

# THE UK, THE EU AND WORKING PARENTS AND CARERS

Almost 3,000 parents contact our legal advice service each year seeking advice on issues including maternity or paternity discrimination and flexible working.

The UK joined the EU in 1972. The advice we give is very often based on EU provisions for employment protection and equality in the workplace that has been translated into UK law. In some areas the UK has been ahead of the EU such as flexible working rights. In other areas EU directives have led to improvements and extensions of UK law.

With a referendum on the UK's membership of the EU fast approaching, Working Families has set out a timeline of some of the key employment protection and equality laws to show where the laws that underpin the advice we give comes from.

## A TIMELINE OF RIGHTS

INTRODUCED BY UK GOVERNMENT

INTRODUCED BY EU

### EQUAL PAY ACT 1970

Prohibits any less favourable treatment between men and women in terms of pay and conditions of employment

### SEX DISCRIMINATION ACT 1975

Protection from discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status

### EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION ACT 1975

Introduced limited rights to maternity leave and pay  
Right to return to work after maternity leave  
Dismissal unfair if on grounds of pregnancy or maternity

### RACE RELATIONS ACT 1975

Protection from discrimination on grounds of race

### 1957 TREATY OF ROME

Establishes principles of free movement of persons, services and capital, equal pay for equal work and prohibits discrimination on grounds of nationality

### 1976 EQUAL TREATMENT DIRECTIVE

Establishes principle of equal treatment for men and women in access to jobs, training and working conditions

### 1992 PREGNANT WORKERS DIRECTIVE

Required 14 weeks maternity leave  
Protected the health and safety of pregnant workers and breastfeeding mothers  
Prohibited dismissal due to pregnancy or maternity  
Introduced paid time off for antenatal care

### 1993 WORKING TIME DIRECTIVE

Maximum 48-hour working week  
Right to rest periods  
Right to minimum amount of paid holiday

### 1995 DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT

Protection from discrimination in employment on grounds of disability

### 1996 EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT

Paid time off for antenatal care  
Protection for those made redundant while on maternity leave

### 1996 PARENTAL LEAVE DIRECTIVE

Right to unpaid parental leave  
Right to time off for dependants



## 1997 PART TIME WORK DIRECTIVE

Part time employees must not be treated less favourably than full time employees

## 1998 NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE ACT

Introduced national minimum wage

## 1999 FIXED TERM WORK DIRECTIVE

Introducing rights for employees on fixed term contracts in line with those on permanent contracts

## 1999 EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS ACT

Equal rights for part-time workers  
Time off for dependants  
Unpaid parental leave  
Ordinary maternity leave extended to 18 weeks

## 2000 GENERAL FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

Establishes a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, including pay

## 2000 RACE DISCRIMINATION DIRECTIVE

Equal treatment between persons irrespective of ethnic or racial origin

## 2001 BUSINESS TRANSFERS DIRECTIVE

Safeguards employee rights on transfers of undertakings, business or parts of business

## 2002 EMPLOYMENT ACT

Two weeks paid paternity leave  
Adoption leave  
Right to request flexible working

## 2006 WORK AND FAMILIES ACT

Maternity leave extended to 52 weeks  
Additional paternity leave  
Flexible working rights extended to carers

## 2010 EQUALITY ACT

Consolidated and strengthened equality legislation  
Made provision for gender pay reporting

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ACT 2014

Introduced shared parental leave  
Rights to unpaid parental leave extended  
Rights to adoption leave and pay extended  
Right to request flexible working extended to all employees

As well as what's already in place, there are provisions in the pipeline at EU level for employment protection and equality in the workplace, which could benefit the working parents and carers we support through our legal advice service.

The EU is currently consulting on proposals to improve work life balance and reduce obstacles to women's participation in the labour market. Identified options are new rights to fathers' leave and stronger maternity protections. It is also considering proposals for the right to a written statement of terms and conditions for all employees (including those on zero-hours contracts), and improved rights for self-employed people and posted workers.

You can get in touch with Working Families' legal advice service by calling 0300 012 0312 or sending an email to [advice@workingfamilies.org.uk](mailto:advice@workingfamilies.org.uk)

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Please note that this briefing is illustrative rather than comprehensive.