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Dads and partners now have legal right to ask for time off work when a new baby arrives: unions

Dads will no longer have to justify asking for time off work when their new baby arrives, thanks to new laws that ensure they have the right to access paid parental leave, say unions.

ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said unions had campaigned for paid parental leave for both parents for more than 30 years.

“Unions welcome the expansion of the Government’s paid parental leave scheme to include the right for dads and partners to spend time with their family after the birth of their child,” Mr Oliver said.

“All parents have a right to spend time together with their new baby and there is no reason why work should prevent them from doing so.

“We know all parents want to spend time with their children when they are born.

Thanks to the Dad and Partner Pay leave scheme, which passed through Parliament this week, eligible dads will have access to two weeks’ government-funded Dad and Partner Pay at the rate of the national minimum wage.

Mr Oliver said unions were already talking to employers about ‘topping up’ the minimum wage amount to reach their workers’ ordinary wages as part of workplace agreement negotiations.

He said the new laws would allow fathers and partners, including adopting parents and parents in same-sex couples, could freely seek access to leave.

“Many dads and partners do get to share in the joyous time when their new baby arrives already, but there are also many who either do not feel comfortable asking for time off when their partner gives birth, or simply have their request rejected.

“This is wrong and unions are pleased that these new laws means all employers will now have to move into the modern era and will help ensure workplaces reflect the reality of modern working families”

Mr Oliver said the financial support would be especially important for the growing number of workers in insecure work, particularly those in casual or contract work, who usually had to forfeit all leave entitlements.

“With 40% of the workforce in insecure work, until now a large number of partners would not get any leave pay at all if they wanted to spend time with their new family,” he said.

“This new leave entitlement will be especially welcome news to these men and partners.”

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