

# WORKING MUMS

Feeling clucky? What will they say at work? Katherine Cowan asks two new lesbian mums to share their experience.

Lesbians have been having babies forever; but the concept of two mums can still be confusing for some. A pregnant female employee requesting maternity leave is no surprise. But what about a female employee who isn't pregnant requesting time off to be with her new baby? The law is clear: if eligible, the non-birth mother can take paternity leave.

Claire, a university lecturer, and Samantha, a graphic designer, recently had their first baby. Birth-mother Claire requested her maternity leave 12 weeks into the pregnancy. 'There are quite a few other same-sex couples at work so it wasn't a shock. My team have met Sam a few times, so they are used to us as a couple.'

Meanwhile, Samantha applied for paternity leave: 'It's one week full pay, one week statutory, but my employer let me take the second week as annual leave so I didn't lose salary,' she explains. 'I'm the first openly gay person in my office to have this situation so people were quite inquisitive, in a good way! They've been great with me



attending hospital appointments and with working flexible hours throughout the whole pregnancy and post-birth.'

Employers should ensure their maternity and paternity leave policies are in compliance with the law and explicitly include same-sex partners. Recent legal changes mean it's easier than ever for lesbians to conceive in a way which suits them, so the number of gay birth and non-birth mums in the workplace may well increase. Employers should treat them as any other parent; with respect, sensitivity and in accordance with the law.

Recruitment columnist Katherine Cowan is an independent diversity consultant. For more information go to: [www.katherinecowan.net](http://www.katherinecowan.net)



Helpful resources:  
 Acas: [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)  
 Gay Mums UK: [www.gaymums.org.uk](http://www.gaymums.org.uk)  
 London Women's Clinic: [www.lwclinic.co.uk/gen/lesbian\\_single.php](http://www.lwclinic.co.uk/gen/lesbian_single.php)



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