

# ‘It went sour with my boss when I told her I’d be taking the leave’

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Young dad Alex felt unsupported when he took the 2 weeks he was entitled to – so he looked for a new job



*Alex Drain is a 22-year-old dad of a three-month-old baby living in Kent. He also has two stepchildren ages 10 and 7. When he and his partner found out they were expecting a baby, he told his boss and requested to have the two weeks of paternity pay he was entitled to. Even though his boss initially said it was fine for him to take leave, there was nothing put in place for him to take off, even when his partner was nearly ready to give birth. He ended up leaving his job in hospitality and taking the two weeks off with his family when his baby was born.*

As soon as my partner found out she was expecting, I knew I needed to research what I would be entitled to after the baby was born. Family is really important to me, and I wanted to make sure I took whatever I could to be with my baby and support my partner.

I found out that as an employee, I was entitled to two weeks of paternity leave at pay of around £184 per week.

After the 12-week scan, I had an informal conversation with my boss letting her know we were expecting and that I would be taking the leave I was entitled to. She said she had only worked with maternity leave before, so would need to do some digging and get back to me.

I didn't hear anything until my partner was about five months pregnant, when my boss pulled me in to tell me that I was entitled to what I had explained to her earlier. I kept trying to get her to finalise everything, but she just kept saying to me she was waiting to hear back from 'this person'. It felt like she kept offering excuses.

We were trying to prepare for the baby at home – I didn't need the extra stress at work trying to book time off to be with my child when he was born.

When it got to the eight-month mark, it went sour with my boss when I told her that I would be taking my leave, even though it hadn't officially been booked in. I just didn't feel that I was being valued by my employer, or that they thought it was important for me to have those two weeks off.

I took the two weeks off to be with my partner and baby, before taking another job, where I felt more supported as a person and dad.

I wish it could have been longer than two weeks – they just flew by. We were in hospital for three days after the baby was born, so I was only home for ten days.

It would be more ideal to have more than two weeks to be able to support my wife, who was healing after having just given birth. It takes a woman's body much longer than two weeks to recover after pregnancy and birth. And my partner was also taking care of our new baby and two other children.

I needed longer to learn what it was like to care for a baby – I'd never parented a baby before and would have liked to have more time learning through experience in those early days.

In the end, I'm not sure I was even given statutory paternity pay for those two weeks.

The pay during paternity leave should be more. This is the time dads are thinking about how they're going to provide for their family – if anything, we should be given more than normal. It feels backwards that we would get less than our salaried pay when everything costs more. I'm sure if I wasn't worrying about money, I would have been able to be more present when I was off for two weeks.

When I started my new job after two weeks off, I felt guilty leaving my partner alone, but I didn't have a choice. I had to get money for us.

It shouldn't be this hard for dads to be with their families when a baby is born.