

News story: Government commits to drawing up new guidance to support working mothers of premature babies.

- Guidelines will include advice on flexible working and requests for additional time off
- Key stakeholders will be invited to provide their views on best practice
- Guidance to be published on ACAS website shortly

To mark Mother's Day the Government is committing to ensure employers know how best to support working mothers who give birth to premature babies.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will work with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), and invite the views of premature baby charities to develop guidelines for employers on how to support their staff.

While the government expects employers to be compassionate and flexible during this difficult time, the guidance will make it easier for both working parents and employers to access advice.

The guidance will cover everything from how employers can offer flexible working arrangements following a premature birth to how to handle requests for additional time off. ACAS will publish the guidance on its website shortly.

Business Minister Margot James said:

While most employers treat their staff with compassion, it's incredibly important that they know how best to support their staff at what can be a very difficult time for working parents.

New and expectant mothers must feel confident of their rights in the workplace and this new guidance will go some way to offering those reassurances.

The UK's maternity system is one of the most generous in the world. Eligible mothers can take up to 52 weeks of leave and up to 39 weeks of pay.

The Government will keep the impact of these measures under review but does not rule out legislating in the future.

Further information

1. In 2014, the Government extended the right to ask for flexible working to all employees in work for more than 26 weeks. Previously only parents and carers had a right to request flexible working

2. Around 20 million people are now eligible to apply for flexible working, with an estimated 60,000 people a year already taking advantage of new working arrangements. Employers must have a sound business reason for rejecting any request.
3. Shared Parental Leave was introduced to give working families more flexibility to share childcare responsibilities.