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## NEW FAMILY FRIENDLY PROPOSALS

The new Work and Families Bill been published. The proposals are:

- Extending maternity pay and allowance from 6 months to 9 months from April 2007. The long term plan is to provide 12 months.
- New paternity leave for fathers enabling them to take leave and paternity pay if the mother returns to work after 6 months but before the end of her maternity leave period.
- Extending the right to request flexible working to carers.
- Introduction of “keeping in touch days” to allow women on maternity leave to agree with their employers certain days when they can come into work without losing their right to maternity leave.
- Extending the notice period for return from maternity leave to 2 months. This is designed to help employers plan more effectively future returns to work.
- Making it clear that employers can make reasonable contact with employees on maternity leave to help plan and ease the eventual return to work.

Whilst these extend to the right of working mothers and fathers they also help businesses by requiring longer notice for any return to work as well as making it clear that contact can be made with mothers during maternity leave to help plan and ease the return to work. This is always an area in which employers always feel uncomfortable with.

The proposed changes are expected to come into force in April 2007 but please watch further E-Briefs for confirmation that they have done so and further information on the scope of the provisions.