

YOUR RIGHT TO UNPAID PARENTAL LEAVE:

A HANDY GUIDE FOR EXPECTANT PARENTS IN THE UK

Parenting is a wild ride — wonderful, messy, exhausting, and beautiful all at once. Somewhere between the nappies and the night feeds, you might find yourself wondering:

“Do I really have to go straight back to work?”

The answer is — not necessarily! If you're eligible, you can take **unpaid parental leave** to give yourself extra breathing space.

What Is Unpaid Parental Leave?

Unpaid parental leave lets you **take time off work to look after your child** without losing your job.

You can use it to:

- Spend more time with your baby or child.
- Adjust to life as a parent (because it's *a lot*).
- Take a mental reset before returning to work.
- Avoid quitting your job when things feel overwhelming.

The Basics (According to UK Law)

From [gov.uk/parental-leave](https://www.gov.uk/parental-leave):

- You're entitled to **up to 18 weeks' unpaid leave per child**.
- You can use this until your child turns **18**.
- You can take **up to 4 weeks per year per child** (unless your employer allows more).
- You must take it in **whole weeks** (not odd days), unless your child has a disability.
- You'll need to **give at least 21 days' notice** before taking the leave.
- *(Check your eligibility — you usually need to have worked for your employer for at least a year.)*

Why It's Worth Considering

Parenting is hard work. Working *and* parenting? That's next level.

If you can afford a short period without pay, unpaid parental leave can:

- Give you a chance to **reset and recharge**.
- Help you **ease back into work** gradually.
- Let you **spend time** with your little one during key milestones.
- Prevent you from **making rushed decisions** like quitting your job in a moment of exhaustion.

Sometimes, a **pause** is better than a full stop.

Top Tips

- **Plan early.** Talk to your HR or manager before your leave ends.
- **Budget it out.** Work out how many unpaid weeks you can manage comfortably.
- **Share it.** Both parents may be eligible — you can take turns!
- **Think of it as an investment** — in your wellbeing, your family life, and your sanity.

Try Saying:

“I'm exploring unpaid parental leave — could we talk about how that might work?”

Simple. Calm. Empowered. You're not asking for a favour; you're using your rights.

In a Nutshell

Unpaid parental leave isn't just a legal option — it's a *lifeline* for many parents.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, know that you have choices.

Sometimes, the best next step is to **pause**, breathe, and come back when you're ready.

Helpful Resources

Government guidance: www.gov.uk/parental-leave/entitlement

Citizens Advice: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work

Thank you!

Thank you for purchasing this resource! I trust you will find it enjoyable. I have invested a significant amount of time, effort, and passion into each of my resources. Should you encounter any issues or notice a typo, please reach out to me at tina@tinagibbs.co.uk, and I will promptly assist you!

Meet Tina:

Hello, I'm Tina, a Doula, facilitator, and mentor specializing in supporting birth workers. I previously served as an NCT teacher for more than a decade, developing resources alongside my teaching responsibilities. Currently, my focus is on crafting valuable resources for birth workers and guiding them in creating their own. If you're interested in learning how to create your resources, feel free to reach out using the contact information provided below.



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