

Reference 2009/xxx
Date 6/4/09

NEW RIGHTS COME INTO FORCE

Workplace rights were boosted as new measures to help employees and employers took effect today.

Measures coming into force include:

- Right to request flexible working extended to parents of children up to 16
- Automatic penalties for employers who underpay on the National Minimum Wage
- Simpler dispute resolution rules to help workers and employers deal with workplace disputes.

An extension in annual leave rights from 24 days to 28 days for all employees took effect on Wednesday 1 April.

Employment Relations Minister Pat McFadden said:

“Flexible working has been a great success. The change we are bringing in this month is about helping parents cope with work and family life. Both workers and employers have felt the benefits of flexible working since we first introduced the right to request.

“Fewer mothers change jobs when they return to work meaning greater continuity for businesses and more employees have been able to work hours which help them cope with parental responsibilities.

“Firms can still say no if they have legitimate business concerns, but more than 95% of all requests for flexible working from working parents and carers are now accepted, as employers recognise the benefits more and more.

“Parenting doesn’t end as children get older. Extending the right to request will help more parents get the flexibility they need. The business benefits of flexible working are well documented and this remains the case in tougher economic times.”

Business Secretary Lord Mandelson said:

“New rights introduced over the last 10 years have made a real difference to people at work.

“I am hugely proud of the success of measures such as flexible working and the National Minimum Wage.

“Today we are taking another big step forward and I hope these policies continue to pay dividends to workers, families and business alike.”

Notes to Editors

1. April 6th is one of two Common Commencement Dates each year, when important laws come into force. This allows companies to plan ahead and save time and money.

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