

Equal parental leave: a precious gift for my family

By Iain Atkins

Iain, who works in our Advised Platform Improvements Team, took 6 months of parental leave following the birth of his little boy Charlie on March 2018.



Our whole world changed in March this year when Emma and I became parents for the first time.

Charlie Jake Atkins, our big bundle of joy (he's a very tall baby!) made a big impact on our lives from day one. No-one can prepare you for how tiring those first few weeks are, both mentally and physically — you're basically sleepwalking as you have to be up every few hours, without fail, whilst slowly getting used your new responsibilities as a parent.

Originally I only had 4 weeks off, but that all changed when Aviva introduced their equal parental leave policy. With up to 12 months of leave — 26 weeks at full pay — I could be there as Charlie grew.

Things were a lot easier than they could've been — I could take care of Charlie when it suited us, rather than Emma having to look after him during the day, and me only getting to see him in the evenings.



And I found out that once you get through those first few weeks of sleepless nights, the fun times really do arrive.

Charlie quickly became a very happy, confident baby and I truly believe that without the freedom that Aviva's policy allowed me and the pressure it took off of Emma, Charlie wouldn't have settled in so quickly and developed as well as he has.

He's now 8 months old, and I've been hands-on the whole way — from bottle feeds to experimenting with solid foods and yoghurts, which he covers everyone in. I was there to see him grow into a little explorer; crawling around the living room and breaking through pillow barriers that I'd hoped would keep him in one place.

I really think Aviva's policy is ground-breaking, and shows that they care about their employees and the future generation. I was happy at Aviva before I heard about this policy, and it's just added to the many ways that the company puts its employees first.

I hope that other companies follow their example so that more new fathers can have the amazing introduction to parenthood that I had.