

New parental leave arrangements in Jersey from September

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Extended maternity and paternity leave giving new parents the legal right to a year away from work are set to come into force in September - and employers need to have updated handbooks, policies and contracts in time for the change.

The new proposed rights offer 52 weeks of leave to parents (including adopting and surrogate parents) with no qualifying period, with six weeks paid at the employee's usual full rate by their employer.

Employees will also have the right to request temporary changes to their working conditions to accommodate breast-feeding breaks, and employers will have to take "reasonable steps" to provide facilities in the workplace for breastfeeding mothers to express and store milk.

The proposals were published yesterday and are due to be debated in March – the law proposes that they would come into full effect from 1 September.

The biggest proposed change is to provide for all new parents to each have up to a year off work as parental leave – and that their leave could be broken into four blocks over a three-year period.

Advocate Will Austin-Vautier, a senior associate in Ogier's Local Legal Services team, said: "These are significant changes and adopt a progressive model that is quite different from, for example, the law in the UK.

"If passed by the States it could help promote parity between parents and a greater opportunity for both parents to play an equal part in their children's upbringing."

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