

# Written evidence from Simon Kelleher and Dr Rebecca Jones with Professor Emma Banister and Dr Helen Norman “Working Families [SPL0053]

## About the authors

This report draws on evidence and testimonials collected by *Working Families*, and research by Professor Emma Banister and Dr Helen Norman, which has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the British Academy/ Leverhulme Trust.

- Working Families is the UK’s national charity for working parents and carers. Their evidence includes parent testimonials collected for this inquiry<sup>1</sup>, the findings from their annual Employer’s Benchmark, and Working Families Index polling, and insights drawn from their legal advisory service and rights line, and work with their employer members. Further details on these can be found in the annex.
- Emma Banister is Professor of Consumption and Society at the University of Manchester and a member of the University’s Work and Equalities Institute. Her research involves longitudinal in-depth qualitative interviews with fathers and their partners in the UK.
- Helen Norman is an Associate Professor of work and employment relations at Leeds University Business School. Her research involves the analysis of data (of over 5,000 households) from the UK’s Millennium Cohort Study – a nationally representative survey following a cohort of children and their families living in Britain.
- Working Families and both authors are currently collaborating on a study examining the transition to parenthood in SMEs (included briefly in this submission but forms basis of a separate submission to this Inquiry – see Stumbitz et al<sup>2</sup>).

Collectively, their research and projects explore fathers and fatherhood, Shared Parental Leave (SPL), work-family reconciliation and employer and employee challenges around the transition to parenthood in UK small and medium-sized enterprises (SME).

**\*\*All authors are happy to contribute oral evidence if called\*\***

## Executive Summary

- SPL can sometimes provide parents with more choice and flexibility around balancing work and care responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> Working Families collected 59 testimonials from parents for the purpose of this inquiry. These are used throughout this submission to illustrate key points (quotes in text boxes). For more information see the submission’s annex

- Only 1% of eligible mothers and 4% of eligible fathers have taken up SPL (DBT/BEIS 2023).
- This is much lower than the proportion of fathers who take parental leave in other European countries. In Nordic countries take-up rates by fathers are 70+%.

### **Our research shows that:**

- SPL only provides *some* parents with flexibility in how they manage their parenting responsibilities. Its impact is limited because it is rarely taken up.
- Providing the conditions for fathers' to be involved in care during the first year of parenthood is important as it sets up a pattern of involved fathering that persists as children get older; this can also benefit women's labour market participation.
- Reasons for low take up of SPL include affordability, complexity, and a lack of awareness around SPL policy. These barriers are more pronounced within certain employment contexts and sectors and can be exacerbated by traditional gender role attitudes that prevent fathers from requesting and taking up SPL.
- SPL's maternal transfer design is a barrier to take up of SPL as it puts the onus on mothers to give up part of their maternity leave entitlement.
- Employer schemes that drive leave uptake (particularly amongst fathers) demonstrate the importance/potential of separate individual rights for employees, and flexibility in the timing of leave
- SMEs experience challenges in supporting parents to take up SPL given their limited resources.

### **Our policy recommendations are:**

- The promised review into parental leave should be a formal public consultation focused on eligibility, statutory pay and entitlement, including adoptive and kinship parent care.
- Phased policy reform underpinned by the eight principles for reform adopted by Working Families' Families & Work Group, which includes:
  - Short term: well-paid paternity leave (e.g. 90% of average weekly earnings)
  - Medium-long term: extended and better paid leave provision encompassing more parents plus a targeted leave entitlement for fathers/partners on 'use it or lose it' basis
- A renewed focus on SMEs to ensure they are equipped to support parents in taking SPL (see Stumbitz et al.<sup>2</sup> and Wilson, Banister and Jones 2024)
- Employers should offer more flexibility around the taking of leave and enhancement (e.g. untether enhancement from the child's birth date).
- Clear communication and training so line managers have the tools to manage SPL effectively, support employees who wish to take it, and understand its role in the wider flexible culture of the organisation.

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<sup>2</sup> Stumbitz et al., submission to this inquiry: 'The challenges of using Shared Parental Leave for UK small and medium-sized enterprises'

# 1. To what extent has the statutory shared parental leave scheme given parents (including different sex and same sex parents, adoptive parents, and parents through surrogacy) choice and flexibility in how they share parenting responsibilities in the first year?

- Generally, more 'choice' is available to couples when both parents are entitled to enhanced maternity/ShPP pay.
- Other factors limit 'choice' (e.g., stigmatisation, lack of line manager support and workplace culture).
- SPL's transferable maternity leave design limits choice because it relies on mothers giving up some of their maternity leave entitlement.

## **Adoptive and same-sex parents**

- SPL gives adoptive and surrogacy parents more options around the sharing of care
- Prior to its introduction, periods of leave (other than statutory paternity) were limited to 'primary parents.'
- SPL's flexibility (e.g. blocks of leave) is important for adoptive families and other circumstances where there are additional complexities and challenges.
- In Banister and Kerrane (2018a) study, Richard and Rob's case material was used in a government campaign and the couple also featured in the [video casebook](#) on Working Families website (see Banister, Kerrane, Working Families and Fatherhood Institute, 2018)
  - For same-sex couples such as Rob and Richard, SPL allows them to take patterns of leave that were not available previously.
  - In a supporting [article in Gay Times](#), Richard said SPL *"enabled us both to participate and share childcare in our baby's first year, whilst also maintaining our careers."*

## **Affordability limits**

- SPL is not affordable for most families. The low statutory rate (ShPP) is equivalent to a quarter of men's and 29% of women's median full-time (gross) weekly earnings<sup>3</sup>
- Banister and Kerrane's (2024) participants reported "number crunching" to navigate the financial viability of leave patterns.
  - The intention to take leave was insufficient to ensure takeup; complex comparisons were made between Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP), ShPP, and the availability of employer enhancements.
  - In all circumstances, leave was taken by fathers either because:
    - i. It worked out *better* financially for the father to take leave (e.g. the father's workplace enhanced ShPP and mother's workplace did not
    - ii. If the mother's pay was higher than fathers)
    - iii. It was calculated that couples *would not lose out* financially (e.g. wages and Maternity/SPL entitlements were approximately equal).

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<sup>3</sup> Men's and women's full-time weekly earnings (gross) in 2023 were respectively £725 and £629; SPL is paid at £184.03 per week.

## Maternal design

*"It isn't shared parental leave, it's shared maternity leave. A woman is having to give away part of her right to time off with her child."*

- The necessary curtailing of a mother's leave entitlement is a major limiting factor in how genuine choice feels for families
- A recurrent theme in the 60 testimonies Working Families received for this inquiry was new mothers not feeling ready to return to work when SPL would have required them to (due to personal preference or concerns around their recovery).
- Fathers often feel uncomfortable 'taking' leave off their partner (Banister and Kerrane, 2018b)
- This issue is sometimes termed 'maternal gatekeeping' but this simplifies a complex issue inherent in the maternal transfer design of SPL.

## 2. What have been the longer-term equality impacts of the scheme, for example on equal sharing of responsibilities for children as they grow up, and wider domestic responsibilities?

*"It really helped develop a shared understanding of parenting role and responsibilities, and how a full day looks of day time and night time childcare. This helped for when we returned to work and juggled roles/responsibilities around ongoing childcare"*

It is important to provide the conditions for fathers to take time off work to contribute to the care of their children during the early years of parenthood because this:

- Sets up a pattern of involved fathering behaviour that persists as the child grows older – up to at least the age of 11 (Norman et al. 2024; also see Fagan and Norman 2016)
- Enables a mother's return to employment post-childbirth (Norman 2020) thus supporting a more gender equal division of paid work and childcare
- Benefits children's cognitive behaviour and educational attainment at primary school (Norman and Davies 2023).
- Supports parents' wellbeing and perinatal mental health (Wilkinson 2023). Evidence shows that longer). Longer periods of paid leave for both mothers and fathers/partners isare associated with better mental health outcomes for both parents (Heshmati et al 2023; Andres et al 2024).

While the current SPL scheme is unlikely to transform care practices on a wide scale (given low take-up), the experiences of the couples in Banister and Kerrane's (2024) study provide 'glimpses' of what is possible.<sup>4</sup>

- Following leave, 13/25 fathers made formal adjustments to their working practices, with these couples adopting approximately equal sharing of responsibilities.

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<sup>4</sup> Banister and Kerrane (2022, p.1219) provide a breakdown outlining which participants took what leave and on what pay (e.g. enhanced or ShPP).

- 10 of these 13 fathers returned to work part-time, others made changes to their role or work hours (e.g. compressed hours)
- Fathers also gave qualitative examples of how this played out in terms of care e.g. *“He responds really well to both of us, and he’s comforted by both of us...”* (see pp 122-124).

A successful leave policy needs to be accessible for more couples and only then can it drive wider impact on care and wider domestic responsibilities.

*“The childcare leave system (for want of a better word) is entirely set up to prioritise and incentivise the mother to be the primary caregiver in the early years. Those are formative parenting moments and it’s understandable that once one parent has got better at “parenting”, they may consciously or unconsciously take on more, be that bedtimes, parties, school runs or potty training.”*

### 3. What have been the labour market impacts of the scheme, particularly for women?

*“[It’s] a way of helping my wife back to work and minimise separation anxiety, as instead of going straight from caring for the baby to handing him over to nursery, there was a transition period where she’d be working at home and still within touching distance of the baby, and knowing he was with someone she could definitely trust (me). It also meant that I could take responsibility for settling him into nursery, lifting another mental load.”*

- Norman’s (2020) analysis shows that mothers are more than twice as likely to resume employment nine months post-birth if the father does the most or shares childcare equally with the mother.
- The probability of maternal employment increases when the child is aged three if the father does the most or shares childcare equally with the mother nine months post-birth.
- This suggests that if fathers take up SPL to be involved in the care of their child during the first year, mothers may be more likely to maintain their attachment to labour market.

Banister and Kerrane (2024, p.1222) provide examples of men’s adjustments in their work hours/practices in direct support of women’s careers (e.g. as above, 13/25 men returned to work part time following leave).

- SPL and subsequent work-care decisions were specifically mindful of women’s career goals: *“it shouldn’t be the default that the mum’s the one that stays at home, the mum’s the one that sort of takes a back seat with her career.”*
- Further research by Banister and Kerrane follows ten of their study participants up until their child’s school age (including interviews with partners/child’s mothers). This further research confirms mothers continued to pursue career goals.
- Some men report temporarily stepping back or ‘pausing’ careers; couples worked out together how they could best continue to share care, supporting women’s ongoing career journeys.

While smaller qualitative studies cannot infer causation, taken together, the above studies (Norman, 2020; Banister and Kerrane, 2024) suggest that enabling couples to share care in a child’s first year facilitates the setting up of patterns of care and expectations; in turn these inform ongoing, more equitable, work-care decisions.

## 4. Why has take up of statutory shared parental leave been low and what could be done to increase take up?

*“My husband wouldn't have been paid at the rate of my maternity leave during his leave so it did not make financial sense”*

- Strict eligibility rules based on work status and length of service hinders take-up of SPL. The TUC (2015) found that 2 in 5 working fathers with a child under one did not qualify for SPL because their partner is not in paid work. For couples who meet eligibility criteria, reasons for low take up include:

### **Affordability**

- Most eligible parents cannot afford to take SPL because it is paid at a low flat rate, equivalent to a quarter of men's and 29% of women's median full-time (gross) weekly earnings<sup>5</sup>. In the 2019 Parental Leave Rights Survey, a quarter of mothers and almost a third (30%) of fathers said that the main reason for not taking up SPL was due to financial constraints (DBT/BEIS 2023).
- The DBT/BEIS (2023) found that access to enhanced pay was a 'direct facilitator' of SPL but our collaborative research with SME employers found that many smaller organisations do not have the resources to provide enhanced pay (see Stumbitz et al. submission to this Inquiry and the [Transition to Parenthood in SMEs project](#)).
- Working Families' most recent annual Employer Benchmark found that a quarter of employers offering enhanced SPL imposed a cut-off date within the first year for the leave to be taken, which negates the potential of the scheme to support a mothers return to work and discourages fathers to be independent caregivers.

### **Awareness and Complexity**

*“I found the system confusing (and I'm an employment lawyer!). Neither employer understood how the process worked and I had to educate them during the process.”*

There is a lack of awareness about SPL: a third of mothers and 45% of fathers who had not taken SPL had not heard of the scheme when their baby was born or adopted according to the 2019 Parental Leave Rights Survey (DBT/BEIS 2023).

- Lack of knowledge of the scheme amongst line managers and HR departments, and lack of communication to employees about the scheme, can present barriers to parents taking SPL (Birkett & Forbes 2019).
- SPL policy is complex, as illustrated by its 59-page technical guide (see Department for Business Innovation & Skills 2020). One respondent to Working Families call for testimony said:

### **Gendered attitudes in the workplace**

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<sup>5</sup> Men's and women's full-time weekly earnings (gross) in 2023 were respectively £725 and £629; SPL is paid at £184.03 per week.

*“My husband works in a field where he feels if he took parental leave, it would adversely affect his career.”*

- Negative workplace attitudes around male caregiving and fears over the impact taking leave would have on a father’s career progression were cited multiple times as reasons why couples did not share leave in testimonies collected by Working Families.
- Workplace cultures do not often support fathers taking leave as they based on persistent cultural expectations that men will prioritise work and women will prioritise childcare (see Norman 2017; Birkett & Forbes 2019; DBT/BEIS 2023; Kelland 2022).

### **Reluctance to cut short or ‘steal’ Maternity Leave**

*“I was happy to take my full entitlement - I was keen on breastfeeding and wasn't sure how this would work if I returned to work before weaning was fully established”*

- The ‘maternal transfer’ design of SPL can deter fathers from taking SPL up, and often mothers are reluctant to give up part of their leave entitlement.
- Concerns about SPL impacting on recovery and breastfeeding were cited.
- One father in Banister and Kerrane’s (2024) study framed SPL as having to “*steal time away from my wife*”. Banister and Kerrane found that if SPL schemes were enhanced via workplaces, it provided fathers with ‘permission’ to take leave although line managers or other personnel could still constrained leave choices.

## **5. How can inequalities in take up of shared parental leave, including by ethnicity, income, qualification level and occupational status, be addressed?**

*“My partner's job did not offer it, and he didn't qualify for statutory paternity leave, he hadn't worked in the organisation long enough.” [mother]*

### **Eligibility and access to enhanced leave**

- TUC have documented issues with eligibility criteria and those who are self-employed do not qualify.
- The 26-week eligibility criteria for Statutory Paternity and SPL, which the Employment Rights Bill will remove, provided a barrier to many of the parents who contacted Working Families about this inquiry.
- Findings from the Working Families Index series<sup>6</sup> 2023 and 2025 show a correlation between higher levels of household income and the likelihood of respondents being eligible for enhanced pay.

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<sup>6</sup> Working Families Index Series is a regular representative poll of approximately 3,000 working parents on their experiences of work and care

- Individuals from households with an income over £100k pa were almost twice as likely to be eligible for enhanced leave than those from households earning under £50k pa (54% vs 29%).
- The 2025 Index survey found a marked difference in access to SPL for parents of different ethnic backgrounds with parents from Asian backgrounds faring worst.
- Asian parents were more likely not to be eligible for parental leave (24%) and less likely to report having access to enhanced leave (27%) than both their white (40%) and black counterparts (47%).

## Employer size

*“It was not difficult but [I] expect that is largely down to a useful HR director on both mother and father sides.”*

- The size and capacity of an employer plays a role in determining parents’ abilities to access SPL.
- Working Family testimonies highlight the role of effective HR practitioners in facilitating leave.
- SMEs account for over three-fifths of UK employment (Stumbitz et al. 2018); barriers to taking SPL are exacerbated given many SMEs operate without dedicated HR professionals (Forbes, Birkett & Smith 2021; Wilson, Banister and Jones 2024).

SME-specific issues with SPL are currently being explored in our collaborative ESRC-funded Transition to Parenthood within UK SMEs research study<sup>7</sup> Early study findings identify that:

- Resource constraints impact the ability for most SMEs to provide ShPP enhancement and manage staff absences.
- There is limited knowledge and awareness of SPL exists within SME workplaces.
  - Employees often must assume responsibility themselves: *“They didn’t have a policy or anything so I’d looked it all up on the .gov website and figured out how it would work.”*
  - Many SMEs have still not dealt with SPL; it is experienced as an unusual event: *“It was really complicated, they had never dealt with it before, never done it before, obviously I had never done it before so we were kind of working out how did that work.”*
  - These issues adversely affect male employees’ feeling they have the ‘permission’ to disrupt gender norms by taking leave.

This is not a monolithic picture. SMEs are diverse, some are able to prioritise their family offerings, have high knowledge, provide support and offer ShPP enhancements in line with some larger employers.

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<sup>7</sup> The Transition to Parenthood in UK small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (defined as having between 1 and 249 members of staff) study is led by Dr Bianca Stumbitz (Middlesex University) and in collaboration with *Working Families*, the *Fatherhood Institute*, Dr Helen Norman (University of Leeds), Professor Emma Banister and Dr Laura Jarvis-King (both University of Manchester) and Dr Clarice Santos, Dr Bastien Chabe-Ferret, Dr Ericka Rascon Ramirez, Dr Amy Burnett (all Middlesex University).



## 6. Are there potentially more effective alternatives to the current "maternal transfer" model of shared parental leave?

- The 2025 Working Families Index shows that parents who were eligible for enhanced pay took longer periods of leave.
- Employer case studies demonstrate that fathers will take up leave when it is well remunerated:

### Case Study One:

Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield's Equal Parenting Policy means that fathers and partners are entitled to take Shared Parental Leave of 13 weeks full pay and 13 weeks half pay and this is available from the first day on the job and can be taken at any point during the baby's first year. Paternity and Partner Leave has been enhanced to four weeks full pay. 50% of all eligible fathers took their full 4 weeks paternity leave entitlement and 40% of eligible fathers took enhanced SPL, compared to the national average of 2%. [case study published in 2024].

### Case Study Two:

Zurich UK offers equal parental leave to men and women that does not have to be shared. This includes 16 weeks on full pay, if employees have been with the company at least 26 weeks. Since the policy was launched in autumn 2019, 90% of eligible men say they intend to take the full allowance [case study published in May 2020].

In 2022, Zurich reported that 'The majority (73%) [of new fathers at Zurich] are taking the full 16 weeks paid paternity leave, up from 66% in 2020. A further 7% (80% cumulative) have taken at least 10 weeks since the launch of the insurer's family friendly policies in 2019 to its 4,500 UK employees' (see more details [here](#)).

- Assessments of parental leave in other countries (below) show that schemes stimulating the best take up amongst fathers are flexible and based on individual entitlements with a quota of leave reserved for the father and high earnings replacement. Gender neutral (family-based) allocations that can be shared are mainly taken up by mothers in practice (Fagan and Norman 2013).
- Father targeted leave also makes it more acceptable in workplace cultures for fathers to use (Fagan and Norman 2013).

*"It's a terrible terrible system that vampirically robs leave from a mother. It should be abolished and replaced with freestanding paternity leave of a decent duration: 6 months would be a starting point. We cannot have equal parenting until this becomes the norm"*

## 7. Which countries have most effectively incentivised equal parenting and wider gender equality through their approaches to parental leave? What would be the costs and benefits of replicating these approaches in the UK

- In Norway, 15-19 weeks parental leave are reserved for fathers on a use-it or-lose-it basis, this resulted in 90% of eligible fathers taking up at least some entitlement. Prior to the introduction of this 'daddy quota', less than 4% fathers took parental leave (Bungum and Kvande 2024).
- Six months leave are reserved for fathers in Iceland, and 90 days are reserved for fathers in Sweden resulting in approximately 80% of eligible fathers taking up at least some of their entitlement (Duvander and Lofgren 2024; Fahlén and Duvander 2024; Arnalds et al. 2024).
- Evidence from Nordic countries suggests parental leave must be paid at near-salary replacement levels to make taking time off work to care for children a viable option. For example, 78-100% of earnings are replaced when fathers take parental leave in Norway, Iceland, and Sweden
- Fathers' use of parental leave has risen in other countries outside the Nordic context, triggered by policy reforms that introduce or extend a quota for fathers and increase financial support. One example is Spain, which increased paternity leave in 2021 from 2 to 16 weeks paid at 100% of salary. The take up rate amongst eligible fathers has been steadily increasing from 73.7% during the year the reform was first introduced to 88.9% in 2024 (Meil et al 2024).
- In Germany fathers' take up of leave increased from 3.3% in 2002 to 13.7% in 2008 following parental leave reforms that increased the earnings replacement rate (to 67%) and introduced a daddy quota (Fagan and Norman 2013).

### Key research

This submission mainly draws on the following evidence:

Banister, E. & Kerrane, B (2018a). How shared parental leave gives adoptive parents real time to build a new family unit. *The Conversation*, 30 April <https://theconversation.com/how-shared-parental-leave-gives-adoptive-parents-real-time-to-build-a-new-family-unit-95618>

Banister, E. & Kerrane, B (2018b). New generation of working parents demand a better deal on shared parental leave. *The Conversation*, 12 September <https://theconversation.com/new-generation-of-working-parents-demand-a-better-deal-on-shared-parental-leave-102993>

Banister, E. & Kerrane, B. (2024) Glimpses of change? UK fathers navigating work and care within the context of shared parental leave. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 1214–1229 <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12813>

Banister, E., Kerrane, B., Working Families & Fatherhood Institute (2018) Shared Parental Leave – video casebook. <https://workingfamilies.org.uk/shared-parental-leave-videos/shared-parental-leave-making-room-for-dads/>

Fagan C, Norman H. (2013). Men and gender equality: tackling gender segregation in family roles and in social care jobs. In: Bettio F; Plantenga J; Smith M (eds.) *Gender and the European Labour Market*

Fagan C, Norman H. (2016). Which Fathers Are Involved in Caring for Preschool-Age Children in the United Kingdom? A Longitudinal Analysis of the Influence of Work Hours in Employment on Shared Childcare Arrangements in Couple Households. In: Crespi, I., and Ruspini, E. *Balancing Work and Family in a Changing Society: the fathers' perspective*. Palgrave MacMillan: London

Norman, H. (2017). Paternal involvement in childcare: how can it be classified and what are the key influences? *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 6(1), 89-105  
<https://doi.org/10.1332/204674315X14364575729186>

Norman, H. (2020). Does Paternal Involvement in Childcare Influence Mothers' Employment Trajectories during the Early Stages of Parenthood in the UK? *Sociology*, 54(2), 329-345.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038519870720>

Norman, H., Davies, J. (2023) What a difference a dad makes. Paternal Involvement and its Effects on Children's Education (PIECE) study. Leeds: University of Leeds: <https://piecestudy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/PIECE-Final-Report-1.pdf>

Norman, H., Elliot, M., & Vanchugova, D. (2024). How Important Is Early Paternal Engagement? Deriving Longitudinal Measures of Fathers' Childcare Engagement and Exploring Structural Relationships With Prior Engagement and Employment Hours. *Journal of Family Issues*, 45(11), 2751-2776

Wilson, J., Banister, E., and Jones, R. (2024). Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) The opportunities and challenges of family-friendly and "life-friendly" employment practices. *Working Families*.  
<https://workingfamilies.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/20241120-SME-Report-final.pdf>

Working Families (2023) Working Families Index: spotlight on lower income families.  
<https://workingfamilies.org.uk/publications/working-families-index-2023-spotlight-on-lower-income-families/>

Working Families (2025) Working Families Index [forthcoming]

## **Annex: Working Families' Testimonials**

Between January 24th and February 3rd Working Families collected testimonies from 59 parents who completed an online form promoted via the charity's LinkedIn, Instagram accounts, and Parent and Carer, and Employer newsletters. The survey asked respondents the following questions:

Q1. What is your gender?

Q2. Did you take Shared Parental Leave (where you or your partner transferred maternity leave to extend the time one of you could take away from work to care for you child in the first year)?

If Yes

Q3. Please tell us about your experience, how did you share your leave? How did it impact you or your partner's ability to return to or engage in work, and how did it impact how you divide childcare or domestic responsibilities between you in the short and long term?

Q4. Would you recommend it, or was it difficult to take and if so what could be change to improve take up of SPL?

If No...

Q5. Why didn't you and your partner opt to take Shared Parental Leave?

Q6. Imagining you were to have another child, what would have to change for you to take SPL?

All

Q7. If you ran the country, what changes would you make to improve the UK's parental leave offer for new parents?

Q8. Please feel free to share any other views on parental leave below.

**February 2025**