

Neonatal Leave and Pay consultation: how to respond in 30 minutes



Background

The Government wants your views on their proposal to introduce **Neonatal Leave and Pay** for parents whose baby or babies need neonatal care after they are born. If introduced, this would be available to all employed parents living in Britain and would entitle them to one week of paid leave for every week their baby is admitted to neonatal care, up to a maximum number of weeks.

Why should you respond?

This consultation is **your** chance to have your say. By sharing your views and your own personal experience, you will add to the weight of evidence which shows why this change is needed.

How does this guide work?

This guide will help you answer the five questions Bliss believes are the most important. If you want to answer the consultation in full, or these questions in more detail, download our [Question-by-Question Guide](#) from our website to support you with this.

The question numbers used in this guide correspond with the question number on the consultation response form so it is easy for you to find. This guide sets out what the question is, what it wants to find out and Bliss' view on the multiple choice answer.

At the end of this document, there is a '**key stats and facts**' box which has some helpful information to inform any more detailed comments you might want to leave.

Responding to the consultation:

Read the [Neonatal Leave and Pay Chapter](#) of the consultation, which **begins on page 29**.

Use this guide to inform your responses.

Respond either by [filling in the online form](#) or by [downloading a form](#) to return by post or email:

- supportingfamiliesconsultation@beis.gov.uk
- Labour Market Directorate
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1st floor Spur
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

Tell your friends and family to share their views too!

The deadline for your response is Friday 11 October 2019

Responding to the consultation questions

Outlined below are five key questions. Just answering these questions should take you no more than half an hour. If you would like support to respond to all the questions in the consultation, please see our [Question-by-Question Guide](#), available to download from our website.

- **Question 2: Do you agree that parents of babies who need to spend time in neonatal care should have access to additional pay and leave?**

Answer options: Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither/Disagree/Strongly Disagree/Don't Know

Bliss **strongly Agrees** that parents should receive additional leave and pay if their baby is born needing neonatal care.

- **Question 4: If you agree that access to Neonatal Leave and Pay should be restricted to parents whose babies are most seriously ill, after what length of time in neonatal care should the parents' entitlement to Neonatal Leave and Pay crystallise?**

Answer options: After 2 weeks/4 weeks/ **other**

This question wants to know how long a baby or babies should be in neonatal care for before their parents are entitled to Neonatal Leave and Pay.

Bliss believes **the threshold should be set at one week** due to the extremely short length of paternity leave entitlements.

- **Question 7: Do you agree that the qualifying period of service for Statutory Neonatal Pay should mirror the qualifying period of Statutory Paternity and Shared Parental Pay?**

Answer options: Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither/Disagree/**Strongly disagree**/Don't Know

The Government proposes that Neonatal **Leave** should be a 'day one right,' but thinks a qualifying period should exist, like with Statutory Paternity Pay to access Neonatal **Pay**.

Bliss **strongly disagrees** and believes that both Neonatal Leave **and** Pay should be a day one right for parents if their baby is admitted to neonatal care.

- **Question 8: Do you agree that entitlements to Neonatal Leave should be capped?**

Answer options: Strongly Agree/Agree/Neither/**Disagree**/ Strongly disagree /Don't Know

The Government thinks that Neonatal Leave and Pay should be capped. Setting a maximum number of weeks is one way to balance the needs of families with the needs of business and affordability.

Bliss **disagrees that neonatal leave should be capped**. To support as many parents as possible it must fully support the parents of the small number of babies who have a very long neonatal stay.

- **Question 9: Do you agree that the maximum number of weeks of Neonatal Leave should be the same as the maximum number of Neonatal Pay in order to ensure eligible parents can receive pay throughout their leave period?**

Answer options: **Strongly Agree**/Agree/Neither/Disagree/Strongly Disagree/Don't Know

This question wants to know if you think the Neonatal **Pay** element should last for the same amount of time as the **Leave** element. For example, if the Government did decide to cap Neonatal Leave at 12 weeks, they want to know if you agree that Neonatal Pay should be paid for all of those 12 weeks.

Bliss **strongly agrees** that both parents should be entitled to a paid week of leave for every week their baby receives neonatal care. Ideally, there should be no cap but **if** one is in place, every week of leave should be paid.

Key stats and facts

Neonatal Leave

- Parents being supported to take the lead in their baby's care has benefits for babies, including increased weight gain (O'Brien, 2018).
- The length of parental leave doesn't change when a baby needs neonatal care. A lack of leave is a big barrier to parents being with their baby of as long, or as often as they would like (Bliss 2019)
- Bliss 2019 parental leave survey found:
 - **66 per cent of dads and partners returned to work** while their baby was on the neonatal unit.
 - **Over a quarter** had to choose between taking time off when their baby was in hospital, or when their baby came home.
 - **36 per cent** of dads and partners were signed off sick while their baby was in neonatal care.
 - **77 per cent** of parents felt their parental leave was not long enough, with this figure rising to 90 per cent of parents whose baby spent 10 or more weeks in neonatal care
- It is important that Neonatal Leave and Pay is a day one right because around one in four working men in the UK do not qualify for two weeks paternity leave (TUC, 2017).

Neonatal Pay

- Parents told Bliss they faced extra costs of £2,225 on average when their baby was in neonatal care. This is a significant barrier to parents being with their baby (Bliss 2014)
- Bliss 2019 parental leave survey found **half** of parents said they returned to work because they couldn't afford to take any longer off.
- 36 per cent of dads were signed off sick when their baby was in neonatal care.
- Half of dads do not take all of their paternity leave because of pay – rising to 75% for dads on the lowest incomes (Parliamentary Questions 189835 (2018) and 188224 (2018)).