

**Equality and
Human Rights
Commission**

equalityhumanrights.com

The
Working
Better
project



EasyRead summary

Who we are and what we do



The Equality and Human Rights Commission is making life fairer and more equal for everyone.

We work to make sure people:



- get their human rights
- get on better together
- have a fair chance to take part in society.



We make sure people follow the laws on treating people equally and fairly.



We help everyone understand more about why people are being treated unfairly and what can be done to make things better.

What is this paper about?



It is about the Working Better project.

The project wants to give working people more choices in the way they work.



This paper looks at how to give people these choices.

It looks at changes to 2 things:



1. Parental leave

This is the rights of parents to take time off work to look after their children.

2. Flexible working

This is working in a way to suit your needs, like:



- working part-time



- job sharing



- working from home.



To find out what is needed we spoke to lots of different groups and people.



We also looked at how much any changes would cost.



1. Parental leave

We asked:

How do parents choose between paid work and caring for their children?



What would help to make it easier to choose?



Does more time off for mothers after having a baby make it harder for them to get back to work?



What stops fathers from taking parental leave?

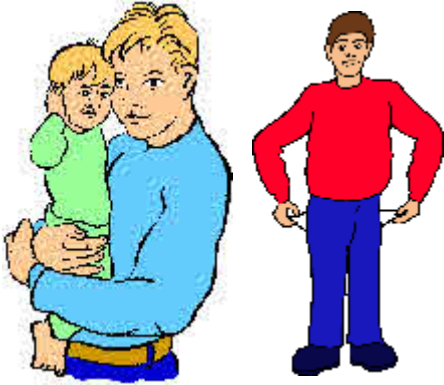


What would help fathers to do more with their children?



We found that:

Parents want to share work and caring for their children more.

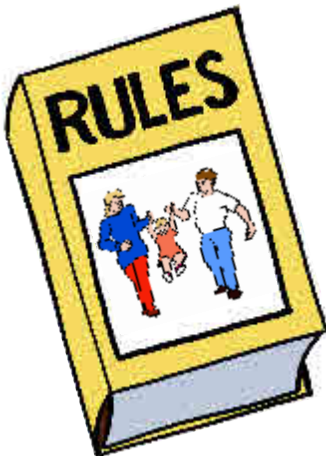


Fathers want to take more parental leave to spend time with their new baby, but cannot afford it.



Parents want:

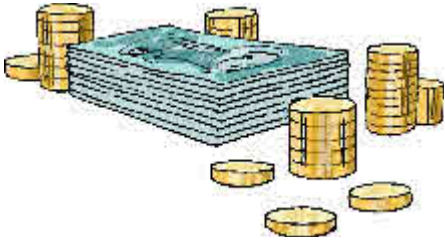
- more choices about working



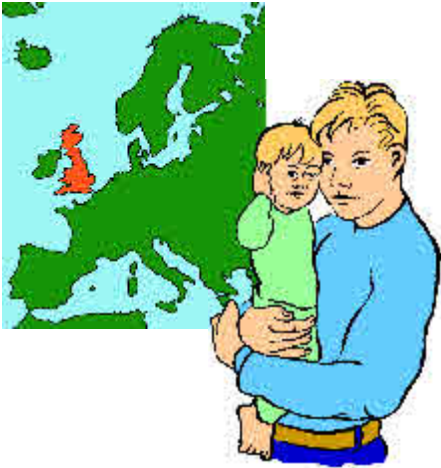
- new rules for parental leave



- more money from the Government to take parental leave



- cheaper ways to care for their children.



Other countries give fathers:

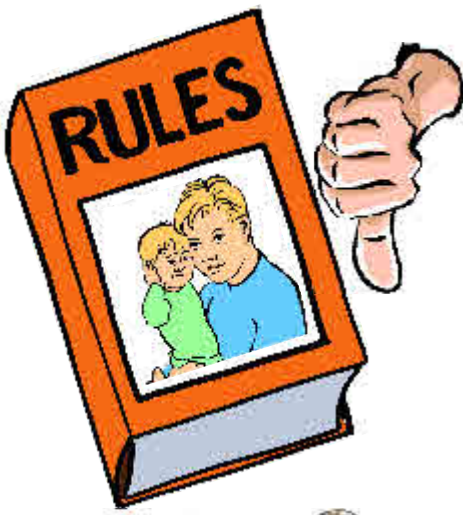
- time off work to care for their new baby



- money to help make up for any wages they lose.



- a reason to take time off. If they do not use it, they lose it.

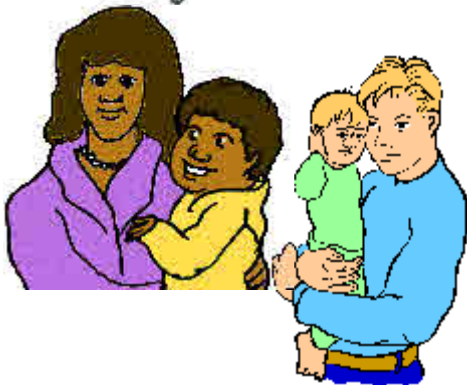


This tells us that:

New parental leave rules for parents in the last 10 years have not been good enough.

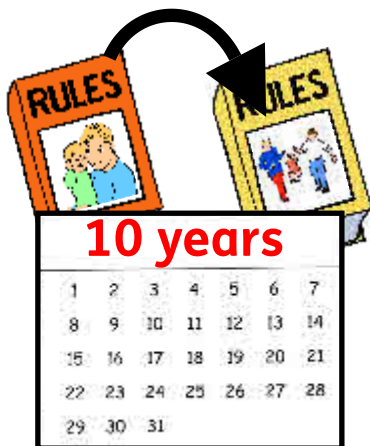


They do not treat fathers and mothers equally over work and caring for their children.



Parental leave should be the same for both fathers and mothers. This will give them real choices.

A big change in parental leave is needed.



What we think should happen:

We think changes to parental leave should happen over the next 10 years.



They will make Britain's parental leave more like Europe's.

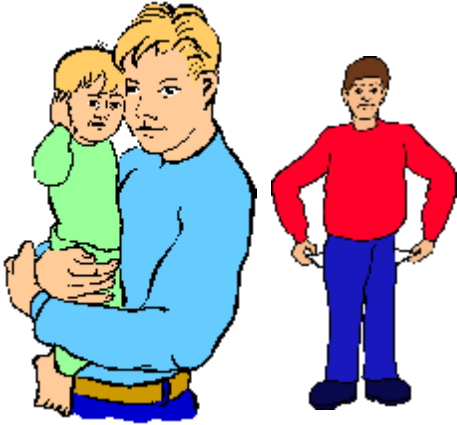


They will give fathers and mothers a choice about sharing work and caring for their new baby.



They will also give parents a choice about caring for their child up to when they are 5 years old.

1. To support more fathers to take parental leave.



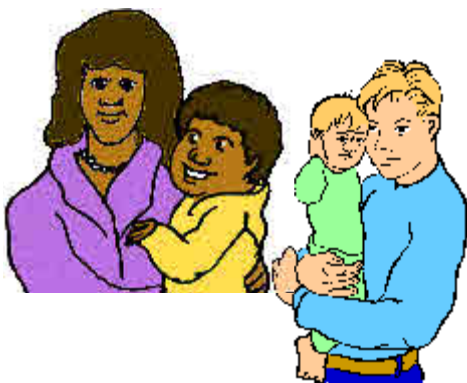
These changes should happen by 2010:

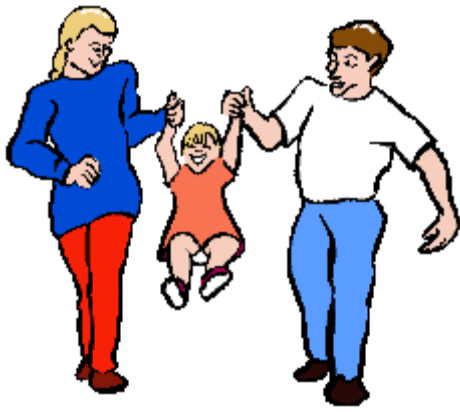
- People who do not make a lot of money should be able to have parental leave.
- Give money to fathers to help make up for the wages they lose when they take time off to care for their new baby. This is called **Paternity Allowance**.



These changes should happen by 2012:

- Let fathers or mothers stay at home to look after their baby up to when it is 6 months old.
- Give parental leave to both fathers and mothers.



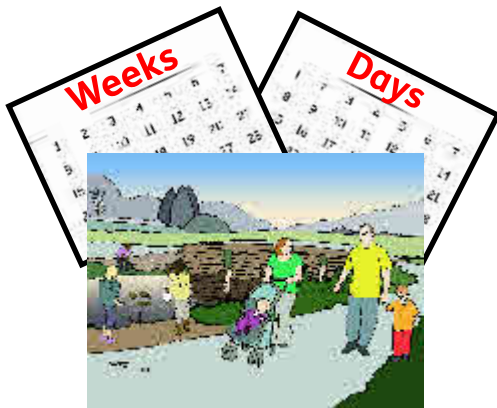


These changes should happen by 2020:

- Have the same parental leave for fathers and mothers.



- Both parents should get paid time off work to care for their new baby.



2.To give parents more choice:

- Let them take time off as days, weeks or longer to care for their baby.



- Let them switch to part-time work during parental leave.



2. Flexible working

The law gives people the right to ask for flexible working. But it does not give them the right to have it.



We asked:

How can we give more people the choice to do flexible working without businesses losing money?



Should the law be changed so that all workers in Britain can have flexible working?



We found that:

There is proof that flexible working is good for businesses.



Many people take a job because it gives them flexible working.



Some people get flexible working because they ask for it.



Not everyone knows they have the right to ask for flexible working.



In Britain there are lots of different types of flexible working. Some businesses are good at giving people these choices.



Some businesses do not even think about flexible working.



In some countries flexible working includes parental leave.



In other countries, everyone can have flexible working.



Parents want flexible working in more jobs to make their lives better.



It is harder for men than women to get flexible working.



Managers in charge of workers who do flexible working need better training about it.



This tells us that:

The right to ask for flexible working in Britain gives people a lot of working choices.



It is important to support workers who want flexible working.



A lot of parents do not know their rights about flexible working.



We want to see if more and more businesses have flexible working.



We want to see if it meets the needs of other groups like single parents and carers.



The Commission believes that all workers should be allowed to do flexible working.



We need to look at the best ways to do this.

The changes we think should happen

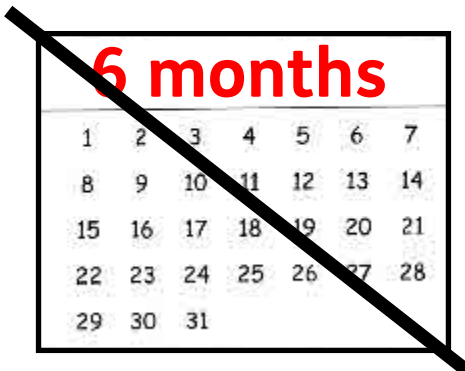


What the Government should do



The Government should change the law so that:

- part-time workers have the right to ask if they can go back to full-time



- new workers do not have to wait about 6 months before they can ask for flexible working



- all workers have the right to ask for flexible working.



The Government should:

- support training for managers about flexible working



- tell everyone about their right to ask for flexible working. They should pay more attention to telling fathers about it.



- aim to get flexible working into places that do not have it now



- use the Quality Part-Time Work fund to get businesses to try out flexible working for new fathers



- get the **BERR** to work with businesses on new ways of working



This is the Government department that looks after businesses in the UK. **BERR** is short for **Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform**.



- give parents better choices to care for their children.



The Commission for Employment and Skills should include flexible working in skills and employment plans.



Local councils should give parents and carers advice on flexible working in their area.



Businesses should:

- tell all their workers about different types of flexible working



- do more to have more flexible working



- include flexible working in job adverts



- make it clear that part-time workers can ask to do more hours or work full-time.



The Commission should:

- work with business groups to train managers in flexible working. This is so that they can bring it into their businesses



- support events that show flexible working can be good for business even in hard times



- give advice to businesses on flexible working.



The Commission is working with businesses on a guide which will be printed in June 2009.



We are also working with them on a website.



Working with different types of businesses, we will look at new ways of working that are better for everyone.

Why are these changes important?



These changes would make things better for businesses and workers.



They would also make things fairer for fathers and mothers.



It would give fathers and mothers more choices about working and caring for their children.



Parental leave and flexible working would run together.



These changes can only happen if all the Government Departments agree.

BERR Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform



So we ask the **BERR** to look at this report.

We ask them to call together the following groups to act on this report:



- the Government Equalities Office



- Department for Children Schools and Families



- Confederation of British Industry



- **British Chambers of Commerce**



- **Trades Union Congress**

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What happens next



We have started work on the next part of the Working Better project.

It looks at ways of giving more choice to disabled workers, carers and older workers.

2009						
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8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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29	30	31				

This part should be finished in 2009.



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