the Centre for Progressive Policy and Women in Data found that six weeks’ well-paid leave for fathers could bring a £23 billion increase in economic output, equating to 1% of the UK’s gross domestic product – all for a cost to UK taxpayers of between £1 billion and £1.6 billion.

**More about the campaign**

In July 2023 the Fatherhood Institute organised and sent an [open letter](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/open-letter-calling-rethink-paternity-parental%3FtrackingId%3DcLE6hFReT2%252FpnapF2CpTJQ%253D%253D/?trackingId=cLE6hFReT2%2FpnapF2CpTJQ%3D%3D) from 30+ organisations with a focus on gender equality and child development, to Kemi Badenoch, Business and Trade Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities – calling for a rethink on the Government’s decision not to improve the amount of leave and pay available to fathers. The Government’s response to that letter is [here](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/governments-response-our-call-reform-its-statutory%3FtrackingId%3DIlq3qOg%252BQGSlmbrAG2Iauw%253D%253D/?trackingId=Ilq3qOg%2BQGSlmbrAG2Iauw%3D%3D).

Later that month, the Fatherhood Institute launched a Parliamentary petition calling for two weeks’ paternity leave and a ‘daddy month’ of non-transferable parental leave (in the baby’s first year) for all employed fathers/second parents, as a Day 1 right – all paid at 90% (with a cap for high earners) - plus a Paternity Allowance with similar benefits for other fathers/second parents.

More than 14,400 people across the UK signed the petition; in January 2024 the Government [responded](https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/640814) saying it had no plans to increase paternity leave and pay, and suggesting that fathers wish to take longer leave, they use shared parental leave – which its own evaluation found is used by only 1% of eligible mothers and 5% of eligible fathers: mostly because they can’t afford to.

A March 2024 Pregnant Then Screwed [survey](https://pregnantthenscrewed.com/70-of-dads-who-didnt-take-their-full-paternity-leave-entitlement-had-to-cut-it-short-due-to-cost/) found that more than three-fifths (63.7%) of fathers took two weeks or less paternity leave following the birth of their most recent child.

Later the same month a Working Families/ Families and Work Group poll[[1]](#footnote-1) found that almost three-quarters (73%) of parents with dependent children aged 0 to 18 in England and Wales want the next Government to improve parents’ pay and leave entitlements. More than two-thirds (68%) said they would be more likely to vote for a party that promised to introduce better leave and entitlements for new parents. Two-thirds (65%) of respondents said the statutory two weeks of paternity leave, and the statutory rate of paternity pay, are not enough. And almost nine out of ten respondents (88%) said self-employed fathers, and those who have worked for their employer for less than 26 weeks – all of whom are currently excluded from paternity leave and pay – should be made eligible.

**What you can do**

Britain’s fathers – and the people who love them – deserve better. Please do whatever you can to help:

1. This is clearly an issue voters care about, so please lobby to get **six weeks’ well-paid paternity and parental leave for new fathers** included in your Party’s manifesto for the 2024 General Election. You’ll find a rationale for ten policy ideas, including this one, in the Fatherhood Institute’s [Manifesto for Supporting Paternal Caregiving](https://www.fatherhoodinstitute.org/_files/ugd/efff1d_ff49ddba051e41f99e2546ee944de828.pdf).
2. If you’d like a 1-to-1 online briefing about this issue, please email the Fatherhood Institute’s Deputy CEO Dr Jeremy Davies j.davies@fatherhoodinstitute.org.
3. You can highlight your support for the campaign by sending a supportive message and tagging the Fatherhood Institute on [X/Twitter](https://twitter.com/fatherhoodinst), [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/572083/admin/feed/posts/), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/fatherhoodinstitute) or [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/fatherhoodinst/).

Yours sincerely,

*Add your signature*

1. Poll of 1,245 parents of dependent children aged 0-18, organised by Working Families for the [Families and Work Group](https://workingfamilies.org.uk/about-us/families-and-work-group/). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)